

Fintrac Inc. - Centro de Desarrollo de Agronegocios ²



Summary of Activities

03 – March 2002

Fintrac - Centro de Desarrollo de Agronegocios (CDA) is a USAID project that works to assist producers, processors and exporters non-traditional agricultural products. The main goal of the project is to expand production and sales of fruits and vegetables in order to increase incomes in this field. During March, 29 new partners were added for a total of 175 lead partners (3,236 producers/microprocessors) for this CDA phase. The partners are companies, producers y groups of producers, processing and export of non-traditional products. Work was continued, focusing on improving the incomes of the partners, including better production systems, yield increases, cost cutting in production and operation, opening of new market channels and buyers and others.

Marketing

- March crops of jalapeño have contributed to a total sales of \$230,000 to Chestnut Hill Farms in 2002. More than 1.36 million lbs of jalapeño have been sold. The planted area now spans to 82 hectares. There are 32 in the harvesting process and it has been completed for 6.5 hectares already. The reused average during March was 6.15% and the accumulated reused average is 7.2%.
- A total of 24 hectares of yucca valencia have been planted, with an estimated 900,000 lbs at average prices of Lps 85/qq (\$48,000).
- A processing company has reported the purchase of planting seeds for 236 hectares of yucca valencia and the producers have been paid a total of \$32,000.

Market Information

- The jalapeño production manual was completed.



Harvested Jalapeño ready for delivery to the processing plant

- A group of students from a private university were given information on wine and clear marañon production techniques.
- A company was given information on how to update stats on the juice market websites (Foodnews).
- A plantain processor was given information on the oil qualities, frying conditions, oil analysis and a SOPs manual produced by FSIS.
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- Weekly market bulletins for yucca, papaya, honeydew, cantaloupe, mango, cucumber and watermelon were made.
- A market study for processed chili products was started in San Pedro Sula.

Production

- In March, 16.3 yucca hectares were planted by CDA producers (totals for 2002 reach 51.3 hectares).
- Producers are being advised that for new yucca plantings the selection be made according to cangre size before planting, which helps avoid uneven results.
- Field analysis of petiole was continued in order to advise on fertilization techniques.
- Students and teachers from Colegio Gregorio Consuegra in Comayagua were taken for a visit to CDA producers in Cacahuapa in order to demonstrate the best production systems for the crops they will plant.
- In Lago de Yojoa there was a meeting with the yucca producers that are interested in setting up drip irrigation systems. There was an information session given as well as a practice session with an installed system.



Most of the yucca is being sold at good prices in the local market

- Yucca producers from the lake were given assistance on plague control, fertilization programs, planting, weed control and soil preparation with leveled curves.
- Jalapeño producers are receiving technical assistance in Siguatepeque for the installation of irrigation systems and production including planting, traps, fertilization and plague sampling.



Irrigation system set up for production of jalapeño pepper

- The producers in the west are working with jalapeño, yucca and vegetables, including baits, weed control, fertilization programs, irrigation solutions, plague and disease control, training in sampling of plagues and diseases.
- Carried out demonstrations with the new clients in La Esperanza, these included planting in seedbeds, including substrate sifting, fertilization, tray loading, planting, covering and irrigation, as well as irrigation and spraying recommendations.
- Trial harvests of broccoli for freezing were beginning in La Esperanza, and calendarized planting was continued.
- Technical assistance and training was given to jalapeño producers in all working zones, including soil prep, planting, fertilization programs, plague identification and control, harvest and others.
- Choluteca and Valle clients received assistance with jalapeño, yucca, watermelon, chili relleno and onion, in areas that include crop rotation, fertilization programs, plague control and irrigation systems installation.
- Planting activities in Choluteca were started with the planting of camote (bush buck) and European melon.
- Crop rotation was done with cucumber producers from La Paz that have finished their season.
- Several lots were GPS surveyed in order to draw maps and design irrigation systems.



