El Salvador, much like many Latin American countries has long been based on its agricultural sector. As coffee bean, mango, bananas, seafood, sugar cane, and corn are produced in vast amounts and have been for long period of time as well as international pressure, sustainable agriculture is a growing sector allowing for long-term production with minimal harm to the environment. There have been and continue to be various efforts to aid in sustainable agriculture becoming commonplace some of them include education, La Coordinadora group, Global Giving, subsidiaries, and permaculture. Although there have been numerous efforts that have helped in sustainable agriculture development across the country, there are still many gaps that must be filled.

Some issues that must be overcome in the process include wealth disparities that have existed in the country over the last couple of decades, as well as education rates, and healthy agricultural market competition to foster growth. About 15% of the country is covered in forests (Johnny Jet.com 2013). Because 10% of the population has owned about 78% of arable land, lower income individuals have turned to slash and burn horticulture in an attempt to gain ‘arable’ land---diminishing the amount of forested land.

Today 73.93% of the land is dedicated to agriculture, and has been more constant then ever before in the last five years as slash and burn methods have been diminished (The World Bank 2013). As this has remained constant, the value added in agriculture in respect to GDP has increased to 12.54% after a moment of decrease in the last decade. It is working to surpass its all time high of 14.34% (The World Bank 2013). A big difference in the todays growing value added is the idea that agriculture is practiced not only to obtain day-to-day nutrients, but doing it sustainably in order to maintain equilibrium in the long run. As citizens notice sustainable trends, it will become more of the norm rather than an option.

An integral part in beginning and entertaining an efficient agriculture sustainability system is education and knowledge on processes. In 2001, Salvadoran policy makers made the official decision to dollarize. With dollarization, there have also been socio-economic policies and regulations implemented to influence education. Since dollarization, education enrollment has increased education levels as well as those who complete and go on to tertiary, collegiate level studies. Percentage of students who went on to secondary education (high school) in 1999 was noted to be at 87.68% while in 2011 it had increased to 92.55% (The World Bank 2013). Just as well, enrollment into tertiary education had a boom in enrollment of 191,825 students from 1999 to 2011 (The World Bank 2013). The investments made in education have returned positive yields in cash crop production ($45.5) and have increased real GDP 3-5%. Alternatively, those who do not invest in education, “face declines in soil fertility, productivity, and farming will become unsustainable” (Cocchi, Bravo-Ureta and Quiroga 2004). Farming families have reaped the benefits from investments as such, and the government is moving towards an increase in this sort of investments as well although they are still lacking.



The agriculture market, as any other, has its’ curves as is seen in figure 1, but nonetheless is increasing. With sustainable agriculture, it is beginning to slowly crawl up again after a period of ‘downfall’ or slowed production. This growth can be attributed to the increasing education levels as well as quality. In 2009, for example, when economic sectors were protected to keep from weakening and decreasing at unsafe rates, the agriculture sector showed the complete opposite (THE ECONOMIST INTELLIGENCE UNIT 2009).

 Global giving initiative has been successful in working with rural communities that have challenges in poverty, flooding, lack of infrastructure, and basic resources in order to promote self sufficiency in agriculture and organic markets to generate a sustainable income from agriculture growth, innovation, as well as promoting diversification in markets and value added (Global Giving 2007). Not only is value added in terms of markets a great outcome but also helps in promoting healthier communities with diversified diets, less chemicals, and reduce dependence on external markets. In the Following chart we can see the correlation between increased education rates, GDP per capita, and food production index as forest areas decrease. The information was provided by The World Bank, until today there is no proven information of reversing the decreasing forest area trend, but local groups assert to be working towards a solution for regrowth.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Primary Education | Food Production Index | Forest Area  | GDP per Capita (Current US$) |  |  |
| 1992 | 829235 | 85.13 | 17.76 | 1080.47 |  |  |
| 2002 | 987676 | 92.57 | 15.58 | 2381.15 |  |  |
| 2012 | 990681 | 106.52 | 13.63 | 3698.54 |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

The recent growth and betterment of sustainable agriculture in the state has begun to compensate for the harm that was done during civil war and protectionist policies in the “lost decade” that ran in Latin America from 1938-1980 (Edwards 2009). During this period coffee became very popular in powerful countries, such as the United States, and any land possible was used for growing coffee and although it helped them in the short term it caused many deficits in the long term. Land began to erode very easily and quickly, making it more hilly and steep. As land became steep and hill(ed), fertility of the soil was washed away. In the following graph it is notable that after periods of rapid growth, it began to slow due to degradation and overuse in all the wrong manners. The information used to produce this graph was obtained from Permacultura group based in El Salvador.

 In the following graph provided by Cocchi, Bravo-Ureta, and Boris shoes the correlation and various actors that must play a role in sustainability in El Salvador. Salvadoran government has dually noted many of these requirements and as they have begun the process, there is much work to be done. In recent history maquiladoras have become popular in El Salvador, in an effort to invite industrialization and global investment. It has also played a large role in recent growth, but in order to have a balanced and sustainable growth from here on out, Salvadoran government must enforce and incentivize sustainable agriculture, which will ultimately result in higher incomes for those families as well as spilled over benefits into other sectors, such as maquiladoras.



 In researching correlations in sustainable agriculture trends in El Salvador, it was found that the trends are often repeating themselves in recent history. With the increased American influence and international pressure for growth, it is viable that as El Salvador’s agriculture sector experiences a ‘boom’ it will be more sustainable then previous eras. Some limitations of the data used are periods in which there was civil disturbance the country either did not report, or had problems reporting efficiently and accurately. Their reporting methods are not known as well as hard to obtain from poverty struck communities and are sometimes taken from middle-income communities.

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