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BASIC CHANGES – RAPID RESULTS

Samuel Herrera increases yields and income by applying improved practices and modern technology

Samuel Herrera of San Marcos de Colon, Choluteca, has planted and harvested tomatoes for over 10 years with several partners, using traditional production practices. In using these traditional production practices, which were limited by excessive rains, droughts, pests and diseases, Herrera would not only obtain low yields, but found himself at times, losing entire crops.

Prior to receiving assistance from the USAID-RED project, Herrera harvested 2.1 hectares of tomato and would obtain a yield of 43,190 Kg/Ha, or a total yield of 90,700 Kg. During the second part of 2007, when Herrera began receiving the support of the USAID-RED technician, the planting area was enlarged to 2.4 hectares. This was done by simply using area of planting ground that was going unused. Herrera planted his tomato crops using new practices that included better soil preparation and drainage; efficient water source capacity; use of agribon on beds; the installation of a drip irrigation system; and the use of diluted fertilization through the irrigation system. He also incorporated improved nutritional sources by using an appropriate program specific to the tomato crop. These included the use of starter solutions, an increase in the population density, preventive control of pests and diseases through live barriers, control of weeds in and around the crops and the use of pH water regulators, vitamins and antibiotics.

Photos by Fintrac, Inc.

Raised beds with plastic and live barriers around the tomato crop are both good examples of the use of Good Agricultural Practices around the tomato crop

“Crop management has improved with assistance from the USAID-RED technician. I reduced my pesticide application costs from Lps 6,000 to Lps 4,000 by using preventive control and managing the products better.”

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February 2008. USAID-RED. Oficinas FHIA, La Lima, Cortes.
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In light of the new production technologies recommended to him by the USAID-RED technician, Herrera improved both the quality of the harvest and the quantity of tomatoes. The yields per hectare increased 163% from one cycle to the next, with total yields of 272,110 Kg. (113,379 Kg./Ha) on 2.4 hectares. Total sales increased to $120,000 with production costs of $23,684, leading to a net profit of $96,316 – a 330% increase over his 2006 profit margin, which totaled $28,947.

Herrera attributes his success to the use of Integrated Crop Management and a reduction of losses during transplant. The development, health and vigor of the plants are due to a personalized fertilization program and a preventive control of pests.

With the increased profit margin, Herrera was able to pay off his debts to an input store and with financial institutions, a debt that totaled more than Lps 300,000. Not only, but Herrera bought himself a pick-up truck to use on the farm; remodeled his house; and bought additional land to expand his production area. At present, he has two new tomato plantings that are already under production.

The Rural Economic Diversification (RED) program, financed by USAID, is an initiative by the American people to increase incomes and generate employment in the rural zones of Honduras.

Herrera listens closely to the recommendations made by the USAID-RED technician

Herrera fertigating and tutoring his crop