Crop rotation between cucumber and corn in La Paz

● The main cucumber growers have finished their season (only two producers will remain harvesting in April). Initial results are excellent – 810 containers were shipped in 2001 while as of March 2002 1,054 containers have been shipped. By the end of the April season, a 35% increase in volumes and sales is expected in comparison with 2001.

● Several producers in Comayagua were given assistance with the installation of drip irrigation in eggplant crops, they were given advice on control of mites, they were also given talks on irrigation, including tape repairs and avoiding leaks as well as talks on the manufacture of application tanks and the application of starter solution.

● An eggplant producer in Comayagua has already shown a 50% increase in the harvest as compared to previous production levels, with the stabilized harvest he has production 20% higher. This has led to a change in production techniques by the rest of the producers in the same area as well as in other areas.

● By means of Excel spreadsheets developed by CDA producers in all zones are receiving assistance with fertilization schedules for all crops.

● An Asian vegetable exporter has started demanding basic CDA procedures from producers, including raised beds, drip irrigation, plague sampling, higher plant density, molasses use, etc. He is requiring this in order to authorize new plantings. He is requiring approval from Fintrac/CDA for each producer before giving them plantlets for harvesting.



Check-up of eggplant crop in Comayagua

● Several training talks were held concerning the installation and use of tensiometers (for irrigation).

● The first releases of Telenomus (a biological control lepidopteron worms) were made in La Esperanza, La Paz, Comayagua and Choluteca.



Telenomus Release

Processing

● A frozen fruit processor was given advice on how to modify the fruit reception areas and a review of the plant cleaning procedures.

● Risk assessment for a banana purée processor was augmented, and plan documentation was updated. The plant was visited by a U.S. client and a German auditor. The plant and the food safety systems were approved.

● Several training activities were carried out with an Asian vegetable producer/grower, including GAPs (12 persons) as well as an introduction to HACCP for 25 employees at a plantain processor.

● Training talks were held for 18 technicians from INFOP on “Application of HACCP in the Food Industry” (training of trainers).



Reception honeydew melon for freezing

- Initial advising assessments were begun with microprocessors in order to determine assistance needs. The microprocessors that joined CDA include dairy producers that use peppers in their cheese production, marañon and the Agronomy School (Escuela Agrícola) Luis Landa with sauces.
- In order to continue improvement of the food safety program of a plantain producer, he was advised to invest in a metal detector as well as insulation for the fruit cooling areas.
- A pickle microprocessor in Ocoatepeque started work on improvement to improve control of deliveries, inputs, labeling of process flows and to run a test on green jalapeño salsa.



Washing of mulberries for processing in Marcala

Postharvest

- Several packing plants and farms were audited with an Asian vegetables producer/exporter in order to measure observance of GMPs, GAPs and HACCP.



Work with a cucumber producer to identify necessary HACCP improvements

- Possible darkening causes during shipments were identified with an okra producer/exporter
- HACCP and GAPs training activities were continued with a cucumber producer/exporter de. Based on CDA recommendations, the company will improve the food safety infrastructure and systems.
- A workshop on Good Manufacturing Practices and Sanitation and Hygiene Principles was given on the premises of a producer/exporter of Asian vegetables.

Specialty Coffees

- Meeting with more than 30 coffee growers, ONGs, and Government Institutions (Ihcafe, Aprocafe) in Ocoatepeque in order to present the results of the cuppings made with Ocoatepeque samples up to date.
- Sales efforts were continued in order to sell the best lots to U.S. buyers through SCAA and Willem Boot. Positive feedback was obtained from several buyers
- 52 samples from different regions in the country were sent to Willem Boot, in order to continue identifying the farms and producers with the best features and the highest possibilities to compete.
- Of all the samples, 14 of the best ones were sent to CQI in the United States so they would later be sent to potential clients.
- Construction and remodeling of the premises for the cupping labs was finished.



