



PROEXAG

NON-TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURAL EXPORT SUPPORT PROJECT

DEVELOPING ORNAMENTALS IN HONDURAS

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SUBMITTED TO:

Regional Office for Central America and Programs (ROCAP)  
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## PREFACE

The following were the objectives of this short-term assignment:

1. To implement an awareness program regarding the possibility of growing tropical ornamentals as an exportable crop in Honduras.
2. To identify existing problems and limiting factors in this endeavor.
3. To identify and evaluate possible farm sites for this endeavor.
4. To identify areas of this endeavor that need the time and effort of prospective entrepreneurs in tropical ornamentals.

These objectives were met by visiting several areas with varying climatic conditions, meeting with individuals with tropical ornamental establishments, and presenting a one-day seminar on tropical ornamentals and prospective markets.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The farms and sites visited feature different climatic conditions, ranging from semiarid highland to humid tropical areas. All are suitable for growing tropical ornamentals, provided the ornamental is adaptable to the particular climatic conditions.

One of the farms visited was a well-managed leatherleaf fern farm that has been in the export business for several years. The operation is also suitable for anthurium production. Semi-arid areas are well adapted for Australian semiarid plants, i.e., proteas and banksias, provided an irrigation system can be installed to keep plants growing.

The interest in developing the ornamental industry in Honduras, especially orchids and anthuriums, is commendable. Thirty-eight growers, prospective growers, and investors attended the seminar and became enthused by the prospect of developing the local ornamental industry.

The following recommendations are made:

- o As grower reaction and interest during and after the seminar were very positive, a follow-up monthly seminar featuring in-depth production guides by experts in the field should be conducted.
- o Honduras is blessed with highly skilled and renowned scientists at the FHIA, who should conduct experimental trials as well as coordinate educational programs with FPX.
- o David Tag should be retained as the extension specialist in ornamentals to help guide prospective growers.
- o Knowledgeable individuals in Honduras with a background in ornamental horticulture should be approached to assist in educational seminars.

## SECTION I

### A. Introduction and Background

Tropical ornamental cut flowers and foliage are becoming a viable commodity in the world market, i.e., the United States, Europe, and Japan. Since these markets are located in temperate zones for the most part, tropical ornamentals are seldom grown in those areas because it is not cost effective to do so. Logically, ornamentals are grown in tropical countries without the high energy cost required in other climates. They are shipped from these tropical areas to markets throughout the world.

PROEXAG/ROCAP in Central America recognizes Honduras' potential as a future exporter of tropical ornamentals and the need for cooperation with their national counterpart. PROEXAG/ROCAP also encourages ornamentals growing because it can provide employment for many people.

Therefore, PROEXAG/ROCAP, FHIA, and FEPROEXAAH of Honduras need to increase the country's awareness of potential revenue in this area, and to assess existing limitations of the tropical ornamental industry in Honduras. Honduras is still unaware of its potential in the tropical ornamental industry, unlike other Central American countries such as Costa Rica and Guatemala. Property owners searching for the best way to increase investment are just beginning to become interested in tropical ornamentals and in finding out what they can do with the available property they own.

Farm sites visited varied in climatic conditions with regard to soil, rainfall, temperature, and humidity. All sites visited are well adapted for tropical ornamentals. However, several are far from the airport and others have limited accessibility. Transportation of cut flowers from these farms to the airport may be difficult and study is required on how to prevent bruising and other damage in transit. Therefore, to start and develop operation at this stage is somewhat premature. The awareness is there, but the actual knowledge of "how-to" and "what to do" is still lacking.

Priority should be given to providing in-depth and intensive education to interested individuals, and to developing production guidelines. The latter can be achieved through cooperation between the local FHIA and FEPROEXAAH. The two agencies should develop research demonstration plots of ornamental cut flowers and advertise for and conduct an annual open house where interested individuals can be made more aware of the potential of these crops. In addition, individuals already exporting or beginning to export these crops should be approached and a close

working relationship with them should be cultivated. They need to be supplied with the necessary technical information, and can then be used to serve as "model samples" who will create and increase the curiosity of others who would, in turn, develop an interest in trying the crops themselves.

B. Conclusion

The tropical ornamental industry in Honduras is not as established as it is in Costa Rica and Guatemala. The local FHIA and FEPROEXAAH should take the leadership by providing program workshops, seminars, etc. They should also work with individuals interested in growing ornamentals for export, and help them in any way possible to assure their success. These individuals should serve as "model samples" to create an interest among others.

FARMS VISITED, May 16-18, 1989

Tuesday, May 16

- (1) Japanese Mission: Tama Salomé Perdomo, Intibuca, Esperanza
- (2) Jesús de Otero: dry desert-like area
- (3) Terima Kasih Nursery (Mr. Andrés van den Berg), Religious Mission, Taulabe, Comayaqua
- (4) Robert Ware: 15-acre leather-leaf fern and pot anthurium farm, Peña Blanca, Lake Yohoa, Cortéz

Wednesday, May 17

All-day seminar

Thursday, May 18

- (1) Vierato Gutierrez, Arrocería Centro América, S.A., Aldea Chultepece, Depto. Cortéz
- (2) Marcio Valenzuela, Finca Fruta del Caribe, Sanalejo, Depto. Atlántida, Azucarera Yohoa, S.A., San Pedro Sula
- (3) Orchid farm (Mr. Machi), Progreso
- (4) Robert Ware, leatherleaf fern and anthurium grower
- (5) FHIA research facilities, San Pedro Sula

## CONFIDENTIAL OBSERVATIONS

1. The writer is concerned by the heavy thrust of the Guatemalan industry in roses. It is true that the climate is appropriate for roses, but the U.S. market is becoming extremely competitive as evidenced by the various groups in the United States that want to restrict imports. I tried to discuss the potential of other crops in the hopes that we can balance the industry's position in the market. I believe we should work toward introducing non-traditional cut flowers into their offers for export.

2. There is a definite need to educate the industry on construction requirement rules for the existing structures that need modification and for new structures being constructed for expansion. The industry requires additional education on the interrelationship between quality disease control and efficiency as controlled by a proper growing structure design and management.

3. There is a need to educate the Guatemalan rose grower to the forces building up against patent right violations they have committed as demonstrated by the indiscriminate multiplying and marketing of internationally patented varieties. I have included legal information on this subject. I wish to inform the readers that my contacts in the United States are beyond the "friendly talking" stage on this subject and it would not surprise me to see a concerted and cooperative effort exerted in the near future by the two major groups: those designing a quota system on imports and the patent owners themselves, who have expressed concern for those honoring the patent and protesting unfair competition. Guatemala is recognized by the world as a geographic area that violates patent rights and pressure is building against these violations. It is a delicate situation in that they can mount their own investigation.

4. We should utilize to the maximum the friendly and cooperative attitudes displayed by Sr. Mirón, who indicated to the Gremial that his finca is at their disposal for classroom demonstration for anyone thinking of entering the business.

5. I do believe I can detect progress being made but also believe it will require additional and repetitive visits before there exists a cadre of agronomists with enough horticultural knowledge to enable them to reason out new practices and then integrate them into production for exportable quality ornamentals.

6. We should strive to introduce additional non-traditional crops such as caladium bulbs and annual cut flowers as opportunities present themselves.