



**Trip Report:** Visit to FADCANIC's Center for Agricultural and Environmental Education (CEAA) and Center for Agroforestry (CAF) in Wawashang, Nicaragua

**Dates:** Monday, October 19, 2015 to Friday, October 23, 2015

**Traveler(s):** Henry Quesada-Pineda, Associate professor, Department of Sustainable Biomaterials and John Ignosh, Extension Specialist, Department of Biosystems Engineering

**Institution(s):** Virginia Tech

**Background:** Since its inception in 1990, the Foundation for the Autonomy and Development of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua (FADCANIC) has worked to improve the quality of social, economic, and political relations of the indigenous and ethnic communities of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. The Center for Agroforestry and Environmental Education (CEAA) and the Center for Agroforestry (CAF) are two of the key educational and value-adding generation programs of FADCANIC. The CEAA started in 2004 funded mainly through the Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund (SAIH) and later on through funding from the United States International Agency for Development (USAID). CEAA offers a basic rural technical degree (TBR) and a medium rural technical degree (TMR) which is equivalent to a high school degree. For each degree, there is an emphasis in agroforestry and another one in carpentry. CEAA graduates about 40 youth each year with a current population of 210 students from seven different ethnic groups from the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua.

With the support of SAIH and USAID, CEAA has excelled in providing educational, entrepreneurial, and professional opportunities to the at-risk youth population in the region. Students who graduate from the program develop entrepreneurial skills to return to their farms and set up their own business activities. Others might continue to pursue higher education degrees in local universities. A third career pathway could be to seek employment in one of the local agricultural or agroforestry industries in the region.

**Purpose:** The goal of this trip was to determine and understand the features that make the CEAA program successful. Specific objectives of the trip included:

- Interview administrative personnel, faculty, students, and alumni in order to find out strengths and weaknesses of the CEAA's model

- Understand the regional, social, and political context where CEAA and CAF are embedded and the role of external and internal support organizations such as SAIH, USAID, and the National Institute of Technology of Nicaragua (INATEC).
- Develop specific strategies that similar organizations in other developing-InnovATE targeted countries could follow to replicate CEAA's model.

**Site(s) Visited:**

- USAID mission at the US Embassy in Managua
- FADCANIC offices in Bluefields
- CEAA and CAF campus in Wawashang

**Description of Activities:**

- Interview with the USAID personnel involved with FADCANIC's programs at the US Embassy in Managua.
- Interviews with administrative personnel (both CEAA and CAF), faculty, students and alumni in Wawashang.
- Interview with FADCANIC's leadership
- Tour of the CEAA and CAF campus.
- Team meetings to summarize interviews and cross-check collected data.

CAF and CEAA are two of the most important programs of FADCANIC in the Atlantic Region of Nicaragua. Both programs are located on a 300-hectare farm in Wawashang, Nicaragua. FADCANIC does not receive support from the Nicaraguan government in terms of funding. The link of CEAA with the government is mainly through INATEC as CEAA's curriculum and degrees must be certified and approved by INATEC. For some stakeholders, the success of FADCANIC programs could be attributed to several reasons, including: little intervention from the government, strong and passionate leadership, the cultural diversity of the Atlantic region coupled with the school's ability to embrace this diversity within its programs, strong support from local communities, and the geographical location of FADCANIC's programs. A critical success factors is FADCANIC's leadership in the region. Since its foundation, FADCANIC's leadership has been able to develop great relationships with external organizations such as SAIH and USAID and also with local communities in the Atlantic Region to support FADCANIC's programs. However; there is internal and external concern as the senior leadership of FADCANIC might retire soon and there is not a clear succession plan.