Coffee harvest in Ocotepeque

- Started collecting information around different farms in the south and the west for the web page.
- Packaging samples were collected from special coffee brands in Jamaica and Costa Rica in order to evaluate which packages can be used in the launching of the new brands of coffee (both ground and whole beans) that the cooperatives that Fintrac CDA assists will sell in the domestic market.
- Local exporters and co-ops with special coffee lots were put in contact. In Ocotepeque more than 600 qq (special but not outstanding) with premiums of +\$3/qq for the producer. The south cooperative is negotiating the sale of 2 lots to Fair Trade and 4 lots at the conventional market with a premium.
- Quality certificates were extended to cooperatives that took part in the special coffee cupping course, for the lots that were graded as special, so that this allows them to negotiate better prices with local exporters.
- The results of the samplings were presented to the new Honduras Special Coffees Association.



Good quality coffee harvest in Ocotepeque

- Distribution of educational materials developed by SCAA (posters, bulletins etc.) to producers in different regions of the country was begun.
- Started preparation of technical bulletins about processing of special coffees based on the most outstanding problems in Honduras.
- Prepared a proposal for USAID to expand the budget required to hold the first nationwide competition of special coffees with 10 international experts. The winner of this competition will be proclaimed as the best coffee in Honduras.
- Direct technical assistance to producers and cooperatives was continued and information on the quality requirements to obtain special coffee is being spread across the country.
- Several practical tips were given to the new Honduras Special Coffees Association pursuant to their attendance in Anaheim and the set up of their stand there.

Micro enterprises

- A bulletin of activities on micro enterprises was prepared in January and February.
- Several visits were made in order to contact several agricultural companies and pave the way for providing assistance to their clients through CDA bulletins as well as other materials, technical talks and field demonstrations. At the same time, information was gathered on the clients that visit these *agropecuarias*. This info included the clients that visit them, as well as the sex and size of the products in terms of production area. Talks also included their willingness to transfer technology to their clients.

- Training activities with several agropecuarias continued, and it included fluorescent lamp demonstrations in order to improve product application.
- Started work with other micro-processors in Copán, Ocotepeque, Lempira, Intibuca, La Paz, Comayagua and Valle, including plantain, wines, vinegars, ground coffee, pickles, jellies, *sobritos*, peaches, mango and nance in syrup. Most of the microprocessors have basic operations without registered brands or sanitary licenses.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- A connection was made with the National Statistics Institute and the official export figures of select crops were obtained (CDA gave them a manual on how to access US import statistics on the Internet).
- Sales figures were updated and information on CDA works with producers from Cucuyagua, Corquin, San Francisco, La Unión and Las Flores, Lempira.
- Weekly reports were made on the jalapeño and yucca harvests.
- A complete analysis of the activities reported in the CDA MIS for the first quarter.
- The results for new clients in Siguatepeque during 2001 were compiled.
- An analysis of the cucumber 2002 season was made, comparing it with 2001. A press report was prepared for “La Prensa”.

General Activities

- The introduction of new production and processing clients was continued in all zones.
- Reviewed work plans for each crop and worked on global work plans.
- A meeting was held with the Agriculture Minister and USAID in order to present the project’s activities.
- A couple of chili producers in Santa Bárbara were visited with USAID representatives. One of them was in the

process of transplanting and the other had an excellent field already in production.

- Activities and information collection were begun with SAG/Pronaders y vendors for an irrigation program for CDA producers in Comayagua, Lago de Yojoa and Cantarranas.
- A meeting was held with USDA Honduras and Guatemala representatives, to review programs and activities.
- A proposal to AID was prepared in order to expand special coffee activities – cupping competition, technology fund and continuation of technical assistance between July and December 2002.



Visit with USAID representatives to producers in La Entrada

For more information, please contact CDA offices in La Lima (tel: 668.2078, fax: 668.1190) o Sta Rosa de Copán (tel / fax: 662.2568). E-mail: cda@fintrac.com

Those interested in receiving the weekly bulletins on “Market Conditions” for cantaloupe, honeydew, watermelon, yucca, mango and papaya, please contact Jennifer Bocock a jennifer@fintrac.com