



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

GUATEMALA

SNAPSHOT

Better Irrigation Policies for Better Harvests

Guatemala reaffirms its commitment to increased irrigation



Farmer in Sololá irrigates his vegetable plantation.

Photo: Mario Amézquita

Irrigation is essential to improve agricultural productivity and enhance food security. Thanks to the PRS Project, the Ministry of Agriculture now has a national irrigation assessment, a policy proposal to incorporate more agriculture land into irrigation, and a strategy and regulations that will improve the effectiveness and transparency of the Integral Development Trust in areas with irrigation potential and drainage, service in favor of the Zero Hunger Pact.

Access to irrigation is essential to any policy that seeks to increase agricultural productivity and enhance food security. In the case of Guatemala, introducing irrigation to a hectare of vegetable production can increase its yield by 150 percent and revenues by almost 300 percent. This represents an average of 648 additional daily wages, two additional jobs, six additional direct beneficiaries, and 12 additional indirect beneficiaries in one year. Luckily, these astounding figures are not out of reach. Guatemala has enormous irrigation potential for agriculture; roughly 2.6 million hectares of land are irrigable in the country.

However, by 2012 only 337,471 hectares, or 12.9 percent of the available irrigable land, had been developed. This is due in large part to the lack of any clear policy support or action over the last 12 years. The public trust that provides credit and technical assistance to support irrigation amongst farmers has been abandoned and is disassociated from public policy. As a result, the loan portfolio has accumulated 65 percent arrears, which is threatening its survival.

In 2012, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food (MAGA, Spanish acronym) requested assistance from the USAID Policy Regulatory Support for Economic Growth (PRS) Project to support a national irrigation assessment, which has provided the foundation necessary to design a National Irrigation Policy proposal. At the same time, the performance of the Irrigation Support Trust was assessed, and together with officials from the Irrigation Department a strategy was designed to recover the non-performing loan portfolio. Finally, support was provided to prepare a manual of regulations and procedures to reorient the operation of the trust towards the target population and territories of the Zero Hunger Pact and other rural development policies. It is expected that the implementation of these new procedures will raise the effectiveness and transparency of what is currently the only instrument to promote irrigation in the country.

Telling Our Story

U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>