2014-01-13 CRS Guatemala Conference Call

* Team introductions (4 of staff of 60 - 1/2 in field and 1/2 in Guatemala City)
  + Anne Bousquet
    - CRS country representative
    - 6th and final year
    - background in Agricultural economics (Cornell)
  + Juselle (sp?)
    - program assistant; will be helping with logistics
    - with CRS for 13 years
  + Karen
    - Deputy representative
    - 5 years at CRS Guatemala
  + Dan R.
    - Program manager for sustainable agriculture
    - just finished masters in UF in tropical ag a couple of years ago
* Project overview thoughts
  + Title 2 Food security program - to reduce chronic malnutrition in children under 2
    - Three-pronged approach
      * Health/nutrition
      * ag
        + improving ag production
        + connecting ag to markets
      * community organization
  + Amaranth
    - since pre-colonial times, used to be part of the culture (replaced by corn recently, low comparative nutrition)
    - Much more developed Amaranth market in Mexico --> US sales (flour, seed grain…)
    - high in nutrition (protein)
    - market for health food in US (gluten free)
    - 1) local consumption; 2) additional income
    - grown in the country but not in scale
      * small co-ops in rural areas have amaranth (other projects); sell to health-conscious ex-pats in GC
    - corn is the main staple; second is beans
      * during inquisition, natives said "superpowers" --> Spaniards oppressed and imposed corn
      * few know that amaranth was the staple crop
    - not difficult to grow (targeted at poorest of the poor, not much land and risk tolerance)
    - personal: aware of growing market in US for health food (quinoa as example; has affected local markets there)
    - two families of amaranth
      * amaranthus retroflexis (more like wheat, like spinach)
      * amaranthus hypocondriacus (grain, 2m, head like wheat, consume grain, more like US/Mexico, would be the focus)
    - was an NGO 5-10 yr ago that tried amaranth
      * not scaled enough, too localized (advantage of scale in SM for next 6 years)
    - environmental factors
      * requires less fertilizer/water than corn (adv for small farmers without outside inputs)
      * doesn't need lots of mgt for moderate yields
      * most are C3 crops (6-7 hrs of sunlight, photosynthesis saturates)
      * amaranth and corn are C4 (can photosynthesize as long as there's sunlight; important for high altitude areas in Guatemala)
      * grows well in all S Mexico, western highlands of Guatemala, might not do as well in warm/tropical climates
      * grows year-round in western highlands
      * yields 2500 lbs/hectare
      * harvested once/year in highlands
    - work in farmer field school methodology
      * demo farm, neighbors come and get training/experimentation
      * bring to own plots once familiar with amaranth
      * most farmers have space available on home plots; some rent land to grow staples but have some land at home, etc. (.05 hectare to start with --> need a lot of farmers)
      * there are small farms groups solola
    - processing
      * can be consumed right after harvest
      * can add value by additional processing
        + granola bars in Mexico
* Successful outcome
  + to know what has been done locally to support potential amaranth production
  + what local/int'l markets might exist
  + would love to see local value chain, but might be more int'l market
  + two aspects:
    - good for internal consumption
    - connect to external markets
  + challenges
    - acceptance at household level
    - find markets elsewhere
    - price (would yield less on