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## SNAPSHOT

### Sweet Potatoes Drive Business Success

**New, high-quality crop increases incomes for producers and local businesses, stimulating economic activity across an entire community.**



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Co-owners of EMDIPA with new packaging for their sweet potato candies and chips.

**“Thanks to USAID-ACCESO, we have really improved our product.”**

— Dora Coto, President, EMDIPA

In La Labor, Ocotepeque, USAID-ACCESO has introduced sweet potato as a new high-value crop. To date, 61,000 pounds – worth more than \$11,000 – have been exported, creating an economic boom for this community. Sweet potatoes not directed for international markets are being transformed into commercial products, generating additional income streams and employment opportunities for local women.

USAID-ACCESO production specialists began working with 20 producers in April 2012, assisting them in good agricultural practices such as seed selection, raised beds, drip irrigation, and fertilization. Once the group started producing a consistent, high-quality product, marketing specialists had no trouble linking the group to an international buyer.

Thanks to early successes and project support, others have joined the group, making sweet potato an important local source of revenue. The group is now under contract to ship one container to Canada every 15 days. An additional 16 local residents are working in postharvest processing – cleaning, sorting, and grading sweet potatoes according to international standards, and packing them for export.

The producers sell sweet potatoes not meeting buyer’s criteria – but are still in good condition – to local small businesses that process the crops into chips and sweets.

EMDIPA – a local, woman-owned business – is one such business receiving assistance from project specialists in processing sweet potato for sale to local markets. These five women are selling approximately 30 pounds of sweet potato candies and chips every month.

The women are also learning basic business skills such as cost control, recordkeeping, packaging, and market analysis. They have now targeted new local market opportunities, including high-traffic local gas stations and their new products are adding up to roughly \$470 more in weekly sales.

To further expand production capacity, EMDIPA recently applied for credit to invest in an industrial stove and grill. They plan to hire additional women as their business continues to grow.

“We have always worked hard, we have never received any type of donation,” said Dora Coto, EMDIPA president. “Now, I want to industrialize the entire company.”

By promoting access to new income streams for both men and women, USAID-ACCESO is achieving long-term, sustainable economic growth and improved food security for entire communities. The project has helped nearly 1,500 micro, small and medium enterprises access new, more lucrative markets, both in Honduras and on the international stage.