

THE STORY BEHIND THE RESULTS: FOCUSING ON NICARAGUA'S NEXT GENERATION OF FARMERS

Although the world's food is grown in rural areas, people living in these areas are not free from malnutrition, a condition that affects young children in particular. There are many challenges involved in increasing food security, including low productivity, high costs and gaps in modern techniques and technologies. By targeting the men and women farmers of the future in northern Nicaragua, Solidarité Union Coopération (SUCO) is helping the next generation to overcome these challenges and ensure the future success and sustainability of rural farmers.

Since 2010, with support from Canada, SUCO's PROGA-Jeunes project has helped more than 1,000 Nicaraguan young people improve production yields on their experimental agricultural plots. In addition, 107 ha have been cultivated using agro-ecological farming practices, 36 facilitators and technicians have been trained, 502 young people and their families have received training on gender equality, and 140 environmental protection and 614 productive infrastructure projects have been implemented.



One of these young farmers-in-the-making, 20-year-old Duglas Mendez Espinoza, runs a farm near San Andrés together with his parents and four brothers. Through training and technical guidance provided by PROGA-Jeunes, Duglas and his family have increased their farm revenues by 80 percent by diversifying crops, adopting agro-ecological practices and marketing part of their production.

"I didn't know how to farm effectively," said Duglas. "Traditional methods were very expensive. At first, my family and I were not convinced that agro-ecological methods would be successful, especially since our neighbours told us we would face crop diseases and pests."

One such infrastructure project is also a source of pride for 16-year-old Dimas Ramón Olivas Sánchez: a rearing pond for tilapia he built himself that can hold 200 fish. Thanks to this pond and the knowledge Dimas acquired from the PROGA-Jeunes project, the family farm has tripled the number of its income-generating food products, from 5 to 15. "With all of these products, my family has access to food for at least 10 months of the year," said Dimas.