USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

MAKING TRADE WORK FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

USAID REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM

Making Trade work for the Environment

USAID Regional Environmental Program

During the last two decades, the people of the United States, through the US Agency for International Development (USAID), has contributed to the economic, social, and environmental growth of the Central American region.

Since the signing of the Free Trade Agreement between Central America, Dominican Republic and the United States of America (CAFTA-DR) in 2005, the USAID Regional Environmental Program for Central America and Mexico (E-CAM) has been working to improve trade and environment in the region. Chapter 17 of the Agreement requires countries to establish high levels of environmental protection, as well as improvement and enforcement of their laws.

In order to advance in the compliance of the environmental commitments of the Agreement and overcome the challenges related with implementation, USAID Environmental Cooperation is supporting CAFTA-DR countries in several processes, which represent the greatest positive impacts in the region in the last five years:

- Better wastewater management
- Increased air quality monitoring
- Better solid waste management
- Improved private sector environmental performance
- Informed decision making
- Improved enforcement and compliance

IMPACT OF USAID ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION IN NUMBERS

- More than 13,000 people trained on enforcement and implementation of environmental laws.
- Over 60 improved policies, laws and regulations.
- More than 350 companies adopting cleaner production technologies and energy efficiency practices.
- An average 5% increase in treated wastewater in the region.
- Reached over 2 million people benefiting from air pollution monitoring.
- Information provided to respond to 48 disasters that have occurred across the region.
- Over 150 tons of solid residue and waste recycled.
- Increase in public participation and access to environmental information.

All of the above has favored greater enforcement and compliance of environmental laws, enhanced public participation, and more access to environmental information.

The following impacts confirm that trade can work for the environment and that economic, social, and environmental benefits will not be only for central americans, but also for the people of the United States.

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

In the CAFTA-DR Environmental Cooperation process, there are different strategic partners that have been crucial in achieving the objectives, among them the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA); the US Department of Justice (USDOJ); the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD).

CCAD

Better Wastewater Management

CAFTA-DR contributes to better health and environment

The lack of strong wastewater regulations, standards, analysis, and monitoring resulted in high levels of water contamination in the region. USAID facilitated the design of a Regional Wastewater Regulation aimed at regulating discharge and capacity building for analysis.

In the face of this reality, a Wastewater Model Regulation for Central America was designed through USAID Environmental Cooperation and technical assistance from the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), in coordination with the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD) and constant engagement of environmental authorities and institutions responsible for managing and monitoring wastewater in each country; a scientific methodology that established 12 priority elements in order to regulate outflow discharge.

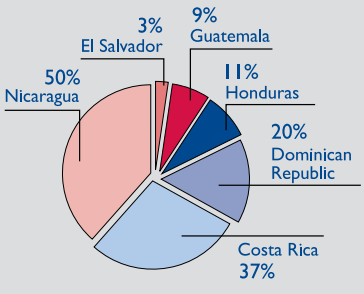
The denominated "Model Regulation for Wastewater" was approved by the region´s Ministers of Environment Council in 2005 and since then, the USAID Cooperation Agreement has facilitated a process that that has permitted some countries to fully adopt the Model, while others are gradually adapting their national regulations to regional parameters, without abandoning their countries´ reality.

The implementation process of the Model Regulation also resulted in the creation of multi-disciplinary workgroups which facilitated environmental authorities to conduct national inventories of existing pollutants discharge in their territory, besides identifying or en la Región: updating the necessary requirements to award waste water discharge permits in their countries, and to create guidelines for the final management and disposal of sludge. Also, a review of guidelines, regulations, and agreements related to Regulation enforcement was made.

Presently, the countries of the region have a stronger regulatory instrument, which allows local institutions to enhance the process of issuing permits and conduct supervisory tasks, audits and assessments with clear parameters.

Simultaneously, the process for implementing the "Model Regulation for Wastewater" has been executed in 6 productive sectors in the region (slaughterhouses, dairy, porcine farms, hotels, textiles, and coffee processing plants). A methodology to define performance standards has been used, as well as the identification of the best technologies available in the market, which facilitate efficient compliance with the law.

