



SUCCESS STORY

HIGH VALUE CROPS: INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY IN TOMATOES



Pest and Disease Monitoring

"Last season's tomato production was excellent, we harvested 4,000 boxes (200,000 pounds). Neighbors said it was due to our land type, but we are telling them it is because of all the care and maintenance we give to the plant, we are demonstrating to them that implementing GAPs pays back with good yields and fruit quality."

*Mario Tercero, Grower
San Marcos de Colon, Choluteca*



Row Covers to Reduce Pest Pressures

Tomato production in Honduras has traditionally been carried out using basic technology, including gravity fed irrigation systems, general or limited fertilization programs, and inadequate pest and disease control programs. The USAID-RED project has introduced updated technologies to the tomato production systems which have resulted in increase yields, extended harvest periods and the production of consistently high-quality fruit.

The growers receiving USAID-RED's technical assistance are implementing an integrated production program based on Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) including: land preparation, raised beds, seedling preparation, transplant systems, weed control, drip irrigation, fertilization, insect traps, live insect barriers, integrated pest and disease management, row covers to reduce pest pressure, and post-harvest management including packing and transportation.

Different types of tomatoes are grown for different markets including the pear shaped varieties for the El Salvador markets, and the pear and round shaped tomatoes for the Honduran markets. In both of these principal markets, the prices of tomatoes fluctuate widely, but with high crop yields and minimized unit production costs, Honduran growers are able generate profits even when market prices are low.

Tomato growers assisted by USAID-RED are located in Francisco Morazán, El Paraíso, Choluteca, Olancho, Comayagua, Copan, Yoro, Ocotepeque, Atlántida and Santa Barbara. During 2005, over 200 hectares of tomatoes were planted by USAID-RED assisted growers which generated more than \$2.8 million in sales. In 2006 to date, 272 hectares of tomatoes have been planted which is projected to produce more than 37 million pounds of tomatoes and generate more than \$4.2 million dollars in sales. The increased tomato production has provided 245 permanent jobs of which 28% are position filled by women.

As a result of improved production techniques, tomato harvesting starts 75 days after transplanting and lasts for an average of two and a half months. Average yields per hectare have increased by 100% from 1,500 to 3,000 boxes per hectare. The cost of production for one hectare of tomato averages \$7,023 with a yield of 3,114 boxes. At an average price of \$4.75 per box, gross sales are \$14,787 with net profits of \$7,764 per hectare (111 per cent return on investment).

USAID-RED growers have experienced excellent profits on their farms thus stimulating neighboring producers to implement modern production systems on their farms. This has helped make Honduran tomato sector more competitive both locally and internationally.



Tomatoes Packed in Wooden Crates for the El Salvador Market