

- Cucumber exports for the 2001/2002 season reached an all time high of \$7.37 million, up \$1.76 million (31.6%) from \$5.6 million in 2000/2001.
- Butternut squash exports for the 2001/2002 season were \$1.82 million, up \$0.73 million (67%) from \$ 1.09 million in the previous season.
- The combined increase in export sales for the 2002 season for cucumber and squash was \$2.49 million.
- These sales results were obtained despite a reduction in cucumber market prices. Average prices for this season were \$2.00/carton lower than the previous season due to market conditions.
- Lower market prices were offset by increased yields. As a result of improved production practices and new hybrids, the average cucumber yields this season increased by 19% over the previous season.
- Total volumes of cucumbers increased from 865 in the previous season to 1,144 in this season (20,821 MTs).
- Overall all exporting countries reduced their cucumber volumes to the USA in the 2002 season – except Honduras. Mexico down 24%, Dominican Republic down 40%, Guatemala down 78% ... but Honduras UP 26%.

Background: Cucumbers and squash are two of the selected nontraditional export crops that the Fintrac CDA project has been supporting during the present and past seasons. Technical support to the growers and exporters has been on-going since the project began in February 2000. New grower/exporters have also entered the business over the last two years. The activities are presently centered around 5 medium sized grower/exporters with 20 small outgrowers. Several of the partners also form part of the Business Development Service (BDS) activities providing embedded technical services to outgrowers.

Activities: Fintrac CDA production specialists have been providing technical assistance and training throughout the entire production, harvesting and packing processes to all of the export companies for both cucumber and squash. This has covered technical support, information and problem resolution, together with the implementation of new production technologies and practices that have helped the companies improve yields and product quality. Some of the specific activities carried out with these producers and exporters included integrated pest management practices, improved fumigation techniques and introduction of new more effective equipment (air assisted motor sprayers), land preparation, fertilization practices, harvesting practices and equipment, food safety and process flow improvements.

In addition, CDA marketing specialists tracked prices and volumes for these crops in the US market on a weekly basis and distributed this information to all of the exporters.



Cucumber harvest on a lead partner's farm in La Paz



Cucumbers ready to harvest in Comayagua

Activities and infrastructural improvements made in 2000 and 2001 have made excellent returns on investment. Cold room expansion with an existing producer/exporter and packhouse construction for a new grower group have contributed to more than \$1.43 million in new exports since the 2000 season. Fintrac CDA invested \$29,000 in this infrastructure with the clients contributing \$22,600. This packhouse also enabled first time exports by eight growers in the region of El Sifon in Comayagua.

Results & Impact: The return on investments that were cost shared with the two lead partners in 2000 has been impressive. The coldroom investment expanded packing capacity from 45-50 containers/week to 70 containers per week. This allowed the company to increase its area from 70 hectares during the '99-'00 season to 125 hectares for the present '01-'02 season, a 79 percent increase. Productivity for the same period increased 106 percent from 145,000 cartons to 299,300 cartons. Gross sales increased from \$1.6 million in 99-00 to \$1.87 million in '00-'01 to \$2.77 million for the present season, a \$1.17 million sales increase for the two-year period – and a \$900 thousand increase from the previous season.

The investment in a new packhouse for the independent growers in El Sifon resulted in gross sales of \$196,000 (14 containers of cucumbers) and net earnings of \$84,750 for their first season ('00-'01). For the present season, they increased their area from 14 hectares to 21 hectares and their exports from 14 containers to 24 containers. Gross sales increased from \$196,000 to \$259,000.

The 2002 target set by the project for cucumber and squash was an increase in exports of \$2.5 million compared with baseline 2001 exports. Information was collected by personal interviews with all of Fintrac CDA's lead partners and from the official USDA US import figures (www.ams.usda.gov/fv/mncs/weekship.htm). USDA figures show an increase of 279 40,000-lb containers of cucumbers imported from Honduras when compared to last season's total (from 865 last season to 1,144 containers in the present season, a 32% increase in volume). Squash exports to the US from Honduras increased by 28 percent (30 40,000-lb containers). According to sales figures provided by lead partners, gross sales for cucumbers for the past season totaled \$5.61 million, while sales for the present season reached an all time high of \$7.37 million – a \$1.76 million increase. Sales for this squash season increased by \$0.73 million - from \$1.09 in 2001 to \$1.82 million in 2002. The combined increase in export sales for the two crops for the present season is an estimated \$2.49 million.

Fintrac CDA also set targets focused on increasing productivity in the fields. Technical assistance was provided on a weekly basis both during the season and off-season with alternative crops for rotation. Technical representatives worked with all of the cucumber and squash producers on implementing new production practices. Cucumber yields increased by 19 percent from 1,423 to 1,692 exportable cartons/hectare; squash yields increased by 3.4 percent from 1,093 to 1,131 exportable cartons/hectare.



Packing facility in La Paz



Squash plantation in La Paz



Butternut squash selected for export to the US market