Percentage of water treatment in the region



Source: Latinosan Report 2007, The World Bank

Basic elements implementation of wastewater regulation model in CAFTA-DR countries

Basic elements for implementation	HONDURAS	COSTA RICA	DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	NICARAGUA	GUATEMALA	EL SALVADOR
1. Basic knowledge of governing entity						
2. Authorization/Permit Program						
3. Monitoring Program						
4. Compliance mechanisms (inspections/audits and fine calculations)						
5. Discharge parameters establishment						
6. Participation, education and public awareness						
7. Sludge disposal or use						
8. Operators certification						
9. Laboratory accreditation and certification						
10. Non-point source water pollution						
11. Wetland protection and restoration						

Cell color indicates the following:

Red: The country has a process consistent with the Model Regulation, which is being implemented by relevant authorities.

Blue: The country has a proposed process, which is consistent with the Model Regulation and is going to be implemented.

White: This topic has not been dealt with in the country, as it was decided to address iniatilly other prioritized elements.

Some companies are already implementing new technologies in their productive processes to reduce the negative impact on the environment and to comply with the regulation. The importance of protecting the environment and the fact that it does not affect commercial trade has been understood by the private sector.

Additionally, and always in order to guarantee strengthened or strong wastewater management, monitoring is done through reliable analyses. USAID Environmental Cooperation, along with technical support from USEPA, promoted the strengthening of 15 wastewater analysis laboratories in Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica.

The initiative allowed collecting general information on the laboratories, conducting regional workshops to exchange experiences and good practices, auditing of laboratories by USEPA officials, developing specialized courses to train laboratories in different technical areas, and conducting comparison sample testing among the laboratories.

As a result of this process, USEPA selected a laboratory in each country as a national reference, and one additional laboratory as a regional reference for wastewater analysis, based on the best results obtained from the comparative tests. In each country, two more laboratories were added which have been strengthened in wastewater sampling, method validation, and uncertainty measurement.

- **Regional Reference Laboratory:**
  - Environmental Pollution Research Center´s Water Quality Laboratory at the University of Costa Rica (CICA/UCR)

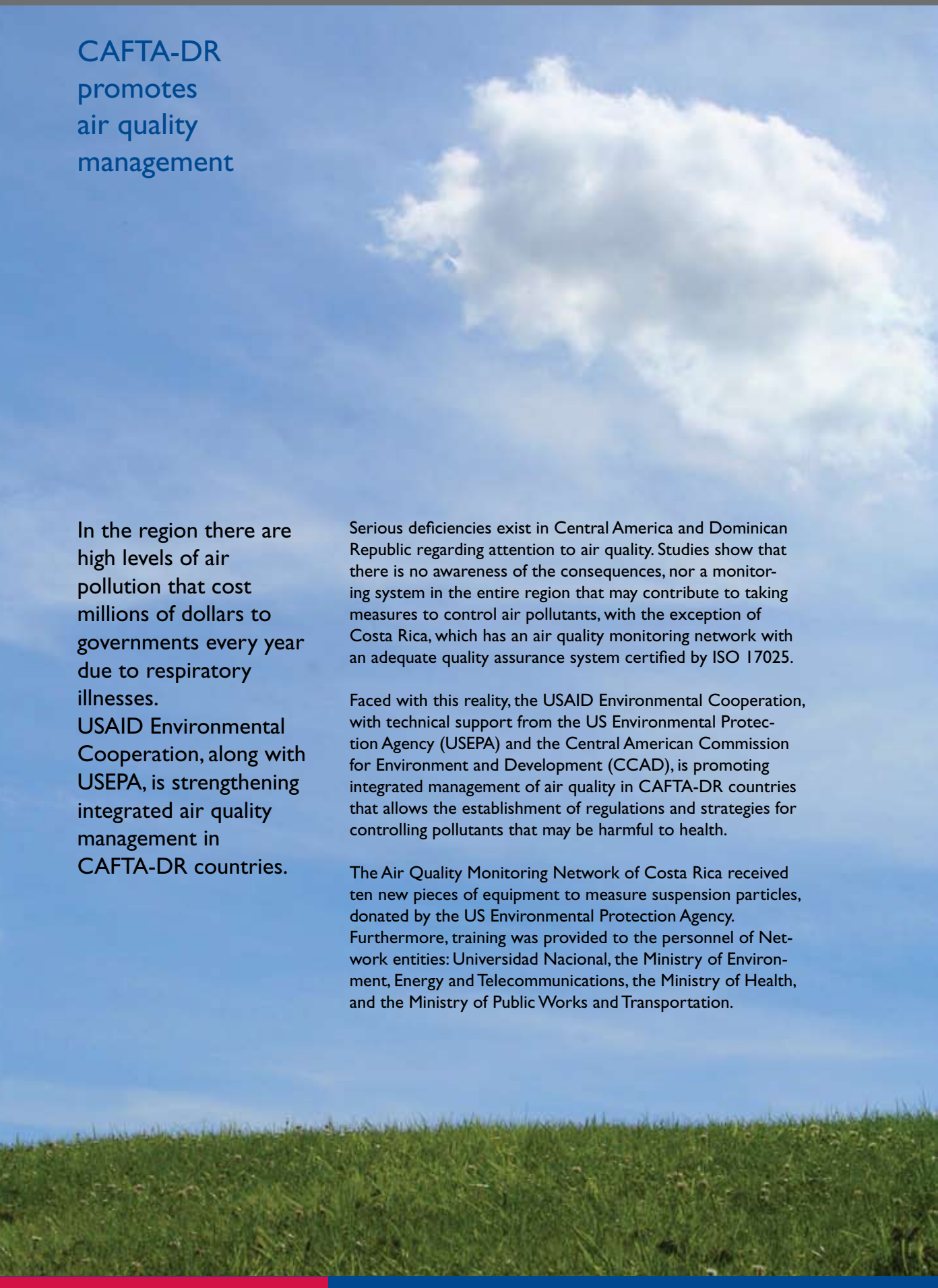
- **National References:**
  - National Administration of Aqueducts and Sewers Laboratory of El Salvador (ANDA)
  - National Health Laboratory of Guatemala
  - National University's Aquatic Resources Research Center of Nicaragua (CIRA/UNAN)
  - Aqueducts and Sewers Institute of Costa Rica (AyA).

