



Entrenamiento y Desarrollo de Agricultores

EDA EMPOWERS WOMEN IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Since the EDA program started field operations in October 2006, it has encouraged women's participation in agricultural activities with customized technical assistance and training for improving yields, incomes and market access. EDA targets assistance for women in the agriculture sector because they are traditionally underrepresented and under trained. Furthermore, empowering women in agriculture improves economic opportunities for a greater number of families and individuals.

EDA comprises a qualified technical team of field agronomists and specialists in marketing and logistics, postharvest handling, farm certification, business skills, finance and business development services who support growers throughout Honduras. While women clients and beneficiaries are trained in all of these areas, EDA emphasizes training in postharvest handling and business skills, which women identify as areas they are most interested and the least trained.

Project Beneficiaries

EDA provides direct technical assistance and training to 128 program farmers and make up 4.9% of the total program farmer base (32 women are lead clients and 96 are direct beneficiary clients). Their farms, located in 14 departments in Honduras, are concentrated in Francisco Morazán, Cortes, Choluteca, La Paz, El Paraíso and Colón.

Production and Marketing

Taking advantage of program assistance, EDA's women clients are diversifying their farms to include crops traditionally grown by men, including tomatoes, peppers, onions, garlic, oriental vegetables, sweet potatoes, passion fruit, watermelon, yuca, plantains, corn and vegetable plantlet production. They are also producing specialty crops such as tropical flowers and aromatic herbs. Uptake of the technical assistance recommendations has yielded positive results, which are expected to continue to expand.

Women farmers of the EDA program have planted 152 hectares and have generated local and export sales of more than \$206,700. Product marketing is a new activity for most women, but with EDA assistance they are now incorporated into market-led production programs developing the capacity to negotiate contracts and fair prices. This includes commercial linkages with supermarket chains, processors, packhouses, exporters, intermediaries and direct sales at agricultural fairs and other national markets.

Postharvest Handling

EDA trains women farmers and their employees in postharvest handling of fruits, vegetables, flowers and fresh herbs to maintain quality and reduce postharvest losses, improve visual appeal and increase shelf-life. Techniques such as proper product selection, classification, packaging and transport help clients reduce losses, thus increasing incomes.

Farm Management and Business Skills Training

EDA technicians provide ongoing training to all program growers in farm recordkeeping, cost of production and marketing opportunities. Emphasis is placed on



Small-scale, high-value, herb production is a crop targeted by EDA for women growers.



Women tend to roses in a greenhouse.



Women learn how to prepare tropical flower bouquets.

encouraging spouses to participate in farm management systems, particularly recordkeeping and financial controls.

Training and Investment/Donations

Since the beginning of EDA, 3,580 women participants have received formal training in subjects including horticulture production, business skills, postharvest handling, market information, record keeping, cost analysis and GLOBALGAP regulations. This includes lead clients and the women employees of all EDA program farmers.

As of June 2008, MCA-Honduras' small grant equipment program through EDA, has installed drip irrigation systems and other farm accessories for women clients worth nearly \$45,000. In the interest of improving their farms, these women have invested nearly \$60,000 in expanding drip irrigation systems and agricultural machinery, land and vehicles, thus strengthening the infrastructure of their farms.

Access to Credit/Discounts

EDA has negotiated with banks, private financial development organizations (OPDFs), cooperatives and agricultural input suppliers to make financing more accessible to program clients. Women farmers have obtained loans totaling \$29,700 from formal institutions. EDA has also negotiated discounts with input suppliers ranging from 6 percent to 35 percent of the normal retail price, therefore reducing production costs.

Agribusiness and Employment Generation

Women clients of EDA are playing an important role in rural economic development by creating their own agribusinesses and making sound economic decisions. Furthermore, EDA clients have generated 132 full-time equivalent positions for women jobs in their communities. Since the onset of the EDA program, these jobs have created income estimated at \$100,000.

From EDA farmers:

- **Iris Sagrario Acosta — plantain grower, Colón**

Acosta's husband went to the United States and left her in charge of their farm. Despite no experience in agriculture, EDA's technical assistance in basic production practices helped her turn her farm into a profitable business. Because of quick success, she increased her planting area from 3.5 hectares of plantains in 2006 to 8.9 hectares in 2007. Her net sales increased in that period from \$7,300 to \$12,100.

"This has been a great experience, and I enjoy farm activities. I have learned how to select plants, clean filters and manage a drip irrigation system. I envision a good future, when [EDA] is no longer here. I know that it will go well now that I have the skills to carry on."

- **Norma Dalila Castillo — flower grower, Santa Cruz de Yojoa, Cortes**

Castillo started with EDA in September 2007. She has one hectare of tropical flowers where she implemented the program's recommended production practices. Her net income earned as of March 2008 amounted to \$2,760.

"Thanks to EDA, we have implemented new production practices and the results are great. We have improved yields, quality and shelf-life of our flowers, which we are currently selling in Tegucigalpa and looking into export markets."

- **Gina Bonilla Robles — farmer Choluteca**

Traditionally a watermelon and corn grower, Bonilla incorporated plantain and sweet potatoes to diversify her crop base. Since becoming an EDA client in October 2006, she has planted 61 hectares of watermelons, sweet potatoes, plantains, yuca, and corn as a rotational crop. Her net income in 2007 was \$30,200 and as of February 2008 she earned more than \$28,000.

"I am thankful for the technical assistance provided by the EDA program. It has been a great help, and the results prove it."



Postharvest Handling: Gina Bonilla, with EDA specialists, samples her sweet potato.



Production: sweet potato planting material selection.



Technified field production also generates employment for women in packhouses.



Training in field recordkeeping and logbooks.