

Bradly Vasquez

Gettysburg High School

Gettysburg, South Dakota

Guatemala: Policy and Governance

Revitalizing Guatemala's Agriculture:

A new Path to Sustainable Growth and Global Partnership

Agriculturalists around the globe face problems out of their control every day and every season. These problems could include weather, pests, diseases, and natural disasters. However, there are numerous issues that countries and their societies could take control of that could improve the agricultural industry and economy overall. Guatemala faces many of these obstacles that negatively impacts the agriculture industry's stability. For example, a history of weak government, corruption, food insecurity, citizen insecurities, land degradation, and inequitable access to economic opportunity. These challenges need to be faced head on to improve the agriculture industry, economy, and the livelihood of all Guatemalan citizens.

The country of Guatemala was founded in the year 1821, but agriculture in this region of the world dates back as far as the Mayan civilization in the 16th century. The Mayans grew many crops, including bananas, maize, and beans. Since then, the people of this region (now Guatemala) have expanded their agricultural pursuits, growing a variety of crops such as maize, beans, coffee, sugar cane, and fruits such as bananas, mangos, zapote, and rambutan. Guatemalan agriculture is beautiful and diverse, but issues within government and society put a strain on its production.

Guatemala is a poor country due to several factors. Economic inequality remains the largest issue in the country. According to the World Bank Group, the top 1% percent of Guatemalans own 65% of the country's wealth. An average citizen of Guatemala lives in poverty with each home filled with about 4.5 as [arcgis.com](https://www.arcgis.com) says. A home in Guatemala can be as much as only a roof and 4 walls. Most homes are built out of mainly thin metals or plastic. Their walls are made of an assortment of items from brick to clay; others include adobe, metal, timber, straw, sticks, palo blanco boards, and other materials. In light of the flooring situation not much better, every ¼ homes in Guatemala have dirt floors, <https://www.habitatguate.org>. With that home status it is very noticeable that the poverty is very high but homes are not only affected, people's lives, schooling, roads, and work is affected. A child in Guatemala starts school at the age of 7 with the average seduction of a child lasting only 3.5 years, 1.5 years for females, reasons for this are working for money or taking care of the home and younger children at home, or there is not sufficient funds to continue sending their children to school, <https://borgenproject.org>. Only 4 percent of people go to college and graduate, as for the rest they have dropped out, but a measly 12 percent of all students in Guatemala finish high school as specified by worldbank.org. This is not a parents fault in Guatemala their work is paid too little for big jobs. For children there jobs are very hazardous mainly working in the agricultural aspect, they work on coffee plantations, corn, and other crops. Adults have more of a wide span of jobs with most working in construction working for small to big corporations but no matter which the pay is almost never good unless you have a high school diploma or even a college degree. People would work in restaurants, but most are in cities and far away from

homes and travel in Guatemala is not easy. Roads are very hazardous over yonder, with major roads and main tourist routes are nicely paved and well maintained, the rest is made of dirt. With natural disasters and gangs the roads are never a safe place. They are almost never mainly tested as my grandfather says who lives in Guatemala in poverty as well. There are many accidents caused by natural causes, drunk drivers, pot holes, or old vehicles. With 5/18 of citizens driving a legal registered vehicle, and of those 25 percent driving motor cycles, automotive.messefrankfurt.com. With the rest of the citizens they must walk, hitchhike or ride buses to get to work. Amid these harsh living conditions, it is the agricultural workers—many of whom live in the most rural and impoverished areas—who bear the heaviest burden, often left without access to modern technology or resources to ease their labor.

Among all the groups affected by poverty in Guatemala, agriculturalists face some of the most severe challenges, as many are forced to rely on outdated or manual labor methods due to limited access to modern farming technology. Only 30% of agriculturalists are able to afford modern technology such as tractors, sprayers, and chemicals. The other 70% of agriculturalists must work by hand, or are left unable to fight diseases or pests plaguing their crops. For example my grandfather (Fabian) is a small farmer who lives close quarters to the Department of Santa Rosa (the county of Santa Rosa). My grandfather, at the ripe age of 78 still conducts his farm yearly. He has his children (my uncles and some of my aunts) work for him part time as people in Guatemala can't always afford working a single job. Whenever there is a desperate need for helping hands they will go into towns and find workers for the day to help get work done faster and on time. For days of hard labor with no modern tools my grandfather, and other farmers alike, is paying them around 100 GTQ (quetzal) daily which is about \$13 dollars a day! Now this is not my grandfather nor any other business owners' fault in that country, as it has been shown the country's financial status is shallow not all are as fortunate like my family survive on a scarcely livable income, enough to keep them sheltered in their own cold clay homes on the countryside of Guatemala. With this foundation established this dramatically decreases farmers and others yields and impacts their livelihoods. With the country's financial status, many people, not just farmers are unable to afford laborers, putting family members with little to no pay work making it hard to fend for their own families.

