

Food security project begins in Guatemala

A \$7.5 million rural development project in northern Guatemala has been launched that is designed to boost corn (maize) production and food security in the Ixcán, Quiché region. As part of the project, a large complex which includes 40,000 tonnes of maize storage, a feed mill and a maize processing facility will be constructed.

“We have received donations from the Inter American Development Bank (IDB), from the government of Guatemala and in the near future from the government of Japan,” Project Manager Marco Fava said. “We have started with teaching the farmers how to get good results by applying good agricultural procedures. We are developing with local entities — the Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology (ICTA) and the Project for the Innovation of Agriculture (REDSICTA) — a seed especially designed for that area.”

Fava said the remote region has been plagued by a lack of modern agri-industrial infrastructure and sub-standard farming methods, resulting in comparatively low maize yields compared to other parts of the country.

“800,000 farms located on 655,500 hectares of land produce a total of 1.16 million tonnes per year, which results in a deficit of 1.13 million tonnes per year, resulting in the importing of products to meet demand,” said Fava, owner of Fava Consultores Ltda., Santiago, Chile.

Fava said the project, called the Corn Agro-feeding Chain System, will provide “an organized, productive infrastructure to improve business competitiveness of products involved in the corn agro-feeding chain in order to meet demand for animal feed and cereal industry consumption and meals for human consumption.”

In addition, the project will provide organization and specialization techniques to approximately 1,500 small maize producers in the region and is expected to reduce extreme poverty by at least 10% in the 40 communities where it will be implemented.

Fava said local enterprises of agricultural input distribution and agricultural mechanization have been established, a program of technology transfer is being implemented, and a local

A maize field in the Quiché region of Guatemala. Photo courtesy of Marco Fava.

by Arvin Donley

Goal is to boost corn production and add storage and processing facilities in the Ixcán, Quiché region

certified seed company has been established.

The plan also calls for the construction of a maize storage and processing complex that includes:

- a maize receiving, drying and storage plant with storage capacity of 40,000 tonnes, and receiving and drying capacity of 200 tph;
- a feed mill with pellet production capacity of 5 tph;
- a maize mill with a processing capacity of 120 tonnes per 24 hours.

“We do not have a date for the main plant construction, because that will depend on when we obtain the financing,” Fava said. “Meanwhile, we have started with the construction of a small receiving and storage plant for the corn seed we are developing.”

First-year maize production goals for the project include:

- 8,900 tonnes for animal feed, with an increase of 8% in annual production;
- 4,413 tonnes for hominy grits, with an increase of 8% in annual production;
- 3,281 tonnes for grits for the beer industry, with an increase of 8% in annual production; and
- 4,406 tonnes for other meals, with an increase of 8% in annual production.

Agencies already involved in the project include: the Agency for Ixcán’s Economic Local Development; ICTA; REDSICTA; National Peace Fund (FONAPAZ); and the IDB.

“We need more financial support and we are searching for more financial support,” said Fava, noting that the goal is to have the project implemented within a 10-year period. **WG**

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