



# Entrenamiento y Desarrollo de Agricultores

## RESULTS AND IMPACT

### Hillside farmer increases production and protects environment

Because much of Honduras is mountainous, many small farmers struggle to harvest enough to cover the extra effort and costs of hillside farming and often use practices that harm the environment. MCA-H/EDA provides hillside farmers with hands-on training in all aspects of high-value crop production and makes environmental protection a focal point of the strategy.

Oscar René Lazo Lemus is one of thousands of farmers receiving assistance through the program and in a little more than a year he increased his tomato production by 80 percent and lowered production costs by following the program's environmental guidelines and production system.

"Before the program I never had good yields and most of the time my production was low quality," Lazo said. "I made very little and sometimes I could not even cover the costs."

MCA-H/EDA's Environmental Plan focuses on conserving soil and water resources and avoiding misuse of agrochemicals, which can harm the environment and farm workers. The program also teaches farmers how to increase productivity for existing areas rather than open up new production areas through deforestation.

Lazo started with MCA-H/EDA in February 2007 and immediately incorporated improved production techniques on his 1.4-hectare plot in Las Neblinas, Cortés. The hilly farm is 1,189 meters above sea level and before program training he was using practices that were bad for the soil, caused runoff, soil erosion and overused water.

"I planted tomatoes and peppers directly and lost many crops," Lazo said.

After program training, Lazo started using a seedling nursery where he could more closely monitor water use and start plants in a protected environment. This leads to stronger, healthier plants, increased yield and profits and reduces the need for pesticides use. He also started using raised beds to protect his crop from severe weather and reduce runoff, drip irrigation to manage his water and apply exact amounts of fertilizer, and biological controls such as Trichoderma to reduce disease pressure and minimize chemical use.

In the year before assistance, he harvested 25,000 pounds of tomatoes from 0.175 hectares. In the year after, he harvested 45,000 pounds. "I have changed the way I work, I used to plant and then not pay attention to the plot for a month, I didn't irrigate the crop and I applied whatever chemical the sales representative suggested," said Lazo.

MCA-H/EDA focuses on systems – not on specific products. Crops are recommended based on market demand and local conditions. MCA-H/EDA also helps farmers reduce risk with calendarized plantings so farmers are not reliant on one harvest. Farmers are also taught to rotate crops to support natural populations of beneficial organisms, reduce pest and disease pressure and help replenish soil to avoid decreasing yields associated with monocrop systems.



Photos by Fintrac Inc.  
Hillside production with basic production practices including contoured and raised beds.



Plantlet production in seedling trays



Oscar revising the drip irrigation system with the MCA-H/EDA field agronomist.