The financial challenges faced by agriculturalists in Guatemala are highly severe, but they represent only a fraction of the bigger issues. As a tropical country, Guatemala is home to a diverse range of pests that give high threats to crops. Without the needed pesticides, many of the farmers' crops become non edible and unsellable, making a big portion of the financial struggles of the population. To decrease this, crop rotation is commonly used for these problems, as it helps stop pests from becoming used to a certain type of plant. However, as said by Ageopages.com, the effectiveness of crop rotation is heavily influenced by Guatemala's unpredictable weather conditions. Guatemala's tropical climate gives unique challenges, particularly in strange rainfall patterns. Long periods of heavy rain can lead to flooding, which damages the homes, harms livestock, and destroys crops. On the other hand, droughts are also very common, leaving fields dried out and in horrid need of water. Even though 91% of the population has access to clean drinking water, nearly 56.03% of "clean" water systems are at high risk to human health, according to macrotrends.net. This leaves limited water for agriculture, with drinking needs taking over crops needs. With a population of 18.12 million, as of 2023, Guatemala faces a weak balance between human consumption and agricultural needs. Furthermore, the country's odd climate, including cooler temperatures in the highlands, makes crop production harder, especially for staple foods like maize and beans, which is huge to the diet of the Guatemalan people, due to those crops' low cost. While other foods are often too expensive to grow or purchase, Guatemala's tropical climate is able to grow various fruits, which thrive in the country's weather conditions. These fruits may give an opportunity for Guatemala to overcome some of its agricultural and economic challenges.

Guatemala has shown much success in fruit growth, but the high costs of seeds is a challenge for the Guatemalan citizens. To address this, I propose a huge shift. Guatemala should reduce its maize and bean production by 30% over the next five years. This major reduction can be changed over time based on

outcomes and needs. During this time, Guatemalan farmers could increase the production of fruits and coffee, with a main focus on exporting these products to international markets, mainly the United States. The U.S. could benefit by getting into common trade. This will give new food options in American households. In return, the United States could export beans and corn to Guatemala, ensuring profit for both nations. This plan would need big financial support, in the form of a loan from the United States, because the wealthiest 1% of Guatemala is unlikely to invest in the country's long-term agricultural success. Over time, this partnership could expand to enter other countries in this, making global access to new foods and increasing trade opportunities bigger.

While making a global marketing system would be a grand benefit to Guatemala and its citizens, there is still a major problem that is still at play, the government. Corruption, inequality, and more has left farmers and small communities in poverty without the support they need to thrive and build a stronger country. To construct a truly real, longlasting, firm, strong country there needs to be bold, legal, actions, and organized efforts to create a true accountable government that works with their country and not with only a couple people. To do this there will need to be a citizen led enterprise focusing on pushing towards justice, especially in the rural and agricultural sections in Guatemala for those are one most affected and the ones that can help later in the long run. This would establish independent public error councils made up of teachers, farmers, students, and other members of the country, just no politicians arguing against the case. These councils, which will be spread around the country, will ask for legal inspections of public spending and watching how government funds are being used. This movement will also start a national appeal calling for constitutional protections for small farmers, fair wages, and guaranteed investment in rural areas. Also there would be a secondary campaign to encourage the young and citizens living in areas filled with poverty to register to vote for better government, and even to run for public office to fight against existing power to fight for the rights of their people. Small Guatemalan citizens with their strong thirsty hearts won't be able to do it alone though we would become trading partners for example the United States should tie any future agreements or aid to anti-corruption improvement and direct investments into community-led agricultural systems. Legal complaints can also be handled by the United Nation to demand close detailed information of elections and protection for human rights. Through peaceful and religious means, the people of Guatemala can regain their country from the hands of corruption and inequality proving that true power lies in unity, organization, and the courage to demand something better.

Overall the challenges facing Guatemala's agriculture industry are very difficult and deeply rooted problems to solve, but they are not impossible to solve and make right. Through the power of agricultural changes, international trade partnerships, educational improvements, and most importantly, government improvement, this country can take big steps toward a more stable and prosperous future. Guatemala's farmers, like my grandfather, work day in and day out with limited tools, yet their strength and courage reflect the potential that still exists in the heart in this grand beautiful country. The time has become for the everyday citizens, farmers, workers, and families of Guatemala to be heard and protected. By demanding clarity, investing in run down communities, and building a global trade networks centered on fairness and responsibility, Guatemala can rise above corruption and poverty. With unity, legal action, and the support of other countries, a better life is not just a dream for Guatemala, it is the future within reach.

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