



Entrenamiento y Desarrollo de Agricultores

BACKGROUND

This monthly bulletin provides information on current activities of the Farmer Training and Development Program (MCA-H/EDA), a program of the Millennium Challenge Account of Honduras (MCA-Honduras) with funds provided by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) of the United States of America.

CONTENT

At a glance... page 1
Activities that have taken place... page 2
Sustainability: The "Electronic Agronomist"... page 3
MCA-H/EDA statistics... page 4
Performance Monitoring Plan... page 5
Activities relating to sustainability... page 6

AT A GLANCE

- In August, the list of program producers was evaluated and the producers that have not planted in 2010 (because of lack or excess of water, lack of funds, change of career or other reasons) were removed. The number of program producers was reduced by 188, to 7,263 (6,681 men and 582 women).
- More than 814 market links were finalized between producers and buyers, which include local distributors, agro-processors, wholesale markets and agro-exporters (16,470 links to date).
- 200 hectares were planted with new crops in August, mostly tomato, plantain, potato, sweet pepper and corn. 19,380 hectares have been planted to date.
- 328 events took place with 4,104 participants (3,631 men and 473 women) on production (72.3%), postharvest (5.5%), marketing (11.0%), business skills/finance (6.1%), processing (3.9%) and others (1.2%).
- The program made 4,869 technical assistance visits to farmers for production, and 148 visits for postharvest, finance, processing, marketing, and business skills.
- Three formal training workshops took place on tomato production, plant nutrition and export procedures for new exporters.
- MCA-H/EDA technicians prepared supporting documentation for 17 loan applications (for a total of L. 8.19 million).
- Two women Program producers participated at an agricultural fair in Chicago organized by the University of Wisconsin (financed by USAID).
- Developed 4 technical presentations in marketing, 4 in production and began reproduction of two books developed by the Program – "Fruit and Horticultural Crop Production Manuals" and "Technical Bulletins for the High Value Horticultural Sector."
- Signed letters of understanding and began activities related to sustainability with CURLA and SAG/DICTA/CEDA, and distributed MCA-H/EDA technical publications of the "electronic agronomist." The "electronic agronomist" files were installed on 44 computers at 4 organizations (Curla, Asociación Bayan, Cadelga and APROCOY).
- Finished delivering equipment through the MCA-H small donations program. Of the greenhouses donated by the Program, 9 have been built and trellising systems are being put in place, 10 have the structure ready and plastic and nets are being installed, and 19 are being built.
- In August, capital investments made on farms by producers totaled \$134,563, mostly on vehicle purchases, materials for greenhouses, land purchases and production infrastructure (\$9.50 million to date).

MCA-H/EDA's focus on direct technical assistance and training for producers participating in the program follows a market-led production methodology. Most of the technical assistance is provided directly to individual farmers, who receive regular extension visits on their farms from the program's agronomists. MCA-H/EDA has a highly qualified technical team that includes field agronomists, and technicians specialized in marketing and logistics, postharvest management, farm certification programs, business administration, finances and business development services.



An MCA-H/EDA production team manager looks over a client's cauliflower crop in Marcala.

CLIENTS – MCA-H / EDA

In August 2010, 188 producers withdrew from the program. 7,263 producers now receive technical assistance and training. Program technicians provide assistance in 208 municipalities in the 16 departments assisted.

Client	Change 08/10	Total 08/10
Lead Producers	-56	1,585
Beneficiary Producers	-130	5,506
Graduate Producers*	-2	172
Buyers	-	192
Business Services	-	126
Counterparts	-	86

* Producers that have graduated from MCA-H/EDA continue to be program clients and receive technical assistance in marketing, postharvest and business skills with occasional production assistance.

September 2010 events:

Workshops: pepper producer awards ceremony in Comayagua (September 9); MCA-H/EDA annual event in Tegucigalpa (September 17); production in greenhouses in La Esperanza (September 22); management of virus vectors in tomato in Guaimaca (September 23); awards ceremony for potato producers in La Esperanza (September 23). Contact Lorena Aguilar for more information: 501.0375 or laguilar@fintrac.com.

MARKETING

MCA-H/EDA specialists established more than 814 market links between program producers and buyers from the local, export and processing markets. Held meetings and field visits with local buyers of plantain and cassava. The 20 training events held this month included 453 participants and covered analysis of prices and volumes, export logistics, plantain export and opportunities in different market chains. At these events buyers are invited to make presentations and establish direct links with interested producers to establish volumes, quality specifications and business terms. Held meetings with four companies interested in developing export programs for plantain, cassava, malanga and chayote. Developed presentations with providers of packing materials, shipping companies and customs agencies. A workshop was held with new exporters beginning operations, with participation from SAG, SENASA, SIC, FIDE, IICA and shipping providers.

