



## Entrenamiento y Desarrollo de Agricultores

### Sales double as producer group integrates into value chain

A dedicated group of 13 farmers in Ocotal, Francisco Morazán adopted MCA-H/EDA production technologies and became major suppliers of cucumbers and green beans to two supermarket chains and have doubled sales since 2006.

Before joining MCA-H/EDA's technical assistance program, these growers depended on wages from working on other producers' farms and from vegetable production with traditional systems, which generally produced poor quality and low yields. They also produced basic grain crops for family consumption.

When the growers joined MCA-H/EDA and started implementing the program's recommendations including calendarized plantings, integrated pest management (IPM), drip irrigation, and crop-specific fertilization programs they quickly noticed the impact on yields and sales.

Cucumber yields jumped from 52,174 kilograms per hectare before the program to 70,343 kilograms per hectare by 2008 and net incomes increased from \$2,844 per hectare to \$7,762 per hectare. The group is also growing green beans and green onions under calendarized programs and over the same period saw green bean yields increase from 14,519 kilograms per hectare to 26,060 kilograms per hectare. Green onion yields, meanwhile, increased from 26,138 kilograms per hectare to 104,346 kilograms per hectare, generating a spike in net incomes from \$4,798 per hectare to \$28,246 per hectare.

These growers have more than doubled sales from \$34,701 in 2006 to \$76,466 in 2008 and have seen net income triple from \$13,178 in 2006 to \$41,427 in 2008. Increased productivity and reduced unit production costs have also increased profit margins. Their cucumber and green bean production and sales were seasonal and erratic but they now plant continuously and sell weekly throughout the year to supermarket chains. They currently sell 27,000 to 32,000 pounds of cucumbers each week.

The MCA-H/EDA program provides integrated technical assistance services to ensure sustainability and have also taught them business skills such as marketing, recordkeeping, cash flow projections, and financing as well as postharvest skills such as grading, packing, and handling.

The Ocotal growers have also learned to meet market requirements by implementing good agricultural practices (GAPs) that protect the environment and hygiene and pesticide controls that protect employees and consumers.

The Ocotal growers are a concrete example of how MCA-H/EDA's integrated technical assistance translates into efficient production, handling and marketing systems. The growers' operations are profitable and sustainable and they consistently supply high quality products year round and can adapt to changing market requirements and opportunities.



*Photos by Fintrac Inc.*

MCA-H/EDA grower Juan Carlos Urquía shows off his cucumbers in Ocotal.



Ocotal growers' green onions are prepared for delivery.

**"All the experience that we have right now in vegetable production, we owe to MCA-H/EDA."**

– Edwin Joel Raudales Urquía,  
Farmer in Ocotal, Francisco Morazán