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DEL PUEBLO DE LOS ESTADOS
UNIDOS DE AMÉRICA

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An agroforestry system of plantains, rambutan and mahogany was successfully implemented on Isabel Guardado's farm.

SUCCESS STORY: BASIC CHANGES, QUICK RESULTS

Agroforestry assistance improves rural incomes

USAID's Rural Economic Diversification (USAID-RED) program, through an agreement with the Honduran Foundation for Agricultural Research (FHIA), is working with small producers in the hills of Honduras' northeastern region to identify and promote agroforestry activities that offer greater yields and incomes. After the first year, USAID-RED's agroforestry activities covered 68 clients who increased sales from \$24,803 in 2005 to \$58,520 in 2006, a 136 percent increase. One of the farmers benefiting is Isabel Guardado, who established an agroforestry lot in the village of San Marcos, 7.5 miles from La Masica. Before USAID-RED assistance, Guardado's main activity was the production of corn, beans and cattle.

In 2006, Guardado decided to establish one hectare of agroforestry with rambutan, plantain and mahogany, and with support of USAID-RED technician planted 2,000 plantain trees, 156 rambutan trees and 300 mahogany trees. At the end of the same year, in the first cycle of plantain production, he harvested 39,477 pounds of plantains which sold at an average price of 11 cents per pound, earning a gross income of \$4,343. Guardado also became a supplier of plantain seeds and sold 6,000 plants to neighboring farmers, which generated additional sales of \$947. With the cost of production of \$1,421, Guardado earned a net income of \$3,869.

Guardado's success was due to the good agricultural practices (GAPs) promoted by USAID-RED and FHIA, including:

- soil testing
- plantation design
- ground preparation
- appropriate varieties and quality seeds
- preparation and treatment of seeds
- weed and population controls
- fertilization programs
- integrated pest management
- harvest controls
- postharvest handling



Photos by Fintrac Inc.
Isabel Guardado on his plantain farm.



Proper de-handling is demonstrated.



Plantain bunches are bagged to protect from insect damage.



USAID-RED clients wash and pack plantains.



USAID-RED clients use proper postharvest handling techniques for plantains.

After his initial success, Guardado has increased his plantation by two hectares and has applied the same formula for the same system of plantain, rambutan and mahogany.

Projections for rambutan and mahogany are very encouraging. The first rambutan harvest, which will come in three years, is expected to generate a gross income of \$8,211. The mahogany harvest, in 2015, is expected to generate a gross income of more than \$100,000.

Because of Guardado's strong results, other producers in the zone have become interested in joining the USAID-RED program. More than 16 new producers have decided to establish their lots with the same agroforestry system. There are 84 lead clients in the northeastern region establishing farms with plantain and incorporating other crops such as lemon, avocado, and coconut.

Guardado's sales have grown from nothing in 2005, to \$651 in 2006 and \$5,248 in the first quarter of 2007. He had no employees in 2005, but had three in 2006 and four in the first quarter of 2007.

USAID-RED, which started in August 2005, is a three-year initiative funded by USAID. Its main objective is to increase incomes and employment opportunities in Honduras' rural communities.

"I can pay for my annual family needs of corn by harvesting only 200 bunches of plantain. Previously I had to plant 2 hectares of corn."

— Isabel Guardado
Producer