



Intsormil

TRIP REPORT

MEXICO AND HONDURAS

by

Billie R. DeWalt
University of Kentucky

March 6-24, 1983

CONTRACT NO.: AID/DSAN/XII-G-0149

☆ International
Sorghum/Millet

☆ Collaborative Research
Support Program
(CRSP)

A Research Development Program of the Agency for International Development. Participating Land-Grant Universities, Host County Research Agencies and Private Donors.



Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources
University of Nebraska-Lincoln



TRIP REPORT--MEXICO AND HONDURAS
March 6 to March 24, 1983

TO: INTSORMIL Members

FROM: Billie R. DeWalt, University of Kentucky

Purposes of the Trip

1. Earl Leng, Dan Meckenstock (Texas A & M) and I were to meet with officials from USAID--Honduras and the Ministry of Natural Resources in Honduras. Our discussions centered around the following points.
 - a. With USAID--Honduras we were hoping to interest them in collaborating financially with INTSORMIL in supporting the plant breeding operations at the La Lujosa experiment station.
 - b. We also wanted to inform the Mission Director, Tony Carterucci, and the head of the Agricultural Development Office, Steve Wingert, of future directions for INTSORMIL in Honduras.
 - c. At the Ministry of Natural Resources, we wanted to explore their continuing commitment to collaborate with INTSORMIL.
 - d. We also asked that the Minister agree to recycle any money earned from the sale of sorghum for seed or commercial purposes back to the INTSORMIL/MNR operations at La Lujosa.
 - e. We asked that the Ministry find and assign, as soon as possible, an agronomist to the sorghum program at La Lujosa.
 - f. Finally, we wanted to explore whether the Ministry was interested in having part of INTSORMIL's planned germplasm operations located at La Lujosa.
2. I was to accompany Ron Carroll, an ecologist from Baylor University hired as a consultant to INTSORMIL, on visits to the various communities being studied by the University of Kentucky socioeconomic team. Ron was to look at the soil, wild vegetation, crop interactions in both lowland and highland sites. Ron and I also were to help plan the data collection efforts of Susan Duda, a Kentucky student doing her dissertation research in southern Honduras.
3. In Mexico, I visited several individuals connected with institutions that might be interested in collaborating with INTSORMIL to do farming systems studies. The purpose of this was to plan possible future research in Mexico.
4. Finally, I visited with members of the CIMMYT economics program and with ICRISAT - Mexico personnel in order to plan a possible farming systems workshop next year. It would be held in April 1984 at CIMMYT and be sponsored jointly by INTSORMIL, ICRISAT and CIMMYT.

Daily Activities

- March 6 -- I arrived in Tegucigalpa and was met by Dan Meckenstock. Later, we picked up Earl Leng at the airport.
- March 7 -- We met with people at USAID and the Ministry of Natural Resources.
- March 8 -- We were unable to accomplish anything this day due to the Pope's visit to Honduras. Everything was shut down.
- March 9 -- We saw Earl Leng off at the airport. Dan returned to Choluteca. Susan Duda came into Tegucigalpa to meet me and Ron Carroll.
- March 10 -- Ron had been scheduled to arrive on Tuesday, but was unable to get a flight until this day (Thursday). We met him at the airport and left almost immediately for Choluteca.
- March 11 - We visited Santa Erlinda, Calinchuche El Tular # 1, and Mascafierro el Junquillo. These are all agrarian reform communities that have received their land in the last 10 years. All have good lands in the lowlands, except for El Tular # 1 which has rocky, clayey land. These communities do monocropping of cotton, maize, and sorghum; and also do some maize/sorghum intercropping.
- March 12 - We visited Cacutare, El Naranjito, and El Corinto, the communities initially studied in 1981. Sorghum/maize intercropping is practiced in this region. We have maintained sporadic contacts with people in these communities, including having them do some on-farm trials with new varieties being developed by Meckenstock.
- March 13 - We spent the day in La Ermita and San Antonio de Padua, two communities being studied by Susan Duda. The latter community does sorghum/beans/maize intercropping.
- March 14 - This day we spent writing up notes from the previous days. We also spent part of the day looking at some of the communities that were hard hit by last May's flooding and landslides.
- March 15 - We spent part of the day looking at the economics and energy flow through a salt making operation near San Lorenzo. These use incredible amounts of wood, thus contributing to deforestation. We then continued on into Tegucigalpa.
- March 16 - We dropped Ron at the airport. I then made a follow-up visit to USAID. I dropped off a budget Dan had given me and got confirmation of USATD's contribution to our project.
- March 17 - I left Tegucigalpa for Mexico.
- March 18 - I spent the day with Pertti Pelto of the University of Connecticut. He is working on the Nutrition CRSP in Mexico. We spent most of the day at the National Nutrition Institute.

