



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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Women Entrepreneurs Make Strides in the Coffee Sector



USAID/ACCESO

Eunice (right) and Karen Arita process and package coffee for their business, Café ARAMIL. Feed the Future helped them increase sales by 35 percent.

More than half of Honduras's 8.5 million people live in rural areas where agriculture is the main source of income and employment. Life in these remote parts of the country can be challenging, and 68 percent of rural households live in poverty. The task of managing families' daily needs often falls to women, but with limited access to incomes, inputs or training, they struggle to fully participate in the agriculture sector.

Recognizing that women play a major role in improving food security and nutrition, [a Feed the Future program in Honduras](#) funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development is investing in activities that improve women's access to critical resources and decision-making authority.

In San Pedro Tutule, La Paz, Feed the Future is supporting a group of women coffee processors who call themselves "Entrepreneurs of the Future."

Melida Velasquez, Victoria Manueles, Francisca Chinchilla and Maria Felix formed a business in 2012 and have been working with Feed the Future ever since. The women receive training in basic business skills and processing practices, and their husbands receive on-farm training in improved production practices.

Their business has been diversifying and increasing its sales every year. Initially producing for small local stores, the women are now preparing orders for customers in distant cities such as San Pedro Sula and Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras. Since 2012, they have nearly doubled their sales, from 5,000 to 8,000 pounds of coffee annually, and they are projecting sales in excess of 10,000 pounds for 2015.

With their increasing profits, the women purchased a thresher, roaster and grinder, and now provide these services - as well as packaging - to neighboring coffee farmers to augment their income. They plan to invest in an industrial toaster and a solar dryer, equipment that will help increase their production capabilities.

Each of the "Entrepreneurs of the Future" earns about \$2,000 per year to complement their husbands' farming incomes. By contributing significantly to household earnings, the women have more authority in deciding how the money is spent. They have chosen to invest in their children's education and to purchase small plots of land.

"I have encouraged women to be part of this group so they can earn their own money," Felix says. "I have shared my knowledge with them and with other women in the area. With this company, we have been able to change the taste of local consumers for really good coffee."

Feed the Future is also helping two sisters in Santa Rosa de Copan launch a small coffee processing business, Café ARAMIL. Eunice and Karen Arita founded the company in 2012 and quickly realized they needed support to turn their idea into a viable business. With technical support from Feed the Future, the Arita sisters conducted a full business diagnostic to identify opportunities for growth. Based on the results, the project provided a suite of training courses in market-driven production, improved productivity, and finance and administration.

After two years of support from Feed the Future, the Aritas have cut down on processing time and costs and increased their sales by 35 percent. More significantly for their long-term prospects, their firm is registered as a formal business, which opens doors for potentially lucrative contracts with national supermarket chains. Their success is proving to the broader community that women are capable of running efficient and profitable businesses - something that has traditionally been seen as the purview of men.

"In my country, when we talk of a coffee producer, people think of a man in a sombrero," Karen says. "They did not believe all our work was done by women."