

Anne Philo, Student Participant
Boone High School, Iowa

Food Production in Guatemala

Guatemala is a country the size of Tennessee in Central America. It has eleven million inhabitants. Seventy-five percent of them are below the poverty line. The government has had some problems with corruption and is in a bit of debt. Its primary exports are bananas, coffee, and sugar cane. It has some of the most uneven distribution of wealth in Central America. It is also one of the poorest countries in Central America.

The people in Guatemala live mostly on subsistence farming. This way of living has never worked very well for them. Droughts and other natural disasters often destroy their crops. Recently the situation has taken a turn for the worse. Two hurricanes destroyed many of the coastal farms and falling coffee prices has decreased the earnings of the coffee growers in Guatemala. Now sixty thousand of the children are malnourished. There is an increasing trend towards urbanization and very little employment.

I have chosen to address the problem of food production in Guatemala. Guatemala's problem with getting enough food to its entire people goes far past simply food production into cultural hindrances and a corrupt military and government system. Also there are some problems with large corporations however food production plays a large part in Guatemala's problems with feeding its people.

In Guatemala the problem with food production has many effects. It affects the way people produce food, and earn money. I will define a typical family and their needs and then I will talk about the severity of the situation, how much food and nutrition people get and their income. I will discuss the trends in food production how they are changing and how this will affect the people. I will also tell you my suggestions for countries and organizations to help Guatemala short term. I will also suggest ways they can help the country to actually recover which include land grants, education, farm technologies, and birth control.

The typical family of Guatemala is composed of one dad, one mom and about five children. The father usually farms or, if the family lives in the city, he works at a factory or in some sort of tourism industry. I have chosen to focus on families in the city. This is because with the current crop problems people are moving to the city to find work. Most people don't have enough food and malnutrition is common throughout all of Guatemala. The people in the city are much more fortunate than everyone else in one respect. There are malnutrition clinics closer by in the city than in rural areas, also the people are more educated about the signs of malnutrition than people in rural areas. Most people cannot read, and there is very little schooling available.

The price of food in Guatemala is high. Those who used to subsistence farm no longer can because drought and other natural disasters have made it impossible to continue farming. People have begun moving into the city hoping to get jobs and earn enough to buy food. They hope that they will have food all the time not just when the harvest is good. They find jobs but these jobs usually don't pay enough or they cannot work enough hours at them to earn enough money. They cannot buy enough food in the city because they cannot earn enough to buy it. Now instead of growing food for free they are buying food for high prices. They may have the same amount of food all the time but it's still less food than they need.

When people move to the city and quit farming this creates more problems than they know. Just one person not producing his own food and buying the food that is grown commercially might not seem like it would make much difference, when a large portion of those living in rural areas does this it makes a big difference. There are now less people producing their own food and more buying out of the already insufficient amount of food grown commercially and imported. This is part of the price of food is high.

Currently only sixty percent of the needed food for Guatemala is grown in Guatemala. As I've said before this is sort of a constant situation. Some times it is more severe than others but always there. There are not much exact data about Guatemala, if this is because the government is not interested or if it is because it is hard to obtain information I do not know. What I do know is that malnutrition is a huge problem over there and that the average income is low. For some reason no one can tell me exactly what it is just that it's low. If you ask me the situation in Guatemala is severe. Not because of the fact that it is severe now but simply because it is a situation which has always been there and never been resolved.

The trend for food production for Guatemala has always been that there isn't quite enough food. Now the trend is that there is even less than before. The way things are going it looks like this will get worse. The birth rates are quite high and so the population is growing too quickly for the food supply. At worst the situation will get worse, another natural disaster will happen or there will be a drought and there will be even less food available than before. On the other hands they could get lucky and have good weather for a while. Maybe the price of coffee will rise and the coffee farms will revive. Much more likely though things will stay the same.

If the production of food were increased many good things would happen. First food prices would come down and people would be better able to buy food. Secondly more jobs would be created. This is because to grow more food you either need more machinery or more workers or both. This would mean that either factories for farm machinery would be opened and would employ more people or farms would hire more people to work on the farms. The best would be that both things would happen.

For Guatemala to stop people and children from suffering malnutrition and in some cases actual starvation, Guatemala will need help from other nations. Guatemala's government does not have the resources to revive Guatemala. It also seems to be rather disorganized and has had problems with being corrupt. If other nations would donate both food and man power Guatemala's starving could be relieved. I wouldn't suggest that money be given to Guatemala for short term relief as I currently doubt the competency of the government to handle money.

