



# SUCCESS STORY

## FOOD FOR PROGRESS

### GUATEMALA

LOCATION: GUATEMALA

DURATION: 2016-2021

FUNDED BY: USDA

## MANAGING A PANDEMIC IN REAL-TIME: USDA AND COUNTERPART SUPPORT GUATEMALA'S MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK, AND FOOD

On March 13, 2020, the first positive case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Guatemala and soon after, the virus spread throughout the country, reaching even the most remote rural areas. The Guatemalan Government immediately started implementing several measures to slow the spread of the pandemic as well as activities to support families in need.

Guatemala's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food (MAGA) had to implement critical activities to support rural farmers, including distribution of food rations and coupons. The Ministry's Agricultural extension agents had to be mobilized to collect reliable and accurate information from all departments and municipalities of the country. However, the Ministry did not have the technology, IT equipment, or the appropriate facilities needed to organize the collection and analysis of the departmental and municipal level data to inform national-level decision-making, and ensure an effective response to the pandemic. MAGA needed a situation room, and they requested USDA's assistance to create one in the Ministry.

The United States Department of Agriculture has several active programs in Guatemala, including the Food for Progress 2016 program implemented by Counterpart International. The FFP program in Guatemala has been working to improve the ability of local communities to increase their agricultural production and improve their livelihoods. By delivering farming knowledge and tools into the country's most neglected communities to build markets for rural

agriculture, Counterpart delivers a permanent, scalable solution to improve livelihoods.

Through Food for Progress, Counterpart implements capacity-strengthening programs and provides strategic training to MAGA's extension agents to effectively manage the National Rural Extension System. The presence of MAGA extension agents in the field makes them key actors in tracking and monitoring COVID-19 in the country, as well as providing hard-to-reach communities with much-needed relief from the Government.



Based on its long history of strong and successful partnership with MAGA, and after consultations with USDA, Counterpart immediately offered to establish a situation room in MAGA through the FFP 2016 program.

In May 2020, Counterpart began working with the Ministry to establish the parameters of the situation room, assess the needs for renovations, and compile a list of items and IT equipment needed. An in-kind grant agreement was signed between Counterpart and MAGA for provision of the goods and services for the creation of the situation room.

In coordination with USDA and MAGA, Counterpart conducted the large-scale procurement process for renovation work and the provision of the equipment for the situation room. Work was completed and items were delivered in less than three months. The situation room was ready to be launched in early August.

The situation room strengthens MAGA's ability to generate and analyze critical data and better enables effective decision-making and timely information exchanges between the different dependencies of MAGA and with other ministries of the Government of Guatemala. After the pandemic, the room will become a center for MAGA to coordinate and manage the country's extension system, ensuring the delivery of timely and quality extension services to the farmers and agricultural producers of the country. With this critical support from USDA and Counterpart, MAGA's operational capacities were enhanced, which will contribute to the development of country's agricultural sector and the well-being of the Guatemalan people.