PRODUCTION

MCA-H/EDA agronomists continue strengthening group technical assistance so producers can exchange experiences and strengthen joint calendarized plantings for market sustainability. Technical assistance and training covered basic practices, programming plantings, fertilization, irrigation, prevention, identification and control of pests and diseases, plantlet production and integrated crop management. Assisted producers with the prevention and control of fungus and bacteria, drainages and improvements in cultural practices to reduce the negative impact caused by excess rainfall. 14 **visits with producers** took place to production systems with established crops including plantain, broccoli, cauliflower, tomato, mango, oriental vegetables, onion and pepper; visited several greenhouses to observe placement of plastic on roofs and nets. Agronomists held 38 field **workshops** in different zones covering cultural practices, nursery plantings, nutrition programs, IPM, biological control, eliminating crop residue, production in greenhouses and identification and control of weeds. **On-farm trainings** included basic practices, cultural practices, soil preparation, nutrition, drip irrigation, IPM, greenhouse construction, use of agrochemicals, drip irrigation systems, transplanting pineapples, cucumbers and tomatoes, using starter solution, calibrating equipment, and biological control (227 on-farm events).

POSTHARVEST/PROCESSING

MCA-H/EDA specialists provided on-farm technical assistance to 70 producers on postharvest infrastructure and handling of plantain, cassava, papaya, rambutan, banana, sweet potato, guava, oriental vegetables, and malanga. Postharvest specialists held 18 training events with 224 participants. Topics included classification and packing, postharvest handling of plantains and cassava for export, classifying and washing cucumbers for the local market, and harvesting and classifying jalapeño peppers for processing. With the increase in harvest volumes of plantains and cassava, the postharvest team is focusing on training producers that have a determined volume to sell to local supermarket chains and export to the US. Trainign was also provided to producers in the ripening of plantains for the local market. In processing, 5 training events were held with 160 participants that covered good manufacturing practices (GMPs), food safety and certifications. Provided assistance with new processed products for the local market, labeling requirements, cassava processing options, packaging for pickled products, and certification of processing plants, among others.

BUSINESS SKILLS

Business skills specialists prepared supporting documentation for 17 loan applications worth L.8.19 million. Six workshops were carried out with 252 participants, covering production costs, the use of logbooks for record keeping and cost control, business plans and finance/credit. Helped launch a loan identity card from an input provider for Program producers. Continued assisting financial institutions and input stores with follow-up to loans given to Program producers. Analyzed production costs for tomatoes grown in greenhouses, and salad and pear-type tomatoes.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Activities with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock: Participated in a paratrioza in potatoes workshop organized by OIRSA and SENASA in Siguatepeque; visited the SAG/PROMECON project in Yoro to learn about the impact of the project on two associated companies that are applying for project funds; the Secretary of Agriculture and exporters participated at Program events on tomatoes; SENASA and Agribusiness made presentations at Program events.

MCA-H: MCA-H/EDA participated in MCA-H systematization activities and vice versa.

Others: An awards ceremony took place in Comayagua for tomato program producers with the highest yields in the last 12 months.



An agronomist gives potato training to a farmer group in Intibucá.



Workers harvest guava in Comayagua.



Malanga dries on racks in preparation for export from Cortés.



Women pack ginger flowers for export in Cortés.



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SUSTAINABILITY: THE “ELECTRONIC AGRONOMIST”

As part of MCA-H/EDA's exit strategy, selected activities are being implementing that are directed at ensuring sustainability of the technical assistance that the Program has been providing to growers and to the country's horticulture sector.

One of these activities is the installation of the “Electronic Agronomist” on computers at institutions, organizations and businesses that the Program has worked with and with whom agreements have been reached and formalized through letters of understanding and intent.

The “Electronic Agronomist” is a consultation tool for producers and the technicians that provide assistance to the country's commercial horticulture sector. The user has access to all the technical information generated during the implementation of the MCA-H/EDA Program which will help producers strengthen their knowledge of high value horticulture. In addition it gives the user direct access to the websites of MCA-Honduras, MCA-H/EDA and Fintrac Inc.

One of the advantages of having access to all this technical information is that producers and technicians can directly continue their training.

The “Electronic Agronomist” has information organized by technical area and type of document including manuals, bulletins, success stories and presentations. It also includes photographs on production techniques, pests, diseases and quality specifications in addition to logbooks, production costs, directories of equipment and service providers, among others.