Because Connecticut and INN are working in the Valley of Temascalcingo, my dissertation research site, I ended up doing a fair amount of free consulting for them.

- March 19 - Pelto and I drove out to the Temascalcingo area where I visited old friends. We stayed at INN's headquarters.
- March 20 - We drove northwest of Temascalcingo toward the Acambaro region. Acambaro is on the southern edge of the Bajio and is a big sorghum growing region. Many people there follow a sequence of planting wheat in the winter and sorghum in the summer. Yields of sorghum are typically 8 - 10 tons per hectare even when planted by small farmers (i.e. ejidatarios with 6 to 10 hectares).
- March 21 - I met with David Barkin of the Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana and the Centro de Ecodesarrollo. We talked about a possible joint project between UAM and INTSORMIL. (See Results section)
- March 22 - I met with Dr. Ridolfo Quintero, the Director del Programa Universitario de Alimentos. This is a program to coordinate the research activities relating to food at the National University (UNAM).
- March 23 - I went out to CIMMYT where I met with Robert Tripp of the economics program, and with Compton Paul and Vartan Guiragossian of ICRISAT - Mexico.
- March 24 - I left Mexico for Lexington.

Results from the Trip

1. USAID - Honduras has agreed to use 60,000 Lempiras (\$30,000) of Title I - PL 480 moneys to help support labor and supply costs at La Lujosa. This will enable Dan Meckenstock to purchase a tractor and some equipment needed to keep La Lujosa running.
2. The Ministry of Natural Resources was quite positive about continued collaboration with INTSORMIL. They have agreed to return money earned from sales of sorghum to the sorghum program at La Lujosa. They will assign an agronomist to the sorghum program as soon as possible.
3. The Minister was quite interested in further exploring whether germplasm operations could be located at La Lujosa. He told us that there is unused land there that could be allocated for this purpose. Other regulations concerning importing and exporting seed from the country appear to be reasonable.
4. Ron Carroll's experience with tropical ecosystems was quite helpful to us. He was able to identify a large number of tree species for us and to give us a comparative perspective on the degree of soil erosion. Ron is in the process of writing a report concerning his findings; first reports are that he was impressed with the fact that erosion was not a severe problem despite the steep-sloped agriculture, and that phosphorus deficiencies are probably a real constraint. We planned some experiments to measure the amount of soil erosion on lands around La Ermita and San Antonio de Padua. These will be carried out by Susan Duda.

5. In Mexico, David Barkin of UAM was quite interested in establishing a cooperative relationship with INTSORMIL. The students at UAM are required to do six months of social service before they can receive their Licenciado degree. We discussed the possibility of establishing teams of students who would carry out farming systems research in areas of Mexico in which sorghum is grown. In our discussions, Barkin suggested that there were 5 distinct areas of the country in which sorghum was important or becoming important. These are in Tamaulipas, the Bajio, the Baja California-Sinaloa-Sonora region, Morelos, and the Oaxaca-Chiapas area.

Our idea is to send students in teams to each of these areas. The students would be trained in farming systems methods during an 11 week seminar to be held at UAM. The seminar would be run by INTSORMIL investigators and Mexican counterparts. Teams would consist of an economist, nutritionist, and agronomist. Kathleen DeWalt would do the nutrition training, I would do the economics training, but we need an INTSORMIL agronomist to work with us. We discussed possible counterparts at UAM but these will be chosen after a time period is chosen and an agreement is signed.

The advantage of the project we are designing is that it would be relatively cheap to run since students would be the primary investigators, complementary data would be gathered from all of the important sorghum growing regions, and students would be trained in farming systems methodology.

6. Preliminary plans were drawn up at CIMMYT for a farming systems workshop to be held next April. Each of the sessions would involve social and agricultural scientists. The primary audience we would like to have come to the conference are research directors from Latin American countries. More will follow concerning the preliminary program when approval is given to proceed with our planning.