CAF is a value-adding generation center that transforms agroforestry products into value-added products that are currently placed in the local market in the Atlantic Region. In addition, CAF acts as a research center where tropical crops are improved through various mechanisms and results are transferred to at least 2,000 families in the region. CAF employs 60 people in different positions such as field workers, processing, administrative, and marketing positions. Main products produced at CAF are coconut oil, palm heart, fruit and vegetable flours, and cocoa powder under the brand Wawashang and are currently sold at FADCANIC's locations under a special permit. However, CAF is very close to finally obtaining government permits to be able to expand CAF's distribution channels to supermarkets and similar venues. Even though CAF is making good progress in the path of becoming self-sustained, the majority of operational funds still come from the program Agenda for Innovation (Agenda para la Innovación), a different FADCANIC's program. CAF needs to continue to promote their brand not only in

regional markets but also in national and export markets. If CAF is to become self-sustained, it would need to improve their current production capacity and considerably strengthen up their marketing efforts (pricing, promotion, distribution channels and products offering).

The case of CAEE is similar to CAF in terms of funding and support. CEAA activities depend heavily on contributions from SAIH to support its 43 employees (faculty and technicians) and current 210 students (USAID provides support to 30 students out of the total enrollment). CEAA generates income by selling some of the products produced in the farm to the local market and to CAF for further processing. There have been also opportunities to generate revenue at CEAA by contracting furniture and other forest products that can be manufactured by students under the carpentry emphasis. However; the strategy of becoming self-sustained by selling CEAA's farm and wood products is still in its early stages. For CEAA; increased volume, higher value-added production strategies, and stronger marketing skills are much needed if CEAA is to become self-sustained. An intriguing strategy could be to unify efforts between CAF and CAEE instead of just having two financially independent organizations, as it appears to be now. There is strong collaboration between CAF and CEAA in terms of teaching, research, and extension activities but it seems that both centers operate under a different financial structure and the profits from CAF are not transferred to CAEE.

#### List of Contacts Made:

Last Name	First Name	Title/Organization	Contact Info (address, phone, email)
Solis	Jennifer	Co-Director, CEAA	ulrikasolis23@gmail.com
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Castillo	Gilbertson	Teacher, CEAA	Students, teachers, and alumni might be contacted through Jennifer Solis, CEAA Co-Director at <a href="mailto:ulrikasolis23@gmail.com">ulrikasolis23@gmail.com</a> or at +(505) 5782-3765
Gonzalez	Indiana	Teacher, CEAA	
Plataola	Kattia	Teacher, CEAA	
Ocampo	Fátima	Teacher, CEAA	
Ensard	Collins	Student, CEAA	
Joshep	Yorshani	Student, CEAA	
Campos	Jason	Student, CEAA	
Campos	Heriberto	Student, CEAA	
Taylor	Lillith	Student, CEAA	
Romero	Isaí	Alumni, CEAA	
Lopez	Cesar	Alumni, CEAA	
Hernandez	Elizabeth	Alumni, CEAA	

**Appendix:**

**Trip Log: (activities by day)**

**FADCANIC's CEAA Itinerary**

**October 18-23, 2015**

**InnovATE project**

Sunday, October 18, 2015

- Arrival to Managua. John from DC and Henry from Costa Rica
- Stay at hotel Camino Real

Monday, October 20, 2015

- 10am. Meeting with USAID Yassin Osman and Alicia Slate at the US Embassy at Managua
- 2pm. Departure to Bluefields by airplane
- Stay at Hotel Oasis in Bluefields

Tuesday, October 20, 2015

- 9am. Departure to CEAA campus (Wawashang) by boat
- 11am. Arrival to CEAA campus
- 1pm to 5pm. Meetings with students, administrators and faculty
- Stay at CEAA campus

Wednesday, October 21, 2015

- 8am to 3pm. Tour of CEAA and CAF campus. Continue with interviews and tour of FADCANIC projects
- 3pm. Return to Bluefields by Boat
- 5pm. Conversation with Hazel Willson at FADCANIC office

Thursday, October 22, 2015

- 8am to 12pm. Team meeting to summarize interview data
- 2pm. Departure to Managua by airplane
- Stay at Hotel Camino Real

Friday, October 23, 2015

- Return trip