Improving Farm Efficiency: Can Maize Farmers Really Triple Yields?

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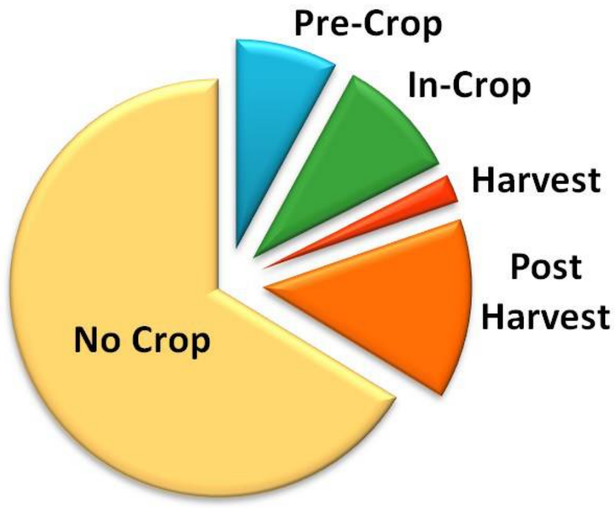
A leading farmer on the plains of Los Palos agreed to trial innovative techniques and improved agricultural practices over a period of 4 years on 1.4 ha of land. All inputs were paid for by the farmer through sales of production. The farmer kept a daily diary of all labour and number of workers. Over 4 years, the yield tripled where improved practices were used while the labour remained stable. The farmer continues to try out new ideas and assist others to improve.

Crop Season 2011-12

In the first year of trials it was found that the soils were highly acid, grubs were eating roots and the plant spacing was a very low 1 plant/m^2.

Annual Labour — Total: 126 days

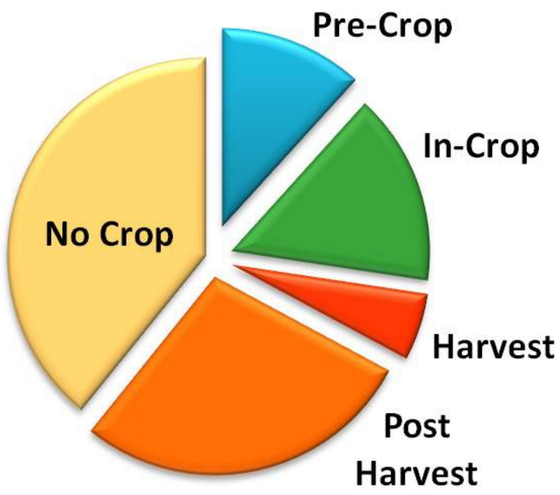


Yield: 1.0 t/ha

Crop Season 2012-13

The farmers intercropped velvet bean and increased the plant spacing. They also invested in air tight silos to stop wee-vils damaging the maize. Labour hampered by rains.

Annual Labour — Total: 225 days

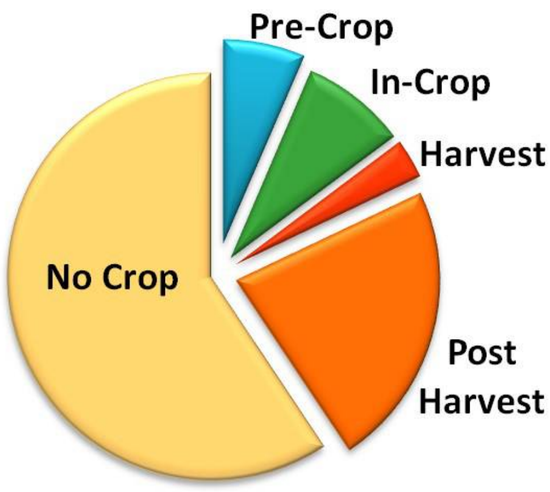


Yield: 1.3 t/ha

Crop Season 2013-14

The crop benefits from increased organic matter from the velvet bean and labour is reduced due to improved fencing and the use of a hand cranked corn sheller.

Annual Labour — Total: 148 days

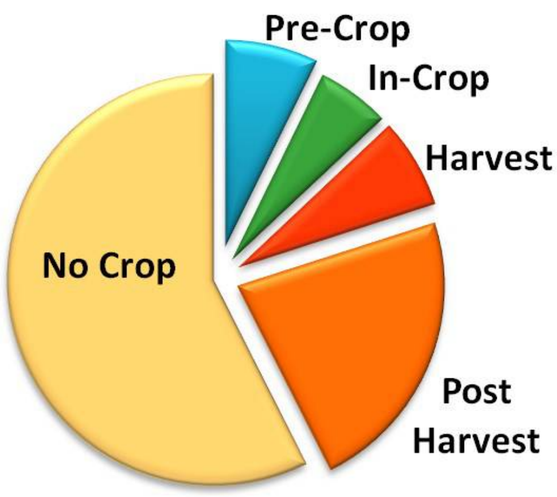


Yield: 2.0 t/ha

Crop Season 2014-15

Farmers plant in lines at 5 plants/m^2 using a jab planter with micro-dosing fertiliser and continue velvet bean. They de-husk in field using nails and have more corn shellers.

Annual Labour — Total: 155 days



Yield: 3.6 t/ha

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