There is currently a group of laboratories in the region that satisfy the ISO/IEC 17025 standard, which guarantees that they have a quality system in place and are technically competent and capable of producing valid results, not only for wastewater analysis but also as reference for the evaluation of Exchange products in international trade. The strengthening process and reference laboratories election in Honduras and Dominican Republic is under development.

All of the above has resulted in a treated wastewater percentage increase in the region, which reflects the political will of the countries in favor of higher levels of sanitization that promote health and food safety, without affecting the productivity of the companies, some of which export to the US and largely depend on the compliance with international wastewater standards in order to continue commerce.

Increased Air Quality Monitoring

CAFTA-DR promotes air quality management



In the region there are high levels of air pollution that cost millions of dollars to governments every year due to respiratory illnesses.
USAID Environmental Cooperation, along with USEPA, is strengthening integrated air quality management in CAFTA-DR countries.

Serious deficiencies exist in Central America and Dominican Republic regarding attention to air quality. Studies show that there is no awareness of the consequences, nor a monitoring system in the entire region that may contribute to taking measures to control air pollutants, with the exception of Costa Rica, which has an air quality monitoring network with an adequate quality assurance system certified by ISO 17025.

Faced with this reality, the USAID Environmental Cooperation, with technical support from the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD), is promoting integrated management of air quality in CAFTA-DR countries that allows the establishment of regulations and strategies for controlling pollutants that may be harmful to health.

The Air Quality Monitoring Network of Costa Rica received ten new pieces of equipment to measure suspension particles, donated by the US Environmental Protection Agency. Furthermore, training was provided to the personnel of Network entities: Universidad Nacional, the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Telecommunications, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation.

This has allowed the country to produce a report on air quality of the country´s Great Metropolitan Area since 2009, to be used to take new measures so that all Costa Ricans breathe cleaner air in this area that includes the capital city of San Jose, Alajuela, Heredia, and Cartago, where 60% of the population resides.

The 2009 Air Quality Report confirmed, among other findings, a significant presence of particles originated by public transportation, thus corrective actions have centered more on this sector through bus stops relocation, redefinition of bus routes, improved road emissions supervision, and a better quality control of the fuel used.

With support from USAID cooperation, Costa Rica has also created a National Emissions Inventory which will allow validating a regional methodology in order to collect this type of information.

In the remainder of the countries, the strengthening of air quality monitoring is on its way. Consequently, and with USAID Environmental Cooperation, a group of officials from environmental ministries, secretariats, and related institutions have been trained in order to raise awareness on the importance of knowing the quality of the air their population is breathing, the need of having a monitoring system, the way to disseminate this information, and also the importance of establishing an Air Quality Index as a goal for 2012.