The publications were developed to fill a gap in technical information for high value horticulture agribusinesses. The information found in the publications is based on the experience accumulated in the field by technicians, producers, processors and exporters that have worked with MCA-H/EDA. They are a reference tool for current and new producers, trainers, extension agents, distributors of pesticides and equipment, students, professors, and technicians that assist the country's horticulture sector. The documents are easy to print and some have been incorporated into a series of videos on crops and Program results.

“Electronic Agronomist” Content

Area	Technical Manuals	Technical Bulletins	Technical Presentations	Success Stories	Videos
Marketing		17	10		
Production	13	29	30		
Postharvest		18	22		
Processing		6	9		
Good Agricultural Practices		4	16		
Business Skills		31	27		
MCA-H/EDA Reports		Monthly		63	6

The “Electronic Agronomist” is being installed at input stores and for service and equipment providers. This will allow companies to provide technical assistance to their clients and have training material available for their technical-administrative personnel.

Agricultural schools, universities and educational institutions will have the material available for their courses and as reference for studies and teaching students, instructors, administrative and technical personnel, and the public. The “Electronic Agronomist” will strengthen the field training of technicians from government institutions (SAG, DICTA, PROMADERS) and NGOs and will be a tool for the producers that are assisted by extension agents from these organizations.

In addition the “Electronic Agronomist” has a lot of potential for development. It can be expanded by including photographs of problems found in the field provided by laboratories that analyze the information and determine if a physical sample is necessary in order to determine the cause of the problem and make an immediate recommendation.

The “Electronic Agronomist” is not meant to replace hands-on field experience. According to Dr Norman Borlaug, Nobel Peace Prize winner and father of the Green Revolution, “To produce it is necessary to leave the office, go to the field, get your hands dirty and sweat. That is the only language that the soil and plants understand.” Nonetheless, it is a tool that field agronomists value as a way to increase their knowledge and as reference to develop business plans, the MCA-H/EDA technological package and market links.

Examples of “Electronic Agronomist” content.



La Lima, Cortes, Honduras C.A.



PLANTINGS

In November 2006, producers began new plantings using technologies promoted by MCA-H/EDA technicians. During the month of August 2010, 200 new hectares were planted. Plantings of producers that leave the Program and that have not been harvested are not counted, which can cause a reduction in the area in comparison to the previous months. To date a total of 19,380 hectares have been planted by the producers currently registered with the Program.

MCA-H/EDA ASSISTANCE ZONES

MCA-H/EDA provides technical assistance in 16 of the 18 departments in Honduras and is working with 7,263 producers (1,585 lead, 5,506 beneficiaries and 172 graduates). The production zones where MCA-H/EDA technicians are assigned are areas where, for the most part, producers were not receiving technical assistance for agricultural activities.

Department	Registered Lead Clients	Registered Beneficiary Clients	Graduates
Atlántida	43	152	3
Choluteca	108	137	11
Colón	20	99	0
Comayagua	219	788	49
Copán	66	244	16
Cortés	33	231	14
El Paraíso	128	509	17
Francisco Morazán	360	1,134	41
Intibucá	150	539	5
La Paz	91	297	3
Lempira	15	139	4
Ocotepeque	83	385	3
Olancho	92	241	0
Santa Bárbara	72	264	2
Valle	22	69	0
Yoro	83	278	4
Total	1,585	5,506	172

FARM LABOR COSTS

Most MCA-H/EDA program producers have small scale operations. 85.4 percent have reported farm labor costs of less than \$1,000 per year and only 1.6 percent have costs that are higher than \$10,000 per year given their production level.

TRAINING

MCA-H/EDA technicians held 328 events during the month of August where they trained 4,104 participants: 3,631 men and 473 women.

Area	# Events	# Participants
GLOBALGAP (Production)	1	41
Business Skills	6	252
Marketing	20	453
Postharvest	18	224
Processing	5	160
Production	271	2,926
Others	7	48
Total	328	4,104

Examples: Implementation of basic and cultural practices; Integrated Pest Management: safe use of pesticides, identification and control of pests, diseases and weeds, use and management of biological control, management of crop residue and use of SAR (Acquired Resistance); programming of farm activities; installation, use and management of drip irrigation systems; exchange of experiences and visits to producers that are managing different crops; classification and packing; construction of greenhouses; management of personalized fertilization programs; soil management and conservation; evaluation of agribusiness markets; irrigation management and nutritional balance in greenhouse crops; postharvest handling; analysis of volumes and prices; transplant and planting; use of plastic on beds; GAPs/food safety; management and production in nurseries; on-farm management of cost and sales logbooks; export logistics and management of plantlets in trays, among others.

