

# Honduras Fact Sheet

## Background: Honduras

Honduras is a lower middle-income country with a per capita income of about U.S \$1,190 and a population of about 7.5 million. Currently, more than two thirds of the population in Honduras live in poverty, with nearly 58 percent in rural areas solely dependent on agriculture for their livelihood<sup>1</sup>. World Bank studies have shown that there needs to drastic improvements in the quality of education system to increase productivity and incomes<sup>2</sup>. On average, Honduras spends much more on public education than any other Latin American country, but still faces problems in general service provisions, low performance and low teacher accountability. The government is addressing these issues by encouraging and implementing reforms and initiatives to the education system that increase the quality of education, increase enrollment rates among the poor, improve access and quality of secondary and higher education schools, emphasize agricultural education and training to all students, and equip graduates with practical information that can be used in the real world.



## Present Status

The educational system in Honduras is broken into pre-primary education, primary education, middle education, and higher education. Primary education (ages 6-14) focuses on the natural sciences (biology, chemistry, and physics) with little mention of agriculture in the curriculum. However, specialized agricultural education becomes an option during middle education (ages 15-17) for those who choose or are placed in the professional (vocational) track. There has been a sharp increase in technical and professional agricultural programs between 1990-2001, from 7 to 61 programs in upper secondary with enrollment rates as high as 82 percent. Honduras has a low number of higher education institutions compared to other Central American countries. Of the 20 institutions of higher education, only six have agriculture or agribusiness programs.

<sup>1</sup> Pavon, Fernando Yitzack. "Improving educational quality in Honduras: Building a demand-driven education market." *Journal of Public and International Affairs* 19.1 (2008): 194-213.

<sup>2</sup> World Bank (2013). *Honduras Overview*. Retrieved from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/honduras/overview>

### **Public Universities with Agricultural Programs**

- The National Autonomous University of Honduras
- The National University of Agriculture
- The National School of Forest Sciences

### **Private Universities with Agriculture Programs**

- The Panamerican School of Agriculture-Zamorano
- The University of José Cecilio del Valle
- The University of San Pedro Sula



## **Challenges and Issues**

There are several barriers facing the overall education system in Honduras. Most education funds are used for payroll purposes and reports of high teacher absence and inflated hours proliferate while school structures and resources remain poor. Challenges at the primary school level include high drop-out rates in rural areas, large distances from school, and lack of relevant agricultural curriculum for students. A need for the expansion of secondary schools is a major issue in Honduras, with only 900 secondary schools compared to 11,000 primary centers. More challenges at the secondary level include poor infrastructures with limited resources, under-qualified teachers and staff, few available public institutions, and lack of relevant education at a level needed to improve agricultural production. Limitations on higher agricultural education include: a low number of students admitted into agricultural programs at universities, few higher education agricultural programs, frequent student strikes over unreliable education, and a disconnect between agricultural education institutions, the government and the demands of the labor market.

## **Next Steps and Recommendations**

To address some of the issues in the agricultural education system, vital linkages between institutions, markets and the government need to be improved and strengthened. Findings from research on the Honduran education system and Honduran student focus group interviews resulted in some recommendations for building the capacity of agricultural and education training systems. They include:

- Improving the existing infrastructure and increasing facilities
- Improving teaching methods, practices, and biases to reduce the repetition and dropout rate—especially among boys
- Increasing private/public partnerships to provide more opportunities for students to continue schooling
- Establishing agricultural curriculum that is relevant to societal needs and that provides graduates with the necessary skills to succeed in the labor market
- Upgrading teaching practices by placing a higher emphasis on practical applications of agricultural theory
- Implementing performance monitoring programs to reduce teacher absence and increase performance
- Increasing public investment in education, especially for poor and rural populations
- Exploring new ways for funding higher education institutions to make them more accessible to students from poorer and rural backgrounds
- Increasing opportunities for relevant agricultural research, practice and internships



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