Better Solid Waste Management

CAFTA-DR facilitates commercial exchange and recycling of solid waste

Each year, Central America and Dominican Republic produce an average of 20,000 tons of solid residue and waste per day, and even when some countries have sanitary landfills and controlled dumpsites and their national laws and guidelines establish sanitary landfills as the final disposition of waste, the reality is that a greater portion is deposited in open dumps.

Therefore, with USAID Environmental Cooperation, technical assistance from the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and in coordination with the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD), CAFTA-DR countries are receiving support to reduce pollution generated by solid residue and waste through implementation of different regional activities.

The starting point for these activities is the existence of a standardized regional framework for the integrated management of waste, created by CCAD and approved by the Ministers of environment.

The first initiative was the development of a regional buy/sell market for residue and waste that has the potential of being re-used, by using the Central America and the Caribbean Industrial Residue Exchange, BORSICCA (www.borsicca.com). BORSICCA is an electronic platform for commercializing and/or exchanging residue, which allows to take advantage to re-enter it in different productive chains that are developed in the region, thus preventing or minimizing industrial waste, strengthening the environment, and at the same time encouraging companies to become involved in the use of this tool.

The concept of BORSICCA has been developed and promoted by the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD), with support from USAID-CAFTA-DR Environmental Cooperation. Cleaner Production Centers or Industry Chambers in each country are technical partners, and manage national exchange nodes where plastics, paper, cardboard, metals, glass, oil, organic residue and other non-hazardous materials are commercialized.

USAID Environmental Cooperation supported the design of the electronic platform, the selection and training of an operator in each country, a business plan in order to make the mechanism sustainable, and a strong promotion of the exchange in each country.

Inaugurated in August of 2009, in a little over a year of work, BORSICCA has commercialized nearly 150 tons of solid residue and waste with more than 500 customers or businesses who have used the platform in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Honduras. The mechanism is sustainable and currently operates independently from the cooperation. BORSICCA is the first regional exchange for commercializing industrial residue and sub-products under an appealing concept which will soon be installed in Dominican Republic as well.

Another promoted initiative aims at creating sanitary landfills in every country as the final disposition of waste, with adequate technology and infrastructure for treatment. To date, several countries have their respective plans: El Salvador has the plan to install 6 new sanitary landfills, Costa Rica 4, Guatemala 2, and Honduras 1 sanitary landfills.

Nevertheless, there is no adequate knowledge in the region on the construction and operation of this type of infrastructure, and neither the authorities have the experience to inspect and monitor appropriate parameters.

Therefore, with the CAFTA-DR Environmental Cooperation framework, and with technical support from USEPA, two important instruments are under development: the Construction Guide for Sanitary Landfills and the Operation Guide for Sanitary Landfills, which dictate protocols that must be followed and to be inspected by national or local institutional authorities. These isntruments also provide the guidelines to audit and assess both the construction process and the operation of these facilities in order to guarantee there is no soil and underground water pollution due to the concentration of solid residue and waste in a single location.

Institutional officials that have knowledge on the matter in the countries have participated actively and have given feedback in the process of formulating these instruments and pilot projects that will be implemented in El Salvador and Costa Rica in order to measure their effectiveness.

Additionally, three technical guides on hazardous or special waste management will be developed with technical assistance from USEPA, for the management and disposal of compact fluorescent lamps, mercury, and dry batteries will be developed. This will help countries to have a regional reference for preparing their own domestic instruments for managing these residues.

Finally, the creation of a Regional Policy and Strategy for Integrated Waste Management was achieved, which will allow national policies to harmonize.

Improved Private Sector Environmental Performance

Businesses, governments, universities, and NGOs support cleaner production in CAFTA-DR countries

For many years, businesses of the region have considered environmental regulations compliance as a barrier to trade. Due to the lack of knowledge or business vision, the private sector was not aware how profitable it is to produce goods and services in harmony with the environment.

This view has changed mainly since the signing of the Central America, Dominican Republic and the US Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) in 2005, which in its environmental chapter encourages the development and use of voluntary mechanisms in order to improve environmental performance in the private sector, with the purpose of supporting compliance with the laws, as well as incrementing trade with the United States, meeting the demand of environmental and labor standards.

