**Subj:** Re: hillside farming
**Date:** 1/29/2002 8:19:47 AM Central Standard Time
**From:** rolando@cosecha.sdnhon.org.hn
**To:** Minifarms@aol.com, john.gardner@oc.edu
*Sent from the Internet (Details)*

**Dear Ken,**

**OK, I think we finally have an answer. Sorry about the delay, but everything comes to a grinding halt around here between about Dec 15 and January 31. Not only can you do virtually nothing out in the villages, but because of that, we in COSECHA all take our vacation time then, so that the rest of the year we are all available all the time.**

**Anyway, what you apparently saw was the "terracitas" in Guacamayas and a couple of other villages up here near Valle de Angeles. This technology, I would say, is good for steep hillsides (say 40% and above), in areas where people can grow high-value produce, and where they are growing small-sized crops that can be planted closer together than, say, 1 mt by 30 cm. That is, where the "in-row tillage" or "minimum tillage" is too narrow. That is, where only opening up a strip 35 cm wide every mt down the hill means you are**

**losing a lot of land, because the crop can be planted much closer together. So, if people are growing vegetables, rather than maize or coffee or beans or even potatoes, then "terracitas" would be a good idea.**

**So what you do is lay out the lines across your field just as we do for in-row tillage, and mark off rows at 1.2 mt distance above and below the main contour lines. Then do the same as in-row tillage, except that the "strip" you till will be about 60 cm wide instead of 35. This allows a lot more room for planting your crops. In the process, of course, you are cutting well into the hill, but the cut is made on a slight slant, so that the "terrace surface" will only be about 85 cm wide (of the 120 cms between rows, which, when measured on the flat, would only be about 110 cm, anyway). Of that 85 cms of terrace surface, then, 5-10 cm is the terrace edge, and another 20 cm is a trail along the inner edge of the terrace that is dug out a bit, so people can walk along it (or stand and work on the terrace just above) and so excess water can flow along the terrace to where it can be disposed of. Thus, if this "trail" is, say, ten cm lower than the rest of the terrace surface, the rest of the terrace surface is, in effect, a "raised bed" (I thought you might like that!)**

**By the way, this technology will only work on a fairly clayish soil (say anything as heavy as a clay loam, or heavier), because otherwise the terraces won't hold. Also, farmers just allow weeds to grow along the terrace edge and face, but they cut them with a machete**

**now and then, and within a few months most of the weeds are grass species that hold the soil quite well.**

**I hope this is understandable. If not, send me a fax number and I will draw an illustration.**

**Sincerely, Roland Bunch**