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SNAPSHOT

Inaugural Contest Inspires Record Production

With project support, producers increased maize production per hectare by three times the national average.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Armando Argueta (right) accepts his first place award from USAID-ACCESO staff at the contest closing ceremony. Argueta went from producing 20 quintals of maize per hectare to 157 quintals in one season thanks to practices introduced by project technicians.

“I am extremely happy and thankful to USAID-ACCESO, who motivated us to work better and made all this possible.”

Armando Argueta,

—First place winner, La Paz

To continue motivating and supporting USAID-ACCESO production clients, project specialists in La Paz introduced crop competitions. Producers from more than 17 communities in La Paz committed to participating in the first contest for maize, and began working with technicians to implement best practices, with the goal of winning recognition and prizes for the highest production yields.

Throughout the year, the farmers learned better soil preparation techniques; constructed raised beds; installed improved irrigation systems; and implemented appropriate pest and disease controls. The participating farmers’ improved plots served as demonstration sites for neighboring farmers, further expanding the project’s reach.

When the contest came to close in December 2012, the results were staggering: participants’ average maize yields per hectare were more than six times higher than departmental averages and nearly three times higher than national averages.

Honduras’ national maize production average is 34 quintals per hectare, which translates to average earnings of \$442 per hectare based on a sales price of \$13 per quintal. Contest participants greatly surpassed these numbers – the highest yield was 157 quintals per hectare and lowest was 45, still significantly higher than the national average. Based on these production numbers, farmers participating in this contest stand to earn nearly three times the national average from maize sales.

The winners were announced in December 2012 at a closing ceremony in La Culebrita, San Jose, where more than 200 community residents, government authorities, and USAID representatives were on hand to see Armando Argueta take first prize. Argueta’s production was more than four-and-a-half times the national average, which could earn him up to \$2,000 per hectare. “I am extremely happy and thankful to USAID-ACCESO, who motivated us to work better,” he said.

The top five producers took home more than \$3,700 in cash prizes and agricultural inputs, including fertilizers and other agrochemicals, portable water pumps, and high-quality seeds. Argueta led his fellow contest participants and the award ceremony audience to his farm where he displayed his harvest and explained the good agricultural practices that made it possible.

USAID-ACCESO will continue the crop competition program in 2013, expanding to include other crops such as beans, carrots, passion fruit, plantains, potatoes, and sweet potatoes as part of its program to improve agricultural productivity. To date, the project has assisted more than 17,000 poor and extreme poor clients through technical assistance and trainings in western Honduras.