In this way, USAID Environmental Cooperation has supported CAFTA-DR countries in several processes aimed at increasing environmental performance of the private sector, that to date has had multiple positive impacts that guarantee a strategy empowered by the public sector and a private sector committed to the environment:

Cleaner Production Polices: The adoption of cleaner production has been promoted as a preventive strategy aimed at optimizing resources and inputs such as raw materials, water, and electric energy, thus reducing or minimizing solid, liquid and gaseous waste, and in this way achieving a greater profitability in the productive process, both from the economic and the environmental points of view Within this framework, USAID Environmental Cooperation facilitated the formulation, consultancy and approval or review of national policies on Cleaner Production in all CAFTA-DR countries, with consensus and acceptance from the private sector. Presently, all countries in the region have Cleaner Production policies.

Technical Assistance on Cleaner Production: USAID has provided technical assistance for the implementation of cleaner production and environmental management systems based on the ISO 14000 regulation to over 350 small, medium, and large enterprises of the region, as key strategies for reducing pollution and energy consumption.

Cleaner Production Voluntary Agreements: USAID has facilitated the negotiation process between the public and private sectors, as well as the subsequent signing of 9 Cleaner Production Voluntary Agreements (3 in El Salvador and 6 in Costa Rica) in the porcine, dairy, poultry, slaughterhouse, and services sectors. Furthermore, Voluntary Agreements are still in process in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Dominican Republic.

Universities promote Cleaner Production: USAID has signed agreements with 8 universities in El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Dominican Republic, in order to train teaching staff and integrate Cleaner Production and Environmental Management Systems as course subjects in university engineering program studies, with the purpose of molding professionals who can offer specialized environmental technical services to the private sector and as such, reinforce the concept that improved environmental performance can enhance the competitiveness of businesses.

Incentives: USAID has supported the strengthening of the Regional Award for Cleaner Production, which is executed biannually by the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD), achieving an increase in the number of participating companies in the last two editions. Additionally, it has facilitated the creation of a National Award for Cleaner Production in El Salvador and Guatemala, as well as strengthening the National Award for Cleaner Production in Nicaragua. In Guatemala, the first proposal of a non-financial incentive for the coffee sector has been prepared, in order to promote a green seal for the sector.

Regional and National Business Alliances: USAID Environmental Cooperation has promoted the establishment of market-based alliances with international and regional buyers that they will adopt environmental standards in their supply chains, which were extended to key producers and processors of fruit and vegetables, mahi-mahi, and other agricultural commodities. The alliances place priority on those producers that meet these requirements and that adopt better productive practices, raise the quality of products and assure a smaller environmental impact during their production.

A significant achievement is the regional alliance established with the Central America and Panama Supermarket Association (SUCAP) to adopt environmental standards in the fruit and vegetables supply offered to SUCAP members at more than 200 point of sales in the region.

As a result, in El Salvador, a USAID Global Development Alliance was set between the national supermarket chain Supermercados Selectos and the FOMILENIO Productive Development Program (Millenium Challenge Account), to consolidate commercial chaining in the northern part of the country, through support with infrastructure, technical assistance, training, and consolidation of community companies where more than 6,000 fruit and vegetable producers are trained in order to adhere to Super Selectos quality and environmental standards.

Additionally, a business alliance was signed in Guatemala with the fruit and vegetables processing company Neo-Alimentaria and the Primavera Group, which covers 97 local producers, in order for producers to work under environmental and labor standards, as well as to meet quality, price, and food safety requirements that allow them to obtain an independent certification recognized by buyers in the United States.

A similar document was signed and consolidated in Nicaragua through the commercial alliance between the US importing company Sea Delight Inc. and the Nicaraguan Exportadora de Productos del Mar S.A. (EXPOMAR) in order to buy dorado fish (mahi mahi) from local fishermen, based on environmental and labor standards. Furthermore, jointly with EXPOMAR´s processing plant and another two similar industries in Nicaragua, MARINSA and Nicafish, are working on promoting the adoption of cleaner production methodologies by using resources such as water and electricity more efficiently, and reducing CO2 emissions, waste water and solid waste. Also, this initiative has helped to reduce the incidental catch of sea turtles and other marine species, ensuring long-term sustainability of the marine eco-system in the Pacific Ocean.

Energy Efficiency and Clean Energy: The USAID Environmental Cooperation facilitated the formulation of an Energy Efficiency Policy for the Electrical Energy Sector of Central America and Dominican Republic, which was validated by authorities of the environmental and energy sectors in each country, and resulted in the approval of enforcement, at the domestic level, of 31 regulations in total for LFC, engines, commercial refrigeration, and air conditioning technologies, among others.

