

FINTRAC CDA

The use of technology in production, postharvest, processing and marketing operations is a core component of the Fintrac CDA technical assistance program. The introduction of continuous improvements in technology is necessary to maintain and improve company competitiveness by improving yields, reducing unit costs and meeting market requirements. This bulletin provides examples of selected technologies, uptake and implementation by companies and selected results.

Production Technologies Update

Fintrac CDA production activities support growers and exporters with the implementation of good agricultural practices, the systemization of production practices and the adoption of a market-driven integrated crop management approach. These provide the technological base for grower competitiveness, together with increased sales and profits. The overall farm is considered as the business base and, in any given year, growers will also produce several income generating crops as part of a rotation program which minimizes fixed and operating unit costs.

The use of new, appropriate and cost-effective technologies is a key component of grower technology uptake. Fintrac CDA has introduced many new technologies to small and medium sized growers in addition to improving production technologies and practices with the larger growers and exporters. In order to develop sustainable and profitable production operations, growers need the ability to change and adapt to market requirements, whether this be in quality specifications with an existing crop or to change crop mix completely. This is only possible when the production systems are integrated and focus is not given to just one crop.



BARREL FILTERS

CDA design and locally made by micro-enterprises. Costs \$300 compared to \$1,000 for a commercial filter of similar capacity. 150 filters were installed in 2003.



DRIP IRRIGATION

CDA promotes the use of drip irrigation, and assists with designs, installation and maintenance. In 2003, CDA clients invested more than \$533 thousand on 900 hectares.



PLANTLET PRODUCTION

Low-cost plantlet production systems have been developed for small-scale calendarized vegetables growers in Intibuca. More than 1.2 million plantlets were produced in 2003 for 23 hectares.



PLANTLET PRODUCTION

In 2003, CDA assisted five companies in developing grower services in large scale plantlet production for jalapeño, Tabasco, tomato, honeydew and seedless watermelon.

INVESTMENTS

In response to the CDA technical assistance program, Project clients invested more \$3.06 million in capital items in 2003. These included \$2.3 million in greenhouses, \$0.54 million in irrigation equipment, \$33 thousand in agricultural machinery, and \$41 thousand in new hybrid seeds.



BIOLOGICAL CONTROLS

CDA has assisted Zamorano in the production of biological controls and promoted their use with growers. Biologicals were used on more than 5,000 hectares in 2003.



FERTILIZATION TECHNOLOGY

Fertilization programs have been developed based on soil analyses, crop requirements and fertilization systems for more than 15 crops; all are available as computer program tools.

In mid-2003, Fintrac established a policy that all CDA growers would aim for Good Agricultural Production Standards according to the Eurep protocol. This is one of the most demanding systems covering agricultural production standards and verification frameworks for fruits and vegetables, meeting market and legal requirements. It includes all aspects of food safety, pesticide use, environmental issues, worker protection and traceability. EU buyers require EurepGap certification and most US buyers are moving towards similar certification programs.



JALAPENO PRODUCTION

Production system improvements and new technologies have increased average jalapeño yields from 42,164 lbs/ha in 2000 to 93,379 lbs/ha in 2003.



TABASCO PRODUCTION

New production systems for Tabasco have increased the traditional yields of 5,000 to 8,000 lbs/hectare to new levels of 25,000 to 30,000 lbs/hectare.

Growers are “professionalizing” their operations with market-driven production, systematized production activities, the use of technology and the formal implementation of Good Agricultural Practices. These have now provided access to new markets, improved competitiveness, allowed diversification and increased incomes and profitability. Growers of all sizes who do not move in this direction will go out of business in the near future. This applies equally to growers who sell on export or local markets.

CDA is assisting growers to develop and implement management tools and production systems to help respond effectively to the changing needs of the sector. Growers have to re-invent to stay competitive and need to be dynamic to be profitable and respond to developments in the marketplace.



GREENHOUSE PRODUCTION

Two companies have invested \$2 million in 5 hectares of greenhouses and 12 hectares of shade houses for cucumber and oriental vegetable production for export – a new production technology in Honduras.



SWEET POTATO

CDA introduced sweet potato as a new rotation and export crop in 2003, developing and implementing new production technologies. The first 120,000 lbs were shipped in late 2003.

Production technologies key to grower profitability include drip irrigation, land preparation, seed selection, plantlet production, nutritional programs, integrated pest management, cultural practices, and appropriate use of phytosanitary products. Record keeping, continuous training, innovation and research are also part of the production business operations.

Sector sustainability will only be achieved if the growers are making money.