



# Entrenamiento y Desarrollo de Agricultores

## High-value transition is a sweet success for Honduran farmer



Before EDA, this land was dedicated to low-value sesame seed production.



Now with sweet potato production, the farm has more job opportunities.



A neatly planted sweet potato crop marked by an MCC-EDA sign.

German Calderón Espinoza, like many small growers of Honduras, cultivated his land without knowing its full profit potential. In his hometown of El Triunfo, Choluteca, he had dedicated the past 40 years to producing corn and sesame seeds. His last harvests combined from more than two hectares generated a net income of only \$522.

His story changed after joining the EDA and getting technical assistance from an EDA technician, who saw the potential of his land and proposed participating EDA's sweet potato production program that exports to Europe. Calderón had already tried on various occasions to diversify his farm with tomato and watermelon, but he always fell back on sesame seeds. Trusting in the technical assistance of EDA, however, he decided to plant 1.5 hectares of sweet potatoes. Because the crop was new for him, Calderón followed EDA's basic production practices, which included:

- Soil preparation with raised beds
- Installation of drip irrigation
- Pre-germination weed controls
- Selection and classification of plant cuttings
- Use of starter solution and plant density controls during transplant
- Soil sampling and analysis
- Pest and crop sampling
- Fertilization programs

To comply with export specifications and requirements based on the GLOBALGAP protocol, Calderón started keeping records of all farm activities and installed basic on-farm infrastructure including a shower, bathroom, sink and eye-washing station. Calderón is now helping transfer these changes and new technologies to four of his neighboring growers. After following his footsteps, they are now producing sweet potatoes for export, creating a synergy among them that is helping them reduce costs and use resources more efficiently.

This sweet potato project has also generated the need for more labor, especially for women, in activities such as seed selection, planting and harvesting. Calderón said that when growing sesame seeds he would hire five people at most. Now he has about 30 people on his payroll. Above all, Calderón made his farm more profitable. Total sales from his first sweet potato crop of 1.5 hectares was \$6,579, of which, 53 percent were sales for export. His net income was \$4,315 – an increase of 722 percent from his previous income with the traditional crops.

***“Although we have invested more, we realize that we are making more money. We have learned a lot and we are motivated by the [EDA] program, above all from having a specialized agronomist available. We were able to harvest a good crop, despite the fact that sweet potato is new to us.”***

— German Calderón - Lead Client, Choluteca