On the other hand, a regional Eco-Efficiency Technical Guide for small hotels was developed, and it is currently in force in 39 small enterprises in this sector in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Dominican Republic. To supplement this effort, 27 companies from the region are receiving technical assistance to improve thermal energy efficiency (steam boilers as an energy source) in industrial and agro-industrial processes. These studies determine the economic potential that may be generated, as well as the environmental benefits of enforcing pollution prevention concepts through improvement of productive process efficiency.

Informed Decision Making

CAFTA-DR provides information for improved planning, emergency assistance, and environmental monitoring

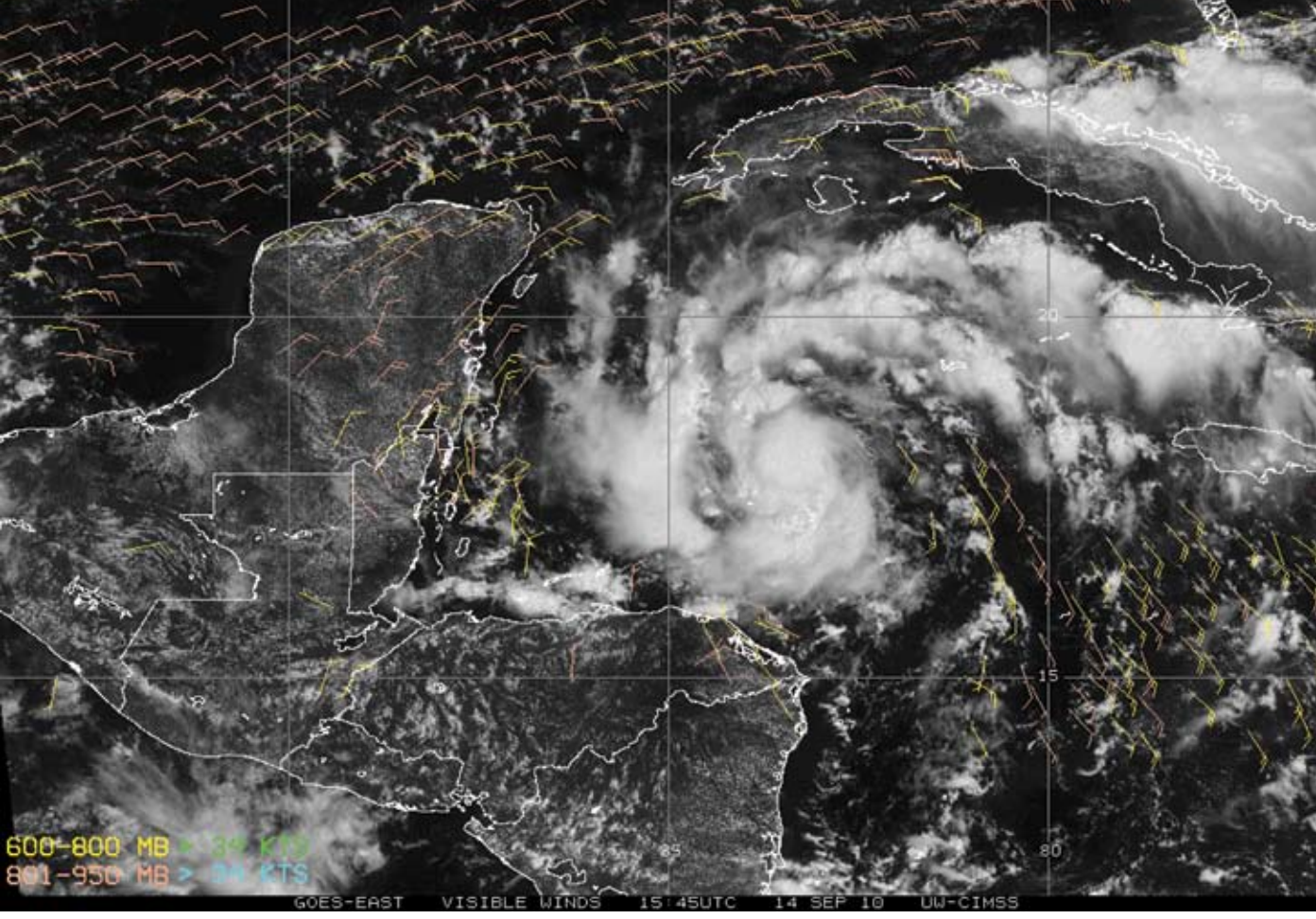
The region, comprised of Central America and the Dominican Republic (CAFTA-DR), is the most biodiverse area of the world. For instance, Mesoamerica – the land bridge between North America and South America – while representing only 0.7% of the world's land surface is home to some 3,000 terrestrial vertebrate species, or 9.4% of the Earth's total, making Mesoamerica even more biodiverse, hectare for hectare, than the Amazon.

