An assessment conducted at the beginning of the Purchase for Progress (P4P) Initiative in Central America—El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua—indicated that smallholders could not access markets and generate enough income from agricultural production due to a number of factors:

- They produced limited quantity and quality due to bad agricultural practices and soil erosion;
- Low yields reduced their negotiation power with market intermediaries and impeded them to sell their production at a competitive price;
- They could not assume high production and commercialization costs due to lack access to credit to buy inputs and equipment necessary to place quality products on the market.

To tackle these challenges, P4P has been focusing on developing the capacities of smallholder farmers’ organizations (FOs) as well as markets, combining the WFP comparative advantage with opportune alliances with partners to fill technical gaps. Existing partnerships were strengthened, new ones were created to ensure availability of inputs, improve farming technology and techniques, reduce post-harvest losses and increase storage capacities. Partners also assist with quality control, transport and infrastructure, thus facilitating access to markets. They include national governments, UN agencies, regional organizations, NGOs, the private sector and research institutions, each using its expertise and resources with the common goal of addressing the needs of smallholders.

In Central America, a critical partnership for WFP is the one with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA): an agreement between the two institutions set up the basis for collaboration in P4P implementation and joint advocacy efforts for the adoption of policies and programmes promoting the development of small-scale agriculture and agriculture sustainability. Joint work is particularly dynamic in Guatemala and Honduras.

This month’s bulletin zooms in on P4P joint work with partners, specially:

1. P4P collaboration with already existing programmes;
2. P4P partnerships with government institutions, and
3. Cooperation to tackle specific issues.
P4P collaboration with already existing programmes

P4P collaboration with existing programmes responds to the need to support smallholders along the value chain in an integral and integrated way. It promotes complementary actions, coordination, and communication between partners as well as coherence in the design and implementation of a number of interventions. This is the case, for example, in Honduras, where P4P collaborates with the IFAD-UNDP Project to Increase Competitiveness of the Rural Economy of the Yoro area (PROMECON, for its Spanish acronym). Smallholders are trained in production of bean seed. Obtaining high quality seeds had been identified as a major problem during the planting period.

In El Salvador, an agreement was reached with the Central Rural Development and Modernization Project for the Central and Paracentral regions (PRODEMOR, for its Spanish acronym), an IFAD initiative implemented with the Ministry of Agriculture. Technical and financial efforts are coordinated for the implementation of the business initiative on basic grain production and commercialization, benefiting P4P FOs.

In Nicaragua and Guatemala, P4P is part of the RED-SICTA network promoting technological and innovation among smallholders producing maize and beans. It should contribute to decrease post-harvest losses through the introduction of appropriate technologies.

P4P partnerships with government institutions

P4P in the Central American region is aligned with national policies and governments consider it as a key component to promote food security and agriculture development. Working closely with national governments and their agricultural technical agencies is vital for the sustainability of P4P actions and multiply the benefits of intervention undertaken as part of the initiative. P4P is reinforcing existing partnerships, as is the case in El Salvador with the National Center for Agriculture and Forestry Technology (CENTA) in the response to the emergency caused by tropical storm 12E in 2011 when efforts were coordinated to implement crop recuperation activities.

In Honduras, the National Institute for Vocational Trainings (INFOP) and the National Institute for Technical Agriculture (DICTA) provide training on best agricultural practices, post-harvest handling and processing, as well as cost management and support actions on the field with their technicians. In Nicaragua, P4P cooperates with the National Institute for Technical Agriculture (INTA) on quality issues and strengthening business capacities of FOs. In Guatemala, the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food, ICTA and INDECA - national technical agriculture institutions – work closely with P4P on appropriate seed varieties, grain handling, processing and storage. Cooperation with the Triangle of Dignity of the Ministry of Agriculture has made credit available to farmers, while sharing experience and lessons learnt during the creation and implementation of this program. P4P is continuously seeking to expand its partnerships with Government institutions in other relevant areas, as in the case of the growing engagement of the Ministry of Agriculture in gender training in El Salvador.

