

**Beneficiary**

Small-holder farmers in Nicaragua

Led by

IICA, with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Development, Industry and Trade and the National Agrarian University

Time-frame

June 2010 – December 2012

STDF funding

US\$560,994 (total project value US\$764,644)

MEETING STANDARDS TO DRIVE AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS FROM NICARAGUA

The safe trade gap

Nicaragua's farmers were at risk of losing their opportunities to export to markets in Central America, the US and EU due to a lack of awareness and know-how on how to meet international SPS measures. Small-scale farmers and the communities most dependent on agriculture for sustaining their livelihoods were among the most vulnerable. They needed to meet standards and get their farms certified, which in turn would help to protect the supply chain and give domestic and international buyers assurances on food safety for the end consumer.

Partnership approach

Strong public-private sector cooperation and coordination was a driving force in raising awareness and running a hands-on SPS training service for local producers. With IICA's support, government ministries, the General Directorate of Plant and Animal Health and the National Accreditation Office joined forces with private sector partners, including Walmart, and NGOs. SPS training units were set up to run training for farmer groups with practical manuals and user-friendly resources such as leaflets and videos. Farmers were engaged through highly participatory sessions, based on a "learning by doing" approach and the use of 35 demonstration plots nationwide.

Results

Improved training on international standards raised farmers' knowledge levels, leading to more certified farms, price increases and better access to export markets. For instance:

- Technical training on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) reached nearly 6,350 farmers and producers (30% of them women) at over 275 events.
- Thanks to the project, the number of GAP-certified farms rose to 125, from less than three. Incomes for small producers increased as a result of complying with SPS standards, helping to tackle poverty in local communities.
- Trade volumes of sesame seeds saw a 48.5% growth in volume and 16.5% increase in price between 2013-2015.
- Manuals were developed and training on standards reached 35 national experts in the field, HACCP training on food safety was held with 25 officials, and 1,000+ students were trained.

Sustaining impact

- An independent evaluation in 2016 found that "incomes for small producers increased as a consequence of complying with SPS requirements". The project was "significantly impacting local and export markets" and "helped to alleviate poverty for farmer beneficiaries and their communities".
- The impact is expanding to other crops, with the number of certified farms of pithaya rising from 20 to 60 in 2015 and farmers being able to export to the US market, thanks to knowledge built up under the project.
- With GAP-related subjects forming a regular part of the curriculum of local universities, over 700 students have since been trained, which in turn is supporting a robust food production system nationwide.

"Through Good Agricultural Practices, small producers positioned themselves in national and international markets, improved family income and the ability to invest in their farms. This created a virtuous circle of sustainability and production growth. Producers are now investing in other crops for export".

Mauricio Carcache,
IICA Nicaragua

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