The region is also rich in other natural resources, with diverse microclimates and teeming ecosystems ranging from tropical rainforests to the second largest coral reef system in the world. Mesoamerica is home to the world's first protected area for the largest cat in the Americas, the magnificent jaguar (Panthera onca), and the world's only reserve for the planet´s largest fish, the whale shark (Rhincodon typus).

But this environment -and the 52 million people who call Central America and the Dominican Republic home- is also extremely vulnerable to recurring natural and human-induced disasters. Each year, recurring hurricanes and tropical storms, floods, landslides, fires, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions interface with lands degraded by ever increasing deforestation, putting life and property at risk. The natural vulnerability coupled with human intervention also threatens to exacerbate the anticipated impacts of climate change.

In confronting the environmental problems facing Central America and the Dominican Republic in terms of disasters and climate change, a key constraint has been the lack of sufficiently detailed and updated information for planning. In 2001, the governments of Central America and the USA signed the extension of CONCAUSA, an agreement aimed, among other aspects, at facilitating technology transfer for improved disaster management, environmental management, and climate change adaptation.

As a consequence, the Mesoamerican Regional Visualization & Monitoring System (SERVIR in Spanish, see www.servir.net) was formally established in February 2005 in direct response to the expanded CONCAUSA agreement. The system is jointly implemented by USAID, NASA, the Water Center for the Humid Tropics of Latin America and the Caribbean (CATHALAC), the Central American Commission on the Environment and Development (CCAD), and various other partner institutions, with a test bed facility at NASA Marshall Space Flight Center in Alabama and the regional operational facility at CATHALAC in Panama.



As a platform for monitoring and forecasting Mesoamerica's land surface, oceans, and atmosphere, the system has provided the region with free and open access to a large archive of satellite imagery previously inaccessible because of cost. SERVIR supports decision-making in the areas of climate change adaptation, environmental management, and early warning for disasters, among others, providing historic data, information on current environmental and weather conditions, forecasts and future scenarios. SERVIR possesses a suite of tools, providing access to information products in a variety of formats and tailored to the range of decision makers, from scientists to the general public. At the Ministerial level of the inter-governmental Group on Earth Observations (GEO), SERVIR has received recognition as a first of its kind model in the implementation of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) concept.

SERVIR has made considerable impacts over the past six years, particularly in the areas of disaster management, environmental planning, and climate change adaptation. As a result, satellite-based information is increasingly being used by the region's governments, NGOs, and academia in their day-to-day operations. Significantly, in the area of disaster management, SERVIR has provided national governments with crucial, time-sensitive satellite-based information in responding to some 48 disasters across Mesoamerica, the Caribbean, and South America from mid-2004 to present. Events addressed include floods, tropical storms, hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, and volcanic eruptions.

SERVIR has also contributed substantial information for climate change adaptation planning and overall environmental planning in the region. An assessment of climate change's potential impacts on biodiversity across the CAFTA-DR has been well received by national climate change focal points in the region, and the study's information is being integrated into national adaptation plans.

An original study of climate change's potential impacts on regional water quality and water quantity is also being completed. SERVIR has also supported regional land coverage mapping, and also supports environmental planning by providing access to hundreds of datasets and images through its online platform. As capacity development is a key component of SERVIR's strategy, 46 national- and regional-level workshops have trained some 782 professionals from across the region in a variety of environmental management, disaster response, and climate change-related themes.

Improved Enforcement and Compliance

CAFTA-DR strengthens policies, laws and regulations

The CAFTA-DR environmental chapter commits the signatory countries to ensure high levels of environmental protection and to promote the widest application and enforcement of its laws.

One of the priorities of USAID environmental cooperation is therefore to support countries to strengthen and improve their regulatory frameworks, especially in regard to the generation of legal instruments and strengthening institutions and staff members of the judiciary power. In the process, the technical assistance from the U.S. Agency for Environmental Protection (USEPA) and the Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD) was instrumental.

In this context, efforts were made to develop and update regulatory instruments, both national and regional, according to identified needs. Over 60 instruments, policies, laws, regulations and rules have been produced and approved to date to improve implementation and enforcement of the law in the CAFTA-DR countries.

