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**EL SALVADOR**

## SUCCESS STORY

# Farmer triples income and increases employment



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

Santos Bolaños show off his sweet peppers.



Some of the workers employed on Bolaños' farm gather in the field for a photo.

**“The increases in production and profits have improved my family’s quality of life and I am planning to buy another vehicle to gain access to other markets and employ more people.”**

— Santos Bolaños, USAID-ADP farmer

Santos Bolaños started working in agriculture in the municipality of Izalco in Sonsonate. During the rainy season, he produced beans and corn for his family’s needs on 0.35 hectares of land.

He later decided to buy 0.53 hectares to grow sweet peppers and cucumbers using furrow irrigation. This type of irrigation required 10 daily laborers at an approximate cost of \$420 per month in addition to the cost of water. His average annual income was \$10,500.

He sold his crops to the local market and did not receive technical assistance from any institution. His only agricultural knowledge came from his experience.

Bolaños encountered many production difficulties including inefficient irrigation, labor shortages, high costs of transport and lack of capital. With little experience to go on and no technical assistance on proper crop management and soil preparation, he was never going to get ahead.

Bolaños started working with USAID-ADP in November 2006. The program helped him calendarize plantings of cucumbers, cabbages and sweet peppers on 0.7 hectares using drip irrigation provided by the program.

After he saw the results of the first plantings with USAID-ADP assistance, Bolaños decided to increase his production area. Using his own resources, Bolaños expanded his farm to 1.6 hectares and installed drip irrigation.

He is currently on his 12th crop cycle, rotating between cucumbers, cabbages, sweet peppers and tomatoes. USAID-ADP has taught Bolaños a number of improved farming methods including Good Agricultural Practices such as good soil preparation and the use of raised beds, and phytosanitary and nutritional programs tailored for each crop.

USAID-ADP visits his farm weekly so that these techniques are used properly. The program does this for all lead clients until the client is considered sustainable and independent.

Bolaños’ average annual income has increased to \$32,500, which is three times higher than before joining the program. His production costs are lower and he is using water more efficiently. He has also hired men and women for eight permanent jobs and 20 temporary positions. Bolaños has invested 34 percent of his income to improve his land and buy a vehicle.

“The increases in production and profits have improved my family’s quality of life and I am planning to buy another vehicle to gain access to other markets and employ more people,” Bolaños said.