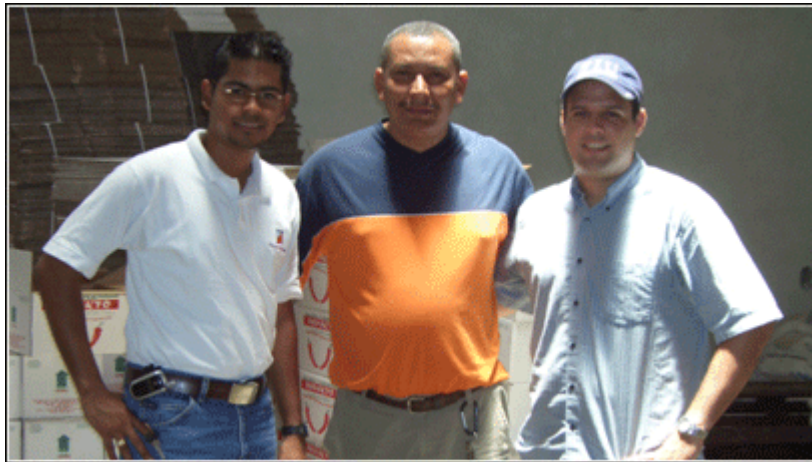




MIB student gives green light to chili company.

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*MIB student **José Carlos Ortiz** (middle) with **Carlos Soto** of Technoserve and **José Alfredo García** of Chacón Agro Industry, the host company for Ortiz's first assignment in Honduras.*

José Carlos Ortiz recently spent a lot of time in supermarkets. But he wasn't buying. Instead, he was studying. What can you study in a supermarket? Chili sauce, of course. For whom? Chacón Agro Industry in Honduras.

Founded in 1986, this family business initially relied on nearby producers, depended on a manual process using windmills, had only one employee, and served a local market. Now, it is one of the country's most important chili sauce companies. Run by the founder's grandson, Carlos Chacón, the enterprise currently purchases raw materials (cayenne, Tabasco, habanero, and jalapeño) from 160 small independent producers and is looking for ways to extend its customer base.

That's where Ortiz, a student in the College's Master of International Business (MIB) program, came into the picture, taking on a three-week market analysis assignment through the [John Ogonowski Farmer-to-Farmer program, funded by USAID](#).

He analyzed the company's marketing chain during a three-week summer assignment that had him traveling the country to examine supermarkets and their buying preferences, among many other tasks—and gave Chacón Agro Industry a green light for distributing its green chili sauce.



"I looked for product differentiation and exclusiveness," Ortiz said. "In supermarkets in Florida and Puerto Rico, there are three or four chili sauces on a shelf, but in Honduras, the sauces occupy six or seven shelves with more than ten or twelve products. In order for Chacón's product not to disappear, I recommended that it commercialize green chili sauce at a premium price."

Based on his detailed analysis of the company, the market, pricing, and distribution, he also suggested that the firm offer just the chili paste—the basis for chili salsa—and not the finished sauce for international markets.

As an essential part of his contribution, Ortiz examined marketing issues, including ways to improve the product label.

"The company had not invested in marketing activities, but they showed interest in starting to do so," he said.

Though he had traveled to Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic before, he had never been to Honduras, had never before lent his business expertise to someone in another country, and had not yet applied his academic background to practical matters.

"I liked being able to use what I have learned in my classes, such as doing a SWOT analysis to figure out what the company should or should not do, what recommendations would be most effective, and what would be a good starting point," he said. "Everything in my studies was a guide to the things I should keep in mind to make a sound analysis."

While recognizing that the assignment will advance his career, helping others factored more heavily into Ortiz's positive response.

"The feeling that you can help a company achieve its goals or help it do things better is what made it all worthwhile," he said.

When he returned, he said, "I am grateful that I took this assignment. It was an unforgettable experience, and I would not hesitate to do it again."

He might have been surprised by just how quickly he got the chance. He has already been asked to take on another assignment in Honduras and will return there in October.

"José will be doing a marketing project related to cashew apples (marañón), a fruit that's popular in juices," said **Carmen Algeciras**, director, USAID Farmer-to-Farmer Program. "He will be volunteering for Comichal Cooperative, a growing organization, analyzing the marketing chain and identifying market entrance strategies and potential client groups, to name just a few of the tasks he will take on."

To learn how to participate in the program, contact Algeciras at 305-348-0399 or algecira@fiu.edu.