



SUCCESS STORY

USAID-RED interns increase agricultural productivity

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

USAID-RED established alliances with agricultural schools to train graduates through on-the-ground experience and hands-on training from project technicians. Since 2006, 20 interns have been trained in market-led and modern agricultural production practices.

In 2007, the interns started providing direct technical assistance to their own clients through the project's technical assistance program. Interns' clients have generated \$243,781 in sales. Interns have assisted 83 clients, of which, 66 increased sales 40 percent from the year before. The interns have overseen cultivation of 132.4 hectares under good agricultural practices and drip irrigation installed on 29 hectares.

During the month-long internship, the interns visited farms assisted by USAID-RED technicians, providing valuable on-farm experience. The interns participated in crop management operations and are shown how to implement good agricultural practices (GAPs). They also participated in field days organized throughout the region where they learn about different practices fundamental to USAID-RED technical assistance.

Small changes generate big results

After the interns complete the month-long farm visits, they are sent to the field to find their own clients. The producers must be using basic practices, have a desire to learn and the ability to implement small changes to obtain big results.

In a short period of time the interns gain the trust of their clients and start helping them change to more advanced farming techniques.

The model farms, installed at the schools receiving USAID-RED assistance and private businesses, are visited by the interns' clients and help facilitate technology and knowledge transfer. During these visits, producers typically are surprised to see that the production areas are relatively small but that the yields are high. They also see that the changes they have to make are simple and within their budgets.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Fátima Villatoro, an intern from Instituto María del Carmen, proudly accepts her internship diploma from José María Miselem, USAID-RED's Deputy Director.

“When I graduated I felt insecure as a technician, now thanks to the project, I can motivate the producers and help them obtain good harvests.”

— Fátima Villatoro, USAID-RED intern



A density marker for onion planting.

Keys to success

The results are obtained by making small changes that the interns are introducing to their clients such as:

- Improving planting density
- Use of starter solution during transplant.
- Regulating the pH of water used for fumigation
- Use of adjuvant stickers to mix agrochemicals
- Use of specific diluted fertilization programs (when drip irrigation is not available, applications can be made using a manual pump).
- Pest and disease identification in order to use agrochemicals appropriately.
- Fertilizer application using the drip irrigation system
- Calendarized planting in accordance with market demands

“I was able to convince my clients to plant in less area, but more efficiently and they obtained higher yields than they used to with a larger surface.”

— Vicente Solórzano



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Vicente Solórzano, a graduate of the Luis Landa School of Agriculture, shows a producer how to use the drip irrigation system to apply fertilizers.