For this short term relief I suggest that more malnutrition clinics be set up. The ones that World Food Programme helps with now are very useful and keep many children from dying. I also think that some thing like Roosevelt's "new deal" could work well. You could have organizations pay Guatemalans to build things like community buildings or bridges.

My suggestions to solve the problem long term are much more numerous than those for short term relief and can be handed over to the country eventually, although for awhile the help of outside sources will be needed. My suggestions include land grants, genetically engineered crops, crop insurance, farm technologies, education and birth control. If these suggestions were put into action I believe that Guatemala's situation could improve.

Land grants are something that the government could probably do by itself but some help from others would be good. The land grants would be given to people wishing to start farming

again. This would help start Guatemala back on its way to producing more food. The land grants should be a little larger than what it would take to feed the farmer and his family so that hopefully he could grow a little extra food for selling or something. Along with these land grants some other things should probably be included like genetically engineered crops and some education on irrigation and other things that would help the people in that area.

I suggest that along with the land grants some drought resistant seeds be given to the farmers. Drought resistant crops would help to stabilize the crop yield and prevent people from losing everything whenever there is a drought. This would require the help of other countries to create genetically engineered maize, rice, and beans that are suited to the area, or if such seeds already exist they would still need to be donated to Guatemala. Even better yet facilities for developing these things could be started in Guatemala, offering employment to some and a way to continue making and growing this type of crop.

To ensure a greater yield in the crops some organization could come in and teach Guatemalans the most efficient ways to irrigate and control pests. For instance they could teach about the usefulness of lady bugs in controlling aphids and other such things. Not only should this organization teach the people how to irrigate but it should help to build the irrigation systems.

Crop insurance is something that is not thought about much in America but would be very useful over in Guatemala. I suggest a government run system that covers all the farmers in Guatemala. For the first years the farmers would not be required to pay in unless they had been assessed and deemed well off enough to be able to afford it. Other countries and organizations could donate money for this insurance but only once or twice because it isn't other countries job to pay for some one else's insurance. Maybe when the citizens are paying into it fully it could be run through taxes but I don't know what kind of tax system there is over there so it may not be possible. This insurance would not give back only money. If your crops were ruined you would be given seed for next year and some money to buy food this year or food for the year.

The green revolution never seems to have hit Guatemala, most of the people are still substance farming. A factory for farm implements could be started in Guatemala creating both jobs and cheaper farm tools that aren't imported. These tools should be things that decrease the amount of labor needed to grow crops so that one farmer could grow more than what would feed his family. This would mean there would be extra to sell so that saving money for the future would be possible.

To help ease the strain of feeding a rapidly expanding population birth control and contraceptives should be made available. Teaching men and women the benefits of having fewer children and ways to not have children would help to slow the population growth and reduce the amount of children who are malnourished, but the percent of children who are malnourished. This project should be undertaken by organizations like World Food Programme or peace cor.

An education system would be the final thing that could be added. Educating Guatemalans children will give them a brighter future, these schools could teach no only math, reading, and science but ways irrigate and the best and newest ways to farm. The schools could actually equip the children with skills for real life.

Guatemala has a food production problem currently, which will continue if nothing is done. This Shortage affects people all over Guatemala. It keeps them from obtaining proper nutrition and from rising above their poverty. It affects what people eat and how much food they have. Children suffer from malnutrition and in some places people are dying.

If something is done to change the production of food for the better Guatemala's future would be much more hopeful. It would lower the prices of food and create jobs. It would help those in poverty be able to obtain more food, and possibly move from poverty because they wouldn't have to try and find food all the time.

I have discussed the role food production plays in causing people to produce food, earn money and buy food. I have discussed the present status of food production, how much nutrition and food people are getting and how severe the situation. I have discussed the trends in food production for Guatemala, how they are changing, and how that affects the people now and in the future.

I also told how changing food production would help the people of Guatemala to obtain more food and get better jobs. I then gave my suggestions to world organizations to help Guatemala in the short term. I told how they could help Guatemala become a better fed country for good. I suggested some education, land grant deals and birth control programs.

I hope that my suggestions are good ones. I wish that if my ideas were done then Guatemala's problems would all be fixed, but that just isn't the truth. Guatemala's problems go far beyond food production. They have much to do with their dependence on the United States economy, and some corporate interests that make life hard there. While my suggestions will not fix those things I hope that they would solve the problem of food production.

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