

U.S. Embassy Visits Palm Oil Production Farm in Guatemala (March, 2006)



Stephen Huete (Agricultural Counselor USDA) and Enrique Arriola (AGROCARIBE General Manager) observing palm oil production sites distribution in the Guatemala map.



Palm oil production farms in Izabal (4,000 Ha) (view from the air).



Randall Robinson, Science and Technology from the ECON section, with Enrique Arriola, in the processing plant at Izabal. Guatemala can produce biodiesel from palm oil. This sector is interested in proposing a law initiative that may support the industry.



The palm fruit contains 60% of oleic acid. Guatemala produced 90,000 MT of palm oil in 2005. Projections for 2006 are 150,000 MT, as new plantations will be ready for harvest.



The processing plant produces its own steam energy through palm fruit pulp combustion. Extra energy can still be produced if the whole flower husk is used.



From back to front: Stephen Huete, Enrique Arriola, Fernando Bolaños (palm oil producer), and Karla Tay (Agricultural Specialist, USDA) looking at new plantation of palm hybrids, that will increase oil extraction efficiency to 85%.



From left to right, Fernando Bolaños, Stephen Huete, Randall Robinson, and Karla Tay, in a mature hybrid palm oil plantation.



Palm oil fruits are harvested with special Malaysian knives. The ripening point is critical for the extraction efficiency.



All the production is ecologically friendly.

No pesticides are applied and natural pollinators are constantly reproducing in the male fruits. Oxen are used to carry the harvested fruits to the extraction plant. In swamp areas, buffalos are used instead of oxen. The palm oil cake resulting from the extraction is a meal which animals are fed as a protein source. The water used in the processing plant is microbiologically treated.