Finally, P4P also contribute to train technical staff within Government institutions, contributing to knowledge transfer: in Honduras, training on agriculture extension and agribusiness were given to enable technicians to train farmers on the field. In El Salvador, P4P and the Ministry of Agriculture through CENTA have established a Crop and Monitoring System. Over 200 farmers and technicians have been trained to gather and feed raw data into the system.

Cooperation to tackle specific issues

In El Salvador and Honduras, FAO jointly works with P4P farmers and provides technical assistance in primary production, the use of appropriate technological packages, storage facilities and organizational strengthening. Other UN agencies complement WFP’s work as it is the case in Honduras where UN Women provides guidance and assistance for a better integration of women in productive and commercial activities. Joint activities with NGOs are also conducted.

P4P is also increasingly engaged with the private sector as an important provider of inputs, training, financial services as well as a market for smallholder produce. P4P has helped improve smallholders’ access to private sector input suppliers, enabling to boost production. In El Salvador, rounds of negotiation with suppliers such as BAYER, DISAGRO or FERTICA have been organized, enabling smallholder to take the leading role in negotiating directly with suppliers and acquire a more business-oriented vision of their activities. In Guatemala, DISAGRO provides technical assistance in fertilization to FOs which in turn, negotiate input packages. Business round-tables and meetings have also facilitated linkages between FOs and financial institutions like Banco de la Produccion or Lafise in Nicaragua or BANRURAL in Guatemala, allowing an increased access to credit for inputs and/or commercialization. In order to reduce post-harvest losses in Guatemala and Nicaragua, P4P also collaborates with Grain Pro, Inc. to implement anaerobic storage technologies. ANACAFE provides soil analyses for P4P in Guatemala.

Finally, a variety of universities are becoming increasingly involved in the Initiative. In Honduras, P4P is partnering with the University of Zamorano in trainings. It also participated to the renovation of the Centre of Experimentation for Agricultural Development (CEDA for its Spanish acronym), where farmers can have hand-on training on production.

At the University of El Salvador, the chemistry laboratory of the Department of Agronomy was strengthened to conduct soil testing and train farmers in soil sampling techniques and in using soil testing results.

In Nicaragua P4P is already working with the University of Central America to strengthen FOs financial and administrative capacities.
Meeting with the General Director of Agricultural Economy (DGEA) for the coordination of activities between WFP and MAG-Crop monitoring system and access to information base lines and farm gate prices.

The Rural Development Unit- Ministry of Agriculture- support three FOs clusters engaged with Fomento Agropecuario Bank (BFA), in order to get access to credit for commercialization.

Agreement with the Strategic Unit from the Presidency of El Salvador to provide technical and financial support for the COMUS FO business implementation plan through the Central America Territorial Development Strategy (ECADERT)

Share of experiences between FOs from UNDP programme -focused on shelter and urban, productive and sustainable settlements- and 3 P4P FOs.

Key Partners: Howard G. Buffett Foundation, DISAGRO & FERTICA, El Salvador Chamber of Commerce, FAO, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the National Center for Agriculture and Forestry Technology (CENTA), PREMODER & PRODEMORO (IFAD-financed rural development programs), CARITAS, UNDP, World Vision.

traceability workshop provided by ICA.

Meeting with SIMPAH-FHIA-INFOAGRO representatives for the implementation of the Farm Gate Price monitoring system.

Seven groups of women were selected to participate in productive projects and gender formation in all P4P regions under UN- Women agreement.

Post–harvest workshop was coordinated by P4P and given by USAID ACCESO, with the participation of 43 technicians from our partners working with Farmers’ Field Schools.


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Our Countries

GUATEMALA

Farms 64
Women 7,363
% Women 34
Contracted (MT) 20,072
Total Value ($) 9.4 M
Trainings 1,364
Participants 51,822
Partners 44

- Preliminary negotiations held between organizations and private sector for sale of maize and beans (Agroindustrias MAYA, Wal-Mart).
- Workshop to evaluate advances under WFP-IICA agreement for the South Coast region.
- Good Agricultural Practices training with AGREQUIMA in east region.
- Participation in Food Security and Rural Development Round Table held by the Canadian Embassy during the official visit of the Honorable Governor General of Canada, David Johnston.
- Joint Programme with FAO, IFAD, and UNWOMEN for the “Economic Empowerment of Rural Women” and workshop to socialize the project among the public, private and academic sectors.

