

Basic guidelines and business plan for Community Gardens in Honduras

LSU Extension Project

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Table of Contents

Starting a Community Garden in Honduras	2
Planting Guide	4
Business Plan for a Community Garden in Honduras	7
Starting a Farmers Market	10
Bibliography	12

Starting a Community Garden in Honduras

1. Stakeholders

Determine stakeholders of the potential community garden. It is better if a committee or a team directs the community garden. It is necessary that the community is engaged in the development of the garden in its whole process. (Hutchison)

2. Leadership and Guidelines

It is necessary that the team or committee directing the project is elected by the community and consider the major interests of the community. If possible, have people from Zamorano meeting with people interested and deciding coordinators for each community project. They must understand the limitations and restrictions that the community wants. For example, the volume of the participants, the people allowed entering the garden, and other possible restrictions. People that benefit from the project must get involved in all the phases of the project.

3. Funding

Approach sponsors for funding. This will include municipalities, central government, NGO's, churches, schools, private business and private donors. Also, fundraisers can be done. Consider Initial investment costs and variable costs throughout the whole project from the beginning. Financing must cover both startup and continuous support. (Timmerman, 2021)

4. Site Selections

Find the best garden site for optimal production. Evaluate the conditions of the site: sunlight hours, soil fertility, slope, available water. A soil tests from multiple locations on the selected site should be conducted to determine fertility needs. A water test should also be conducted to determine water quality. If the soil and/or water results are not acceptable for production another site should be selected. (Timmerman, 2021)

5. Ownership

Have permission of the site's owners or government permission if it is a public space for a considerable amount of time (at least one year).

6. Community Engagement

Maintain the communities' engagement in order to have a successful community garden. Volunteers from the community have to participate in workdays to build and maintain the community garden. The volunteers must work together with leadership provided by the committee or a person selected as the leader. A calendar and rotation of workers with a "chore list" will provide the best results. Seasonal gatherings to celebrate the garden and the people working in the garden are important to maintain moral. (Timmerman, 2021)

7. Education

Involve education in the process. Schools and nearby universities can use the site in order to teach many classes relate to production of crops, from agriculture to commercialization and cooking of these crops.

8. Production Schedule and Market

Design the production schedules. Determine the best crops or vegetables to grow. This will depend on the natural conditions available for each community. Gardeners should refer to the list of vegetables that grow best in their climatic zone (see reference manual). In addition, it will depend on the market. Optimally the community garden should benefit the community where it is located. Thus, local markets should be considered as the first option for sale of produce. If the output of production is significant there is potential for organizing clusters so that there is a great potential for larger markets.

9. Implement

Clean the site, prepare the land and get started.

Planting Guide

Recommended Crops in Honduras (FAO, 2015) (Lardizabal y Medlicott, 2010)

Cereals (Poaceae's)

Sowing Period

Crops	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Temp
Rice (Oryza Sativa)													Warm
Sorghum (Sorghum bicolor)													Warm
Corn (Zea mays)													Semi- warm

Legumes and Oilseeds (Fabaceae's)

Sowing Period

Crops	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Temp
Soy (Glycine max)													Warm
Cotton (Gossypium hirsutum)													Warm
Sesame (Sesamum indicum)													Warm
Bean (Phaseolus vulgaris)													Semi- warm

Fruits and Vegetables

Sowing Period

Crops	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Temp
Onion (Allium cepa)													Semi-warm
Garlic (Allium sativum)													Cold
Chard (Beta vulgaris)													Cold
Beetroot (Beta vulgaris)													Cold
Cauliflower (Brassica oleracea botrytis)													Cold
Cabbage (Brassica oleracea capitata)													Tempered
Broccoli (Brassica oleracea italica)													Tempered
Sweet pepper (Capsicum annuum)													Semi-warm
Chile (Capsicum frutescens)													Warm
Watermelon (Citrullus lanatus)													Semi-warm
Melon (Cucumis melo)													Semi-warm
Cucumber (Cucumis sativus)													Semi-warm
Pipian (Cucurbita maxima)													Warm

Crops	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Temp
Carrot (Daucus carota)													Tempered
Lettuce (Lactuca sativa)													Tempered
Tomato (Lycopersicon esculentum)													Semi-warm
Chayote squash (Sechium edule)													Semi-warm
Spinach (Spinacia oleracea)													Tropical

Roots and Tuber

Sowing Period

Crops	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Temp
Sweet potato (Ipomoea batatas)													Semi-Warm
Yucca (Manihot esculenta)													Warm
Potato (Solanum tuberosum)													Tempered

Business Plan for a Community Garden in Honduras

Starting the business

- Decide a legal structure for the organization. This will depend on the amount of people involved in the project. It is better for the community, in negotiation terms, to work together. The types of ownerships are divided in two major groups, sole proprietorship and partnerships or corporations. The two most common types of partnership businesses, legally, are Limited Liability Company and Anonymous Company. Also, the organization can have a nonprofit approach. (EUROCHAM, 2020)
- Register the business to the Chamber of Commerce of your municipality. There is a registration fee.
- Legal documents must be presented at the chamber.
- After obtaining registration in CCIT or Chamber of Commerce, there is an ID number called RTN given in the SAR or Rental Administration Service offices.
- Then, you must obtain an operations permit at the municipality.
- It is important to know that the process of operating in Honduras for the agriculture sector can be less formal than in other industries and can be permitted or approved by the Secretary of Agriculture (SAG). Commercialization of most small agriculture production organizations is informal. (CCIT, 2021)

Access to Land

Finding land to grow produce on can be one of the biggest challenges. Often it is necessary to buy farmland and invest in farm equipment. Community gardens, however, have the goal to find the most inexpensive alternative, meaning minimal investment required. This type of land can be:

- disposable land at your home
- neighbor's disposable properties (permission required)
- public spaces that will not be used in the next 1-2 years (permission required)

(Timmerman, 2021)

Financing the Community Garden Project

The financing for the community garden can be from different sources. The organization should seek for the lowest credit interest rates in the market. The advantage of this type of project is that little financing is needed. In addition, many costs can be obtained by donations. Credit sources available are:

- government's solidary credit (1% monthly interest rate)
- other Government's credits (Is there a link to a website where one can find other credits?)