Crop	Hectares	
	Area 08/10	Total Area
Chard	-	0.20
Garlic	-	2.54
Sesame	-	1.40
Celery	-	7.88
Rice	-	800.82
Peas	0.20	4.89
Banana	-	1.00
Squash	2.98	170.77
Eggplant	0.97	380.63
Broccoli	1.75	43.10
Coffee	-	119.80
Butternut Squash	-	70.39
Sweet Potato	4.20	207.29
Onion	5.23	774.34
Scallion	-	4.90
Sweet Pepper	17.94	679.46
Habanero Pepper	-	14.65
Jalapeño Pepper	4.40	417.08
Hot Peppers (Others)	-	12.70
Tabasco Pepper	1.95	54.80
Chive	0.35	13.46
Cauliflower	0.58	29.20
Bitter Melon	2.53	294.46
Spinach	-	0.20
Fresh Flowers	-	15.64
Strawberry	1.08	29.16
Bean	-	1,173.98
Fruit Trees - Avocado	-	156.75
Fruit Trees - Coconut	-	66.40
Fruit Trees - Peach	-	0.62
Fruit Trees - Guava	-	94.95
Fruit Trees - Persian Lemon	-	62.83
Fruit Trees - Mandarin	-	7.03
Fruit Trees - Mango	-	313.90
Fruit Trees - Mangostin	-	2.10
Fruit Trees - Nance	-	0.70
Fruit Trees - Rambutan	1.00	425.89
Grass	-	0.70
Green Beans	0.29	100.92
Fresh Herbs	0.15	21.10
Yam Bean	-	0.76
Baby Corn	-	7.52
Lettuce	3.49	137.19
Loroco	-	0.45
Corn	14.00	1,781.73
Corn (Mountain)	-	91.35
Corn - Baby	2.48	286.47
Corn (Seeds)	-	252.32
Sweet Corn	6.00	128.31
Malanga	0.18	13.51
Passion Fruit	0.35	146.13
Melon	-	147.98
Blackberry	-	2.30
Noni	-	0.54
Okra	0.35	247.69
Potato	16.40	994.83
Papaya	3.63	176.18
Poinsettias	-	0.70
Loufah	-	43.95
Chayote	0.08	111.59
Cucumber	1.69	571.88
Pineapple	0.53	38.08
Baby Squash	-	3.93
Plantlets	-	10.60
Plantain	34.98	2,138.17
Radish	-	6.12
Beetroot	0.23	20.35
Cabbage	9.81	407.74
Watermelon	2.45	963.89
Snake Gourd	-	3.13
Sorghum	-	10.90
Tobacco	-	13.30
Tomato	44.81	2,948.07
Husk Tomato	-	1.15
Uchuva	-	1.42
Greenhouse - Various	2.93	40.06
Cassava	5.50	705.99
Carrot	4.26	231.43
Pumpkin	0.26	11.27
Zucchini	-	102.24
Total	200.01	19,379.85

MCA-H/EDA PERFORMANCE MONITORING PLAN

The MCA-H/EDA program uses a Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) to implement activities and follow-up on the development and results of the “low level” goals that are necessary to achieve the program’s “high level” goals. The PMP is a flexible tool that is revised every year and updated monthly as the work plan is developed. As MCA-H/EDA gets closer to the end of its implementation, additional technical emphasis and reports will be developed in these areas. Continued technical assistance visits and on-farm trainings for groups of producers to strengthen the implementation of basic practices and continued discussions with three organizations to provide market price information services. Some of the PMP components with 2010 goals and the status of these activities by August 2010 are outlined below.

MARKETING

Activity	Goal 12/10	Status
# of links between producers and buyers facilitated by MCA-H/EDA	12,000	16,470
# of buyers that are purchasing from MCA-H/EDA producers		
For the local market:		360
For export (fresh and processed):		88
# producers with links with buyers for export	-	1,441
# producers with links with buyers for the local market	-	7,467
# of alliances to provide market information services	4	2

BUSINESS SKILLS

Activity	Goal 12/10	Status
# participants in training and technical assistance	13,250	14,074
# of trainings on the use of logbooks	4,500	4,368
Organization of producers and assistance with input purchases and services	25	26
# of alliances with regional educational institutions to provide training to local producers on business skills	18	21

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Activity	Goal 12/10	Status
# of personnel from associations and other organizations trained in market evaluations	36	36
# of producers trained in market evaluations	-	132
# of SAG/DICTA and NGO field staff trained in Fintrac methodologies and new technology	400	548
# of diagnosis and information centers established with input stores and educational associates	12	46