Key Partners: Howard G. Buffett Foundation, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), BANRURAL, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), DISAGRO, FAO, Inter-American Institute for Agricultural Cooperation (IICA), International Maize & Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), Ministry of Agriculture (MAGA), National Institute for Agricultural Commercialization (NIDECA), Institute for Agricultural Science and Technology (ICTA).

HONDURAS

Farms 20
Women 2,100
% Women 34
Contracted (MT) 2,779
Total Value ($) 1.08 M
Trainings 953
Participants 15,491
Partners 14

- Meeting with Ministry of Family, Community, Cooperative and Associative Economy to identify possible areas of cooperation and support the process by presenting P4P technology used with small producers.
- Diploma in field schools conducted by the UCATSE (Universidad del Trópico Seco), with the participation of technicians from four P4P FOs.
- Workshop in harvest and post-harvest issues within Red SICTA (SICTA Network) to six FOs participating in P4P.
- Women of various P4P FOs, participated in the 1st. Women Cooperatives Meeting organized jointly with the Ministry of Family, Community, Cooperative and Associative Economy

Key Partners: Howard G. Buffett Foundation, FAO, Food Technology Laboratory (LABAL), IICA, International Regional Organization for Animal and Plant Health (OIRSA), Ministry of Agriculture, Nicaraguan Institute for Agricultural Technology (INTA), UCA.

NICARAGUA

Farms 9
Women 2,100
% Women 31
Contracted (MT) 2,779
Total Value ($) 1.08 M
Trainings 953
Participants 15,491
Partners 14

- Meeting with Ministry of Family, Community, Cooperative and Associative Economy to identify possible areas of cooperation and support the process by presenting P4P technology used with small producers.
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Key Partners: Howard G. Buffett Foundation, FAO, Food Technology Laboratory (LABAL), IICA, International Regional Organization for Animal and Plant Health (OIRSA), Ministry of Agriculture, Nicaraguan Institute for Agricultural Technology (INTA), UCA.
According to you what is the importance of P4P for Central American countries, such as Guatemala?

I think that P4P is an effort to position staple grains as profitable and sustainable products for small-scale agriculture; it goes beyond the current tendency that considers food production only as a subsistence activity. Also, it is an innovative initiative that combines many elements that are normally addressed separately, for example technological innovation, integrating women into productive and commercial processes, connecting commercialization of food crops with production, as well as establishing a wide network of actors around innovation on basic grains from researchers to agronomists and farmers.

What is IICA role in P4P implementation?

P4P relies on the idea that institutional capacities should complement themselves. First of all, we believe in local population capacity to innovate and be the protagonist of its own development: this is key.

Secondly, IICA has important capacities to strengthen primary production chains and post-harvest management, through technological innovation. IICA can support in a variety of areas in which WFP, for historical reasons, does not have any skills and, probably does not have to try to develop them! It is of our responsibility as actors participating in P4P to go beyond what has been agreed in our agreements and to look for new partners, including governmental entities and other local actors, such as existing agro-services, local companies that could provide services in areas such as post-harvest and pest management, soil fertility analysis, irrigation system management, equipment and mechanization.

Is it an easy task to deal with this wide variety of implementing partners?

Working with partners has been a diversified and learning experience. With some of them, we coincided since the very beginning on objectives and potential for synergy. It is a win/win relation. In other cases, more time was needed to develop the alliance and let trust emerge for a sustainable and profitable relation between both parts.

How do you value those partnerships?

Without partners, we would not be able to develop P4P in Guatemala. Partnerships with the private sector, financial institutions and sources of technical information are particularly relevant. To us, partnerships are a source of learning and complementarity. The variety of partners enables us to have other opinions when we are creating implementation strategies. They bring expertise that we don’t have in the P4P team. Partnerships are key to P4P exit strategy: farmers can move forward thanks to the connections established.