

Derived from words meaning soil, vegetation and a convergence of streams, Quezungal is the name of an ancient village in southwest Honduras. For an area lush with trees and crops, which cover the steep slopes surrounding the village, the name is quite apt. But less than twenty years ago, the practice of slash-and-burn agriculture had led to degraded soils, water scarcity and declining crop yields. Now, the soil, the trees and the water resources have been restored by introducing a new system which draws on an early practice of tree management discovered in the area.

Known as the Quesungual Slash and Mulch Agroforestry System (QSMAS), in honour of the village where it was first identified, this eco-efficient system is founded on four key principles: no slash-and-burn, permanent soil cover, no tillage, and efficient use of fertiliser. The most significant change is the elimination of burning and the introduction of a slash-and-mulch system. The result has been the natural regeneration of around 60,000 hectares of secondary forest, restoration of the soil quality, and consequently better crop yields and incomes for at least 6,000 smallholder farmers who have adopted the system.

The paper:

<http://www.new-ag.info/focus/focusItem.php?a=1030>