Under this approach, reviews and gap analysis of the legal instruments in the countries were also made, serving as the basis to publish national environmental law digests and a regional summary of environmental bylaw which helped to demonstrate that law enforcement problems are caused not so much from lack of data or legislation gaps but from the incorrect practical implementation of the legal framework. These documents have become valuable input to judges, prosecutors and lawyers as they will have offences, judgments, convictions and the general environmental law at hand.

A product of this legislation analysis is the development of national environmental crime prosecution policy proposals whose adoption has been achieved in Dominican Republic and Costa Rica, while Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador are in the approval process. Also, manuals on the investigation and sentencing of environmental crimes were produced, providing judiciary functionaries with the necessary tools to more effectively apply and enforce environmental laws.

At the same time, a continuous training effort has been pursued to strengthen the capacities of different institutions, judiciary functionaries, and consultants to improve environmental enforcement and compliance. Hundreds of prosecutors, judges, magistrates, environmental inspectors, technicians in assessment of environmental impact, technical reviewers of environmental authorities, lawyers in the public and private sectors, environmental consultants, and university teachers have received - each in their own field - courses and intensive workshops on civil, administrative and criminal environmental law, environmental crime, environmental litigation, environmental inspections, environmental impact assessment instruments for the protection of the environment, and environmental damage, among other subjects of significant responsibility.

This process also allowed the establishment of agendas to work with agencies facilitating the implementation and enforcement of environmental law, as part of the Central America and Dominican Republic Prosecutors Network which, similar to the Inter-Parlia-

mentary Commission for Environmental Development of Central America and Dominican Republic (CICAD), which comprises environmental members of the legislative branches of the region. In Guatemala, the creation and on-going strengthening of the Legal Compliance Technical Council was facilitated, an inter-institutional body to discuss diverse approaches for improved implementation of the law.

In addition to the generation of instruments and strengthening knowledge for the enforcement of the law, USAID cooperation also supported the development of indicators to measure the degree of implementation and enforcement of legislation in each country. Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Dominican Republic have advanced in the creation of their indicators, while Guatemala and Honduras are about to start this process. The indicators cover topics such as sewage, solid waste, assessment of environmental impact and air quality, among others.

Added to this effort is the strengthening of capacities to conduct environmental audits. Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Dominican Republic have adopted different measures to start or improve their environmental audit systems, using the Harmonized Regional Model of Environment Audit designed with the support of USAID and approved in 2008 by the Ministers of Environment of the region.

The Ministry of Environment of Costa Rica created a Department of Environmental Audit and Monitoring that has already conducted the first 18 environmental audits at the national level, in addition to developing 3 regulations relating to the certification and registration of auditors, environmental audits, and environmental diagnostics. El Salvador already has regulations and manuals on procedures for the certification of auditors and environmental audits.

Nicaragua took advantage of the updating of its environmental legislation to develop a system of certification and registration of services providers (including auditors), and the environmental audit system. In effect, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MARENA) is in the process of creating the Environmental Audit Unit. Guatemala also initiated in 2010 the development of an Environmental Audit Unit in the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN). A similar process recently was started in Dominican Republic, which will open an Environmental Audit Unit in the Ministry of Environment and will create regulations for certification and registration of service providers and environmental audits.

Supplementarily, the countries have taken a qualitative leap in environmental monitoring through the Harmonized Regional Model for Certification and Registry Providers of Environmental Services, developed with support from USAID and which was adopted by the Ministers of Environment in 2008 and is already in force. Certification and registration of consultants and environmental auditors will be conducted based on the ISO-17024 International Standard, to help improve the quality of environmental impact studies, and improvement of resolution time. Countries have prepared regulations and manuals to begin its implementation.

Finally, USAID environmental cooperation promoted the establishment of inter- institutional agreements to strengthen Customs pursuant to the major Multilateral Environmental Agreements. A unique agreement was signed in El Salvador among authorities of environment, agriculture and livestock, health, defense, the higher council of public health, and the General Customs Office. On the other hand, Honduran authorities at the Secretariat of Natural Resources and Environment (SERNA) and the Executive Authority of Income Management (DEI) signed the "Inter-Agency Convention on Mutual Cooperation and Exchange of Information".

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENTS
OF CAFTA-DR ARE FULLFILLED WITH SUPPORT
FROM THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

USAID Regional Environmental Program
U.S. Agency for International Development
www.usaid.gov