Introduction

The purpose of this project was to determine the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of, feasibility of, and roadblocks to, converting to certified organic for rice farmers in the area of Las Matas de Santa Cruz, Montecristi province of the Dominican Republic (DR).

Methods

Interviews with rice industry stakeholders
I interviewed one mill owner, two finance service providers, and worked alongside AgroFrontera staff daily.

Interviews with banana industry stakeholders
I talked to 4 different growers associations, one export company, and an organic certifying agency to get an idea of how the organic banana industry came to rise and the keys to its success.

Interviews with banana producers
I interviewed 8 different certified organic banana producers to understand their experience of converting to organic production.

Results

Organic is not feasible... For now
The conversion practices used by ArroEcoz (the growers association) and AgroFrontera helped start reducing synthetic input use, but do not exclude them. To the right are substances and respective quantities currently being applied.

Financing is a big issue.
Access to credit is essential for all rice production and an organic conversion would require additional investments. Only about 36% of ArroEcoz members use financing that don’t have restrictions, and that charge lower interest rates compared to other financing sources.

Recommendations

Lowering the cost of production by an amount that makes Dominican rice competitive with U.S. rice
• Use incremental investments.
• Start with economies of scale to negotiate bulk prices of inputs and machinery services.
• Use savings to invest in newer technology, such as mechanical transplanters and/or harvesters.

ArroEcoz acts as an intermediary between members and a financial institution to provide alternative financing
ArroEcoz continues looking for additional marketing partners in the long-term.

References
