Nourishing the Future: Increasing agricultural production, connecting farmers to markets, improving nutrition, and fostering well governed communities in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua

OVERVIEW A three-year partnership between CARE and Cargill improved the livelihood and wellbeing of small-holder farmers and women micro-entrepreneurs while working with schools to reduce malnutrition among school-age children.

Nourishing the Future

Project Summary

A three-year partnership between Cargill and CARE, increased opportunities and created lasting change for families living in extreme poverty in Central America. Nourishing the Future (NF) was implemented in Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua and sought to promote more prosperous, sustainable and resilient farming communities through a community development approach. This approach provided quality education and nutrition to vulnerable children while also helping their parents to create more profitable livelihoods. NF built on a previous five-year CARE and Cargill partnership and was implemented from September 2013 to August 2016 in 66 impoverished rural communities in twelve municipalities throughout the region. The project directly reached nearly 20,000 children and their families, women micro-entrepreneurs and men and women farmers.

2016 Status

- CARE reached 1,500 farmers with extension services, field schools, and demonstration plots to improve knowledge of good agricultural practices across small-holder farming communities.
- The project established 61 school vegetable gardens, a platform used to disseminate information regarding the importance of fruit and vegetable consumption.
- NF engaged 25,823 people in all 3 countries with nutrition education activities including food demonstrations, nutrition games, community theatre events, as well as establishing school and community gardens.
- CARE trained 575 teachers and directors of 63 schools in core nutrition practices, food and hygiene habits, and participatory teaching methodologies for children including nutrition learning games.
- With the Ministries of Education, the project published guides to facilitate the integration of nutrition and food security promotion into broader academic curricula. The teachers educated more than 14,000 students on health nutrition practices.
- NF educated 1,519 farmers and women micro in market access, business management, and financial services, building the capacity of producers to more effectively negotiate contracts and to comply with quality standards for sale to CARGILL and local markets.
- CARE provided improved seed varieties, organic fertilizer, herbicides, pesticides, and mechanization services to 954 farmers in all three countries.

“I feel more lively because now I know how to take control of my account, of my business earnings and over everything, how to administrate everything and be able to use it.”

– Women micro entrepreneur, Honduras
Impact

The Nourishing the Future project was able to successfully reach the following results during the life of the project, from September 1, 2013 until August 31, 2016:

- **Increased income:** Households in Guatemala and Honduras more than doubled their income, with income increasing by 22.5% in Nicaragua.
- **Greater access to credit:** In Guatemala and Honduras, the proportion of farmers who improved their access to credit increased by 2.3% and 14% respectively. In Honduras, access to credit increased by 37.2% among women micro entrepreneurs.
- **Improved production:** In Guatemala, there was a 13.8% increase in green bean yield, a 2.9% increase in blackberry yield, and a 3.6% increase in pea yield. In Honduras yellow maize yield increased more than five-fold, with white maize yield increasing by 16% and red bean yield by 23%. Sorghum production in Nicaragua increased by 32.5%.
- **Healthier diets:** Dietary diversity increased by 16.6% in Guatemala, 45% in Honduras, and 20.1% in Nicaragua. In Nicaragua, 90% of households were eating the minimum threshold of 7 food groups.
- **More food secure households:** Household food insecurity was halved in Guatemala, decreasing from an average of 5 months of food insecurity to 2 months at end line. In Honduras and Nicaragua food insecurity was reduced by 19% and 13.69% respectively.

**Contributing factors to these successes include:**

- **Stronger linkages to markets:** Connecting sorghum and yellow maize to Cargill’s supply chain resulted in the sale of 100% of Nicaragua’s sorghum production and 89.3% of Honduras’s yellow maize production. In Guatemala, farmers sold 12 times more green beans, 4 times more blackberries, and 8 times more peas to local markets compared to baseline. Farmers in Honduras sold 4 times more white maize and 4.2% more red beans by the end of the project.
- **Created broader access to inputs:** Farmers in Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua increased their access to inputs by 27.8%, 25.7%, and 34.8% respectively.
- **Better agricultural practices:** The number of farmers using agricultural techniques that will help them improve their production doubled in Honduras and Nicaragua. There was 26.1% increase in Guatemala, with 95% of the farmers applying improved practices.
- **Involving children and schools:** The project used 63 schools as a platform for nutrition promotion, training teachers and students on optimal nutrition practices and providing opportunities for broader community engagement. Communities were given access to 61 school vegetable gardens, a mechanism the project used to disseminate information regarding the importance of fruit and vegetable consumption.