



SUCCESS STORY

Honduran returns from Canada and cashes in on cassava

Rubén Torres, a 28-year-old producer from Choloma, Cortés, moved to Canada with his family in 2001 and returned to Honduras with business experience he learned abroad. He wanted to find a way to earn a living independently but was worried about the lack of opportunities in his home country. In August 2006, he heard about USAID's Rural Economic Diversification (RED) program from his sister-in-law, Clementina Fernández, who is a USAID-RED client. He immediately contacted the USAID-RED zone technician and together they planned 1.10 hectares of white Valencia cassava.

Torres did not have any experience growing cassava, but because of his dedication from the beginning he had excellent yields. His success came from following all the recommendations of the USAID-RED technician including weed control, proper application of insecticides, daily fertilization, irrigation system maintenance and good harvest and postharvest practices. Torres is also quick to credit the project.

"The project also helped me establish market contacts. The key to my success was the weekly visits from the technician during which the crop's progress was assessed," Torres said.

Torres produced and sold 72,950 pounds of cassava for 1.30 lempiras per pound generating 94,835 lempiras (\$4,990). His investment was \$2,895, a 72 percent return on investment. This activity also generated 1,000 day jobs in the community. Torres is now producing cassava in another lot, tended to by his father. Torres' recommendation for other producers is to focus on agriculture; he initially had his doubts and even financial difficulties, but with perseverance and a desire to succeed he obtained excellent yields. For this reason, he is one of the 50 producers from Cortés that the project assists and in 2007 these producers increased their 2006 sales by more than \$300,000.

USAID-RED, financed by USAID, is an initiative by the American people to increase incomes and generate employment in the rural zones of Honduras. By July 2008, the program expects that lead clients alone will generate \$30 million in new sales.



Rubén Torres transports cassava to the market. Even though he did not have experience growing cassava, he followed USAID-RED's program and had strong yields and profits.

Photos by Fintrac Inc.