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GUATEMALA

SNAPSHOT

Building Rural Outreach from the Ground Up to serve the Zero Hunger Pact

USAID supports the development of the National System for Rural Outreach



*Farmers undergo training in "agricultural precision" practices
Photo: MAGA*

Rural outreach systems allow small and medium farmers to have access to information, skills and technology. Guatemala has lacked public outreach services for over a decade. Thanks to the PRS Project, the Ministry of Agriculture has designed a new system that will address objectives including food and nutritional security and productive chains.

Access to technology, information and skills is vital to the development of small and medium farmers and rural outreach services are often the means to offer these public goods. Guatemala is currently facing the challenge of providing food and nutritional security to 70 percent of its rural population, while transforming agriculture for small and medium farmers into a profitable activity that will be able to compete while conserving the environment. Access to effective rural outreach services is essential to tackle these challenges.

However, the challenge of recreating and implementing a rural outreach system is enormous, considering the country has lacked a public rural outreach service since the late 1990s. During the last electoral process, a group of independent professionals that were committed to rural development prepared a proposal for a rural outreach system, which attracted the interest of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and, Food (MAGA, Spanish acronym).

With support from the USAID Policy Regulatory Support for Economic Growth (PRS) Project, MAGA developed this proposal, reviewing it with a wide range of officials and experts. Today MAGA has the National System for Rural Outreach (SNER, Spanish acronym), a new system with innovative elements such as the establishment of municipal outreach agencies and the inclusion of household outreach workers to improve family nutrition practices. MAGA allocated a budget of Q300 million (over \$35 million) to launch the new rural outreach system to in 2013. This effort provides the knowledge, technology, and support base that farmers will be able to build upon for years to come.

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