

Fintrac interns increase farm productivity in Honduras

LA LIMA, Honduras — Twenty interns have been trained as part of Fintrac's USAID-funded Rural Economic Diversification (RED) program and are out in the field providing valuable expertise to Honduran farmers. The interns are taking part in a unique partnership between Fintrac and Honduran agricultural schools to train graduates through on-the-ground experience and hands-on training.

In 2007, the interns started providing direct technical assistance to their own clients. To date, interns' clients have generated \$243,781 in sales. Interns have assisted 83 clients, of which, 66 increased sales by 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 Fintrac 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 Fintrac's 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 Fintrac assistance, 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.

Fintrac is implementing USAID-RED, a three-year program designed to increase rural incomes and employment opportunities in Honduras. It is providing support to 742 lead clients and more than 10,000 beneficiaries. By July 2008, the program expects to generate \$30 million in new sales by lead clients alone.



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.