



Entrenamiento y Desarrollo de Agricultores

Hunger for jalapeños nets higher incomes for Hondurans

MCA-H/EDA has teamed its farmers with Honduran processors to satisfy a healthy jalapeño export market. The program is teaching growers high-yielding production systems that meet market specifications and local processors are contracting growers to produce.

The effort is paying dividends for MCA-H/EDA jalapeño growers. Annual gross sales of MCA-H/EDA growers have increased from \$275,500 in 2007 to \$1.06 million in 2008, and totaled \$573,000 from January to July 2009. Net sales income has also increased, totaling \$75,165, \$274,474, and \$156,340 for the same periods. Jalapeño harvest averages per hectare for 2009 show gross sales of \$14,285, production costs of \$10,385 (including employment costs of \$2,686), and net income of \$3,900. Jalapeño production is also generating employment in rural communities; growers paid more than \$107,000 in salaries between January and July 2009.

Production is highly coordinated with MCA-H/EDA, the growers and the market. Since January 2007, under the technical assistance of MCA-H/EDA, producers planted 288 hectares, of which 112 have been harvested and another 52 hectares will be harvested by the end of 2009. The monthly transplanting area for year 2010 is programmed at an average of 30 hectares per month and growers are already identified.

In April 2009, MCA-H/EDA and Honduran processor Mount Dora Farms gave awards to producers that achieved the highest yields in 2008. Héctor Darío Cabrera won for the most exportable volume per hectare with 248,255 pounds. The competition is heating up in 2009. MCA-H/EDA grower Reynan Hernández, of Comayagua, has harvested 357,881 pounds of jalapeños per hectare – 44 percent higher than Cabrera in 2008.

As a result of the implementation of the technologies and production practices recommended by MCA-H/EDA, average yields per hectare have increased from 90,000 pounds in 2007 to more than 150,000 pounds in 2009. The number of MCA-H/EDA growers in jalapeño production increased from 11 in 2007 to 83 as of August 2009. As of August 2009, MCA-H/EDA growers delivered 10.5 million pounds of jalapeños harvested from 11 departments, the most from Comayagua, El Paraíso, Olancho and Yoro.

Financial institutions are taking notice of the jalapeño program. In 2009, Lafise Bank started a \$421,200 finance program designed exclusively for jalapeño growers. This forms part of MCA-H's "access to finance" effort with support provided by MCA-H/EDA, MCA-H/ACA and Mount Dora Farms. As of August, Bank Lafise provided loans totaling \$242,205 to 16 producers.



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

An MCA-H/EDA agronomist checks soil humidity in a jalapeño field in Comayagua.



Women harvest jalapeños on an MCA-H/EDA program farmer in Cortes.



Workers grade jalapeños before delivery to a processing company.

“We did not reach the exporting volume goal during the last two years, but this year, 2009, the goal will be surpassed.”

– Chris Corette, Mount Dora Farms.