PRODUCTION

Activity	Goal 12/10	Status
Farm extension program (# visits)	126,500	145,603
# of participants in training events	100,000	105,849
# of participants trained in the safe use of pesticides	6,000	6,965
# of alliances designed and implemented to expand reach, impact and sustainability	80	107

POSTHARVEST/PROCESSING

Activity	Goal 12/10	Status
# of packing plants that are receiving technical assistance	150	182
# of participants trained in postharvest handling	9,500	10,859
# of participants trained in processing	750	745
# of horticultural processors assisted or expansion to create opportunities for 3,000 producers	31	49 processors; 2,286 producers
# of alliances established with processors and others to guarantee extension services to 3,000 producers after the project ends	53	42 alliances; 2,711 producers
# of producers with links to the private sector that provides extension services	-	527
# of producers with links to institutions that provide extension services	-	2,184

ACCESS TO FINANCING

Activity	Goal 12/10	Status
Program producers directly assisted in obtaining loans with financial institutions	500	540
Loan value (L. million)	-	44.06
Producers trained in accessing and using loans	-	756



From left to right: Farmers receive training in plantain production in Guaimaca; an agronomist gives training on trellising; and the Minister of Agriculture presentation in a Program exporters conference.

ACTIVITIES RELATED TO SUSTAINABILITY

Throughout MCA-H/EDA, the main focus has been ensuring that production and the commercial activities of producers are sustainable. During the Program's final phase from April to December 2010, emphasis is being given to those producers that have been receiving technical assistance for a year or less. Limited technical assistance is being provided to producers with two or more years of technical assistance since most of them already have sustainable production practices, diversified plots and market links – guaranteeing sustainable commercial operations. In order to reinforce the implementation of technology, additional emphasis is being placed on providing technical assistance and training to groups of producers specifically on basic production practices, market links, postharvest handling, and use of logbooks.

In addition to the sustainability of commercial production operations, the MCA-H/EDA Program is working to attain the continuity of selected technical services after the program ends. MCA-H/EDA has established formal development alliances with the private and public sectors with the purpose of increasing the availability of joint extension services within the private sector and other agricultural businesses. Providers of farm equipment, irrigation systems, seeds, and plantlets have greatly benefitted during the Program's implementation. Their products and services have been actively promoted during field activities since their use is important to the Program and the producers' success. Expanding the quantity and quality of private extension services (fees included in the sale price of products) is beneficial to the providers by guaranteeing sustainable growth in sales. During the final phase of MCA-H/EDA's implementation, activities are taking place with these companies and are being expanded to incorporate new companies into the Program.

In addition to these two main areas, other activities related to sustainability include training of NGO, university, agricultural school, and public sector technicians, development of technical reference and training materials, equipment donations, mechanisms for alliances, and sharing program methodology, results and successes.

In April 2010 a document prepared by the Program on sustainability activities provides details on specific areas, which will be included or expanded during the final phase of implementation. Selected areas are included in the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan. Additional activities that took place during this period include:

- Continued grouping of producers to provide technical assistance to ensure the implementation of the technology. The informal grouping of 2 to 15 producers has facilitated the production programs, contracts, volumes and price negotiation, and logistics coordination. In many cases producers assist each other to resolve technical difficulties, install equipment such as drip irrigation and identify pests and diseases. These activities also help to sustain new technology incorporated into Program technical assistance and training.
- One letter of understanding was signed with an NGO in Valle to continue providing technical assistance to MCA-H/EDA producers through a junior technician. The program currently has 37 alliances with NGOs, exporters, municipalities and producer organizations for this purpose. These technicians will remain in the production zones after the Program ends.
- Signed letters of understanding with CURLA and SAG/DICTA/EDA and began activities related to sustainability, by providing technical publications of MCA-H/EDA's "electronic agronomist." The Program is working with 15 institutions through letters of understanding to disseminate technical information and train producers and technicians.
- Installed the "electronic agronomist" on 44 computers at 4 organizations (Curla, Asociación Bayan, Cadelga and APROCOY). To date the files have been installed at 6 organizations on 46 computers.
- Signed a letter of understanding with the Agriculture Growers Fair in Tegucigalpa to provide price information to producers as part of an effort to develop and implement alliances with local partners. To date this service has begun with two organizations.
- Began formal activities with new exporter groups to share information on markets, costs, and material and service providers. The group includes 23 companies. Other organizations were included such as SAG Agribusiness, SAG SENASA, FIDE, IICA and shipping providers.



Input providers participate at Program training events in Intibucá.



A group of farmers receive training on paraffin-coated cassava in Valencia, Atlántida.



Farmers attend group training on identifying diseases on pepper stems in Choluteca.



An MCA-H/EDA agronomist in Intibucá shows a group of farmers how to identify tomato pests.