



## SUCCESS STORY

# Program alliance expands outreach of agricultural training

Santos René Rodríguez, a farmer in Linaca, Francisco Morazán, has been farming with traditional methods for 25 years. At 50 years old, Rodríguez decided he was open to change his ways and started working with a USAID-RED-trained technician. Seven months later, Rodríguez has completely turned his farm around and made it a profitable business.

Rodríguez is receiving agricultural training from the Foundation for Rural Business Development (FUNDER). USAID-RED helps FUNDER by training the trainers to improve outreach and the foundation's sustainability. For Rodríguez, the assistance has helped significantly.

Rodríguez followed the technicians' recommendations closely. He planted lettuce on 437 square meters and used raised beds for the first time. The plot yielded 2,800 pounds, 1,820 more than the regional average for the same area. His harvest generated sales of \$700.

"I no longer sell products to an intermediary," Rodríguez said. "They took advantage of us, now with FUNDER's help we are able to sell our products under better terms to a supermarket."

The positive results encouraged him to re-invest. Rodríguez was limited by water access, so he installed a drip irrigation system that could provide water more efficiently to his crops.

"I started trusting the technician and getting interested in new things," Rodríguez said. "I thought I could make more, and knowing this I wanted to 'hacer pisto' [make money]."

From 2008 to 2009, Rodríguez tripled his income from \$2,600 to \$8,052, improved his quality of life and created two jobs.

"Now I feel more at peace and I am financially secure," Rodríguez said.

Rodríguez is also sharing a useful farm tool that he invented to weed around his plants. Similar to a hoe, Rodríguez calls his tool a "belt." It is a thin metal sheet doubled over to form a "U" that attaches to a wooden handle. The "belt" can be made cheaply and quickly.

The Rural Economic Diversification Program (USAID-RED) is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and made possible by the generous support of the American people. Its main objective is to increase incomes and employment opportunities in the rural communities of Honduras.



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

Santos René Rodríguez covers his lettuce beds.



A worker weeds around the lettuce using Rodríguez's "belt" tool. Horticulture production is an important source of jobs in rural Honduras.