



SNAPSHOT

Supporting National Strategy to Combat Coffee Rust

With support from USAID-ACCESO and IHCAFE, coffee producers have an opportunity to combat coffee leaf rust and diversify into other crops.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Project technical specialists provide training to a group of coffee farmers on the basic production practices that minimize the potential problems with pests and diseases, including rust.

USAID-ACCESO support to coffee farmers includes:

- **Basic production practices**
- **Crop diversification**
- **Improved harvesting and drying**
- **Buyer linkages**

The majority of coffee production in Honduras is carried out on a small scale, with 73 percent of all producers harvesting about 13 quintals per manzana (0.7 hectares). These smallholder farmers have little to no access to basic technologies and are especially susceptible to problems of pests, diseases, and price fluctuations.

In 2012, the country detected the first outbreaks of *la roya*, a coffee leaf rust disease, which is associated with poor crop management and accentuated by climate change. Coffee harvests in the 2012/2013 season were severely affected by rust, and together with negative international price fluctuations, resulted in a significant reduction in producer incomes and employment opportunities in rural areas. Food security, rural families' well-being, and the overall rural economies also suffered.

The impact of rust on coffee production was estimated at 1.63 million quintals, dropping from 7.3 million quintals in the 2011/2012 season to 5.7 million in the 2012/2013 season. Total revenue lost last year is estimated at \$177 million from production and \$48 million in lost wages.

Coffee farming represents the main source of income for many rural families and is the main driver of many rural economies. To assist in recuperating from the effects of the 2012/2013 season, the Honduran Coffee Institute (IHCAFE), with the support of USAID-ACCESO and other public and private sector organizations, has implemented the "Plan Nacional de Apoyo Integral a las Familias Productoras de Café Afectadas por la Roya."

With the implementation of the plan, participating institutions aim to reduce the vulnerability of coffee-producing families, minimize pest and disease problems in the short term, improve crop management and production efficiency over the medium term, and replant using basic production practices and rust tolerant varieties for the long term.

Support from USAID-ACCESO is being provided through ongoing technical assistance and training to more than 16,000 coffee producers with 18,000 hectares of production in western Honduras. Farmers are learning how to implement basic coffee production practices, pruning and shade management, liming, and improved fertilization application. With these basic practices, growers are increasing productivity from an average of 13 to 24 quintals per manzana. Improved harvesting system and adding value through drying are also helping increased family incomes.

To reduce risks from mono-cropping and to diversify income sources, USAID-ACCESO is also providing technical assistance and training to improve the yields of basic grains and to diversify into small-scale production of vegetables, fruit trees, timber trees, and livestock. USAID-ACCESO has also promoted the registration of the project farmers with IHCAFE, which allows them to access credit for coffee inputs and other benefits.