



The United States Agency for International Development

USAID - COLOMBIA:

Alternative Development

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
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2001-014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 2, 2001

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Alternative development is a cost-effective means to permanently eliminate the production of coca and opium poppy. USAID's goal is to eliminate 3,000 hectares of opium poppy and 30,000 hectares of coca. USAID's contribution to the five-year Colombian program of drug elimination and sustainable development of production and marketing of legal crops is estimated at \$222 million, of which, \$53 million has been provided since FY 1999. For alternative development to be sustainable, access to licit markets must be complemented by the presence of civil government, adequate public security, and delivery of health and education.

Poppy

- ▶ Opium poppy is grown primarily on mountain slopes by small farmers that usually have one hectare or less of this illicit crop with 2-3 more hectares of food or other licit crops.
- ▶ In the mountains of Tolima province, 12 small farmer associations have agreed to eliminate 675 hectares of opium poppy. The National Plan for Alternative Development (PLANTE) is helping farmers there to plant 600 hectares of licit crops, mostly beans for local markets and blackberry and other fruits for juice that will be sold in Colombian markets.
- ▶ In southern Cauca, 9 small farmer associations have agreed to eliminate 45 hectares of opium poppy. Farmers are receiving assistance to improve 95 hectares of licit crops, principally organic coffee for export.

Coca

- ▶ Coca bushes grow at low altitudes throughout Colombia. Small farmers who produce coca usually have 3 hectares or less of the illicit crop, with 3-10 hectares of pasture or licit crops.

- ▶ In Putumayo, Plante has obtained agreements with 2,650 small producers that will result in the voluntary elimination of 5,150 hectares of coca near Puerto Asis and Orito. Further agreements are expected by the end of April 2001 for additional voluntary eradication, for a total of 10,200 hectares to be permanently eliminated. USAID technical assistance will assist these farmers through the provision of licit cash crop alternatives.
- ▶ Also in Putumayo, PLANTE plans to arrange approximately twenty agreements with small farmers for the voluntary elimination of coca, using Government of Colombia resources.
- ▶ After the agreement is signed, PLANTE provides farmers with food crop seeds and plants in a public event. At this point, farmers are obliged to begin to uproot their coca.
- ▶ As eradication progresses, PLANTE assists the farmers with USAID-financed licit cash crops, including food crops for local sale and crops for shipment to other Colombian markets.
- ▶ Complete elimination of coca is required within 12 months after the initial delivery of food crop seeds and plants.
- ▶ Assistance for the production of heart of palm has begun, with an estimated USAID investment of \$180,000.
- ▶ Assistance provided to indigenous communities for food crops, medicinal plants, and other crops totals \$505,000.
- ▶ Alternative development programs are complemented by municipal development and activities for internally displaced persons.

USAID is applying lessons in Colombia that were learned in Peru and Bolivia

- ▶ Alternative development is part of a coordinated approach that includes interdiction of trafficking and involuntary crop eradication. In Bolivia, this eradication was done manually by the army, while in Colombia, it is being done by aerial spraying. Both interdiction and involuntary eradication disrupt markets, raising costs for traffickers who then lower the farmgate price offered to farmers.
- ▶ One motivator for acceptance of alternative development is the farmers' perception that drug crop production is accompanied by offensive social effects. This view is most strongly held among indigenous communities, where cultural survival is an important theme. Farmers view illicit drug production as bringing increased drug and alcohol use, loss of work ethic, increased prostitution, and violence.
- ▶ Alternative development must provide two economic stimuli to a small farmer. First, it must cushion the short-term loss of income due to eradication of coca. In Peru, this required delivery of emergency food aid in 1997-8, due to the rapid success of interdiction in driving down the price of coca leaf. Second, alternative development must provide a reliable source of licit income. Due to drug market disruption by interdiction and eradication, licit income does not have to replace a farmer's coca income dollar for dollar.
- ▶ Small farmers maintain a diversified crop mix, both in food crops for home consumption and in cash crops. To them, coca and poppy are merely cash crops that are especially profitable and without serious problems of transportation or spoilage. These farmers usually require several years of dependable governance and access to licit markets before they decide to permanently remove coca or poppy as a possible crop option.
- ▶ A national government must have programs prepared in anticipation of rapid reduction in coca incomes, as seen in Peru. Manual eradication is slower than aerial spraying, but both eventually cause dissatisfaction due to the loss of income from the illicit coca or poppy.
- ▶ A national government must build and maintain a consensus among local governments and civil society on drug eradication. This consensus is especially important at the beginning of the program, and at the very end, when the least cooperative growers are having their crops eradicated.