



Entrenamiento y Desarrollo de Agricultores

IMPACT & RESULTS

Plantain offers alternative for low-altitude coffee growers

Farmers in La Fé, a community in Santa Cruz de Yojoa, Cortés, have traditionally grown coffee for which they earn low prices due to the region's low altitude.

Ángel Rafael Trejo Sosa, a farmer with 6 hectares of coffee trees, jumped at the opportunity to diversify production into higher income crops that was offered by an MCA-H/EDA field agronomist serving his region. Under program supervision he planted plantains on 0.64 hectares in July 2008. With early signs of success, he planted an additional hectare in January 2009. He planted the plantains on a hillside and the program taught him high density planting and how to build raised and contoured beds to prevent soil erosion.

Trejo harvested the first planting in July 2009 and the second crop will be ready to harvest in early 2010. The first harvest generated net income of \$3,979 from 48,600 pounds of fruit, providing Trejo with some much needed breathing room in between coffee harvests.

MCA-H/EDA also located a market for Trejo's plantains and he sold his first crop to a local processor and various intermediaries. He is currently negotiating sales to a local supermarket. "I now have the contacts to make my sales," Trejo said.

Trejo says he has found the program's technical assistance to be rewarding and he has gained valuable experience in crop management that can be applied to his coffee crop as well.

Trejo is serving as a positive example to neighboring growers, some of whom have also taken up plantain production. Trejo has sold 8,000 plantain plantlets to neighbors and is preparing 4,000 more. There are now 12 additional growers in the zone cultivating 6 hectares of plantains.

"What I made with 0.6 hectares of plantain is the same as what I make from 6 hectares of coffee," Trejo said. Given the higher value of plantains, he is planning to increase plantain production to 2.8 hectares by June 2010.

To further help coffee farmers diversify, MCA-H/EDA and the Instituto Hondureño del Café (IHCAFE) signed an inter-institutional agreement to help coffee growers diversify into higher value crops. As part of the agreement, in 2007 MCA-H donated 28,000 grafted Hass avocado trees. Under this MCA-H/EDA activity, and with technical support from the Fundación Hondureña de Investigación Agrícola, 136 coffee growers have planted 140 hectares of avocado trees, mainly in La Paz, Santa Bárbara, El Paraíso and Francisco Morazán. The first harvests are expected in late 2010.



Fotos por Fintrac Inc.

Ángel Rafael Trejo Sosa readies a plantain plantlet for transplant.



For plantain production, Trejo built raised, contoured beds into a hillside on his farm in La Fé, Cortes.