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## SNAPSHOT

# New Crop a Boost to Rural Community

**Export of eggplant raises incomes of producers and creates new employment opportunities in rural village.**



*Photo by Fintrac Inc.*

Benjamin Perdomo is growing eggplant for export to the United States. This high-value crop is new for the small-scale farmer who previously subsisted on a minimal income from sale of his corn and beans harvests.

**“I had never even heard of eggplant before, and now I am exporting my product to the US; it’s unbelievable.”**

— Benjamin Perdomo, small-scale eggplant producer

### Telling Our Story

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Producers in La Jigua, Copán are reaping the benefits of a lucrative new crop. A small group of growers is now exporting eggplant to the United States, earning significantly higher incomes than they ever imagined and creating more than 100 new jobs in rural communities.

USAID-ACCESO production and marketing specialists began assisting a group of seven farmers in February 2012, helping them identify eggplant as a new, high-value crop. With the project’s help, the farmers obtained seeds and inputs, targeted a market, and planted their crop using good agricultural and postharvest practices they learned from project technicians.

Thanks to project assistance, the group had a contract with a Honduran exporter, who shipped the first container of eggplant from Copán. Since April 2012, the group, who added three more producers, has exported 15 containers to the US for total sales of \$150,000. They are planning to export several more containers in 2012.

Benjamin Perdomo is a small-scale farmer who joined up with the eggplant producers after seeing the success of his neighbors. “I had never even heard of eggplant before,” he said. “Now I am exporting my product to the United States; it’s unbelievable.”

Perdomo was growing beans and corn on a small scale for sale to local markets or middlemen. Without a reliable market, he was struggling to make any income for his family. Now he is receiving technical advice to improve the production of his staple crops, as well as instruction on eggplant production. He is selling an average of 7,200 pounds of eggplant a month at a fixed and fair price.

The group is now employing nearly 100 people in the fields to assist with planting and harvesting. These new jobs provide a steady income to more than 45 extremely poor families.

To meet the demands of the export market, the exporting company has opened a packing plant in the community, which currently employs 31 local residents trained by the project in product grading and packing. The exporter pays full-time salaries for these positions, all of which are entirely new jobs.

The small group of producers is helping stimulate economic activity in the community, with the potential to involve more and more small-scale producers and day laborers as production continues to increase.

“We work with all types of producers,” said Carlos Madrid, a large-scale eggplant producer. “We don’t care if they are small [-scale farmers] or poor. If the project is assisting them, we know the high quality we need is guaranteed.”