

7. Agriculture

7.1 Overview of Agricultural Sector

Though agriculture accounted for one-third of value added in the early 1970's, employed two-thirds of the labor force, and was the source of 80% of exports, crop yields are low, the use of improved seed and of fertilizers is minimal, and losses to disease are high. Bananas, 65% of which are produced by two foreign companies, is the major exception. Other major crops, coffee, corn, and beans, are more often grown by small farmers using traditional methods. Coffee, corn, and beans, as well as being the primary subsistence crops, are exported, the latter two primarily to CACM countries. Sector development is limited by ignorance of modern farming techniques, deficient public services to farmers, lack of access to land, skewed ownership of land now under cultivation, and land use patterns.

In 1974 the rural population of about 1.93 million (300,000 families) was distributed over 178,000 farm units, 75,000 of which exceeded 5 hectares. One-third of these rural families had incomes above subsistence level (75,000 who had larger farms and 25,000 banana workers), one-third had insufficient land for subsistence, and one-third were landless. Poverty is greatest in the southwest along the border with El Salvador because of rough terrain, poor soils, and limited infrastructure. Increasing peasant unrest has recently resulted in a rural development policy emphasizing land redistribution, based on allowable maximum farm sizes and efficiency of use and production. Land under banana, sugarcane, African palm, coffee, pineapple, citrus, and tobacco (all significant or potential exports) is not subject to expropriation as long as efficient production is maintained.

Redistribution of expropriated land was begun in October 1975 with groups (asentamientos) working larger farms on a cooperative basis the major beneficiaries. By the end of 1978, the National Agrarian Institute (charged with implementation of the Agrarian Reform Program) had distributed 203,833 ha. of land to a total of 35,586 families organized into 1,240 groups.

Expanding sugarcane plantings and sugar production, for which Honduras' climate and cheap labor market are ideal, are expected to increase exports substantially by early 1980's. Experimental planting of melons, cucumbers, and other vegetables for export is underway in the Choluteca area.

Cattle production is the primary livestock activity and beef is the fourth largest export. Recent improvements in animal nutrition indicate improvement in management practices, although death rates have been higher than in neighboring countries, and reproduction rate and marketing weights lower. Little incentive is given to dairy production and milk imports have increased significantly.

Forestry products are potentially the greatest exportable natural resource: two-thirds of the country's land area (about 7.0 million ha.) is forested. At present roughly 2.7 million ha. of coniferous and 4.0 million hectares of broad-leaved forest exist; the remaining 0.3 million hectares are mangroves and swamps. Since broadleaved forests contain relatively few commercially known species and since these do not grow in pure stands and, once cut, are difficult to process, nearly all wood used for commercial purposes comes from coniferous forests.

The practice of shifting agriculture, employing widespread burning of forests, as well as cutting for fuelwood have caused rapid depletion of forest resources and increasingly serious soil erosion problems. Present exploitation practices are also wasteful; only about 70% of usable wood reaches the mills, and only one-third of that ends up as lumber. Very little additional processing of lumber exists. Plywood and minor forest products are produced in small quantities. With a view to better forest management, the GOH passed a decree in 1974 creating the Honduran Forest Development Corporation (COHDEFOR) and put all forest trees (regardless of land ownership) under state ownership.

(See also section 5.12, Housing Types, Materials, Construction, and Services.)

7.2 Current Status (1980)

Crops, accounting for about three-fourths of agricultural production, grew by less than 2% in 1980. Gains were largely from new coffee trees coming into production and from a 66% expansion in sugarcane area since 1978. Most of the area under banana cultivation damaged by Hurricane Fifi had been rehabilitated; the national target is to surpass the 1974 area of 21,530 ha. by another 2,470 ha. Though corn production exceeded the 1979 level of 343,000 tons by 5%, it was below earlier estimates due to flooding in the northern part of the country in mid-September. The output of rice, sorghum, and cotton was below 1979 levels. Reduced slaughter kept livestock production 5% below the 1979 output of 61,000 tons despite an increase in the national herd from 2.2 million head in early 1980 to 2.3 million at the beginning of 1981.

7.3 Crop Dates

<u>Crop</u>	<u>J</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>J</u>	<u>J</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>O</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>Comments</u>
Cereals									H	H	H		
Wheat									H	H	H		
Maize									H				Some Yield Aug-Mar
Sorghum									H				Some Yield Aug-Oct
Rice				P	P					H			Some Yield Sep-Nov
Sugar													
Cane cut		H	H	H	H								
Tubers													
Potatoes								H	H				Some Yield Oct-Dec
Sweet Potatoes								H	H				Year round Yields
Cassava								H	H				Year round Yields
Legumes													
Dry beans	PH	P						H	HP	PH		HP	Some Yield Aug-Jan
Green beans and peas	H	H	H										
Groundnuts			H	H									
Oranges	H	H	H	H									Some Year Round
Mangoes				H	H	H							
Bananas and Plantains						H	H						Some Year Round
Coffee											H	H	
Cacao								H					
Cotton	H											H	
Tobacco	H	H	H	H									

H - Harvesting

P - Planting

7.4 Agricultural Imports

The value of agricultural imports in 1980, \$81 million, was \$11 million over the 1979 total. Grains, including 80,000 tons of wheat, 60,000 tons of corn, and 5,000 tons of rice, constituted the main import.

7.5 Agricultural Exports

Agricultural exports totaled \$536 million in 1980 compared with \$499 million in 1979. Earnings from coffee were 23% above the 1979 level although the volume of coffee remained virtually unchanged. Banana prices were also slightly higher. 1980 exports included (value in US\$ millions): 61,000 tons of coffee (223), 847,000 tons of bananas (207), 26,000 tons of refrigerated meat (109), 83,000 tons of sugar (56), 9,000 tons of cotton (56), 4,000 tons of tobacco (22), 13,000 tons of fruit preserves (9).

Honduras

-  International boundary
-  Departamento boundary
-  National capital
-  Departamento capital
-  Railroad
-  Road

0 25 50 75 100 Kilometros
0 25 50 75 100 Miles

