



SNAPSHOT

Dairy Cows Present New Sources of Income

With good livestock management practices, rural farmers – particularly women – bring in constant income from milk sales.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Martha Calix, with her two children, is earning hundreds of dollars of new income a month from her dairy cow. She learned better feeding and care practices that helped increase milk production by 50 percent.

“I am thankful we received support from the project in all areas.”

Martha Calix

The path to overcoming poverty is steep and lined with numerous obstacles. For many rural Honduran households, small-scale agriculture production is the only viable income source, and eking out a living on small plots with limited access to inputs, credit, and markets is difficult at best.

To help smallholders overcome these obstacles, USAID-ACCESO production specialists look for ways that farming families can diversify income streams to ensure they are earning money year round.

The dairy cow project is one such source. Beginning in 2011, USAID-ACCESO teamed up with rural savings banks to offer financial assistance to purchase dairy cows in project-supported communities. Production specialists then worked hand-in-hand with beneficiaries to introduce livestock management and feeding practices that result in healthy, productive cows. USAID-ACCESO has worked with various projects and cooperatives, including Heifer, Programa Conjunto, Conbrifol and others, and now 81 USAID-ACCESO household clients are working with the dairy cow project.

In November 2011, Martha Calix, a single mother of two from Las Flores, La Paz, began attending project trainings. In just a few months she had learned how to better take care of her cow to increase its milk production. She constructed a covered area for the cow, began preparing her own feed instead of purchasing it, and started monitoring the cow’s nutritional intake.

Thanks to these improved techniques, Martha and her family began seeing dramatic improvements in milk production. Their cow used to produce an average of 12 liters of milk a day, a number that has increased to 18 liters a day. This daily production translates to 24 bottles of milk, which Martha sells for approximately \$0.60 per unit. The family is now guaranteed at least \$440 in milk sales every month.

With the increased income, the Calix family is investing in other income-generating activities, including high-value vegetable production and pig rearing. They also plan to process some of the milk into higher-value dairy products to sell to local markets.

Martha and her family are a true testament to USAID-ACCESO’s integrated approach to improving incomes, nutrition, and food security. The family is participating in a number of other project activities, including health and nutrition trainings and natural resource management. They recently installed an eco-friendly stove and biodigester to improve household sanitation conditions.

They are eager to learn more from the project and continue making improvements to both their home and agricultural production, ensuring brighter futures for their children.

“I want my daughter to study and become a professional,” Martha said.

The dairy cow project is proving to be a successful way to bring all family members, particularly women, into income-generating activities. The activity is so popular in La Paz that rural savings banks have adopted it as their own, offering young farmers the initial investment to buy the cow, and then linking them with USAID-ACCESO for technical assistance.