- private Banks' agriculture credits (Banrural, Banco Atlántida, Banco de Occidente, and more)

Donations and fundraising sources:

- Government's Agriculture Department can subsidize seeds and investigation material
- Bigger producers in the zone can donate used equipment needed for growing crops.
- International sponsors can donate through internet.
- International programs such as USAID provide grants to development projects in developing countries like Honduras. Check out this link and look at Honduras!
[https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/10.07.16 -
_RDAP_Small_Grants_Program_Summary.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/10.07.16_-_RDAP_Small_Grants_Program_Summary.pdf)

Managing Costs

The community garden, as all agriculture projects, will incur fixed and variable costs before having any returns. The project will start to generate money for the organization when the cycle of production for the crop is completed and it is ready to sale. It is necessary that the community gather enough funding to maintain the garden. Most of the costs for community gardens are variable. They will depend on the amount of plants and the size of growing area. However, the community garden model minimizes costs that other agriculture projects may incur. In maintenance, owners and stakeholders work together to divide responsibilities depending on the amount of disposable time of the people involved. It is best that community gardens rely primarily on disposable or volunteer time and not invest in wages for production of crops. Instead, funds should be used to keep collaborators motivated. Having social gatherings with the people involved that includes food and beverages is a very good way to keep people engaged and and enjoy the fruits of their labor. The majority of costs of community gardens are low which depends on the capabilities of the community involved and the amount of funds raised.

Market

Community gardens like most other agricultural businesses must have a clear vision of the potential market. All of the produce of the community garden is without aggregate value. Therefore, the prices will be controlled by the market. Because crops grow better in certain seasons, a good rotation and diversity of crops can assure a continuous cash flow for the organization. Also, if the producers are capable of growing crops in seasons that the local supply is low, the prices will be higher increasing the possible returns for the organization. The best market practice is to have a rotation of different crops in order to assure that at least one of the crops produced has positive returns and a good market price.

It is also very important to know the possible market channels for the produce. In the case of the community garden, the best and most plausible options are selling to farmers markets and local consumers. A global trend is that people want to consume more fresh, locally grown products and to know where the food comes from. Therefore, it is a great opportunity

for community gardens to have direct contact to the final consumers. The organizations volunteer gardeners may also purchase and consume the produce. The produce that is not sold locally must be sold to other through other market channels. If the community does not have a farmers market, it would be very good to ally with other producers to address the potential of starting one.

Starting a Farmers Market

A farmers market is a great option for small farmers to have a more profitable way to sell crops. These markets by design, remove the intermediaries, which provides for better locally sourced produce and increased profits for the producers. In addition, it can have benefits for the consumer by providing access to fresh, locally produced food. Farmers markets have become popular in both rural and urban communities. (Mass.gov, 2021)

1. Goals

To start a farmers market you must first develop goals. The primary goal can be to increase profitability. In addition, the farmers market model allows having other specific goals that are non-monetary benefits. For example, it can help to promote the agriculture of the region. In addition, it will allow the farmers to understand what their customers prefer and want of their crops. Markets should select the most important goals for the farmers market and continue by searching for other partners. (Mass.gov, 2021)

2. Society

For a farmers market to be successful, it is crucial to partner with other local producers. It is important that the farmers that are going to be part of the farmers market are enthusiastic about the idea and are willing to work hard to make it happen. Also, when the farmer markets is grower oriented, it will allow the organization to be more marketable and attract more clients. (Mass.gov, 2021)

3. Market analysis

Knowing the potential market will increase the probabilities of having a farmers market for the long term. First, it is important to know if the market exists. If the market exists, the next step is to determine the type of people who will shop at it. By knowing the market, it will also help the farmers in the organization to know what to produce in order to make these potential clients satisfaction.

4. Funding

A farmers market can be created with very little funding, however some invest money will help make it more marketable. It will depend on the potential consumer's consumption capacity. The funding for the farmers market can be gathered with the community garden funding sources. In comparison, the farmers market requires a lot less funding. It is much more important to plan the logistics of making the crops available and making the costs stay as low as possible.

5. Location

Site selection is very important to consider visibility, accessibility, parking, and attractive. The site for some markets are owned by one or more of the farmers that are part of the organization. Many sites are locations that are owned by the government or the

municipality to help the agriculture sector of the area. Still, the decision has to be made keeping the potential customers in mind and if it is convenient for them to access. Space for parking will depend on how far away the consumers are and what type of transportation they have. (IFAS extension, 2021)

6. Products for Sale

By knowing who the potential customers are, it is easier to decide what products are going to be for sale. It can vary. Farmers can sell only fresh products or even sell products with aggregate value. Also, it can be a market specific for vegetables, or it can include other crops such as fruits, dairy, eggs and meats. In many occasions, people have fruit trees and many of those fruits are given away or lost. Therefore, a farmers market can allow many people to find a market for what they produce. People usually like diversity and to go buy many things in one place. Therefore, the more people participate and the more crops are available the better. An alternative to the farmers market is a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) which has become a popular way for consumers to buy local, seasonal food directly from a farmer.

7. When to Operate

The best day for a market is Saturday because customers have more time to do their shopping. This will depend if there are other farmers market in the same area.

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