



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

HONDURAS

SUCCESS STORY

Lencas gain access to the market with USAID assistance

The Lencas are indigenous people who mostly live in the mountains at elevations of about 1,600 meters. There are 100 communities of Lencas with approximately 100,000 people. They are an impoverished group in Honduras and their communities are characterized by fragile environments, low productivity, and limited opportunities for business and development, which result in a mostly agricultural, subsistence economy and limited interaction with markets.

USAID-RED is providing agricultural assistance to the Lencas that is complemented by agroforestry assistance from FHIA. The efforts made by these two programs in the last few years have changed the lives of the Lencas.

The Lencas are learning to manage celery, broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, strawberries, radishes, cabbage, onions and carrots. They have also established fruit tree lots to provide additional income.

With the project's help, producers are shifting to production practices that generate higher yields and better quality.

"I produced potato, but was only able to cover costs since I was only harvesting 13,515 kilos per hectare. Since I began receiving technical assistance from USAID-RED my yields increased to 30,385 per hectare," said Gilberto Lorenzo a Lenca from the community of Pahislal.

Lorenzo's higher yields increased his income from \$9,158 in 2006 to \$14,210 in 2007.

"And I think my yields can improve even more," Lorenzo said.

USAID-RED technicians have become agents of change for the Lencas, helping them turn subsistence farming into profitable agricultural businesses.



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

Holes are cut into plastic row covers for proper planting density on Gilberto Lorenzo's farm in Intibucá.

"Thanks to the recommendations made by the USAID-RED technicians I am harvesting 172 Kg. of top quality strawberry a week; I have an established market and I'm earning \$1.93 per kilogram instead of the \$1.39 I used to make."

— Juan Egberto González



Chayote are harvested at Fernando Giron's farm in Yamaranguila, Intibucá.

Agricultural practices such as drip irrigation, improved seeds, seedling trays, weeding, and pest and disease control measures are some of the improved agricultural practices adopted by the program's Lenca clients.

The program has established calendarized planting programs that enable production throughout the year. It has also helped establish market links with organizations such as APROFHI and HORTIFRUTI, which offer prices up to 60 percent higher than traditional merchants.

The assistance has produced many positive results, including higher incomes and improved living conditions in Lenca communities. The agroforestry system established by FHIA provides additional mid- and long-term income to further help families be sustainable and improve their quality of life.

Since USAID-RED started in 2005, it has assisted regions inhabited by Lencas. In 2006, sales in these regions increased by more than \$250,000, a 60 percent increase from 2005.

In 2007, the producers from Intibucá increased their sales from \$850,068 to \$1,266,537, an increase of 49 percent. From 2005 to 2007, 267 new permanent jobs were created because of expanded production on USAID-RED's Intibucá client farms.

USAID-RED started a "Train the trainers" program with three NGOs in the region to transfer knowledge and experiences to the institutions that are providing assistance to this sector in Honduras.

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



Chayotes are sorted at APROFHI, Intibucá.

“Due to the market link USAID-RED helped me establish with APROFHI, I get better prices and can dedicate more time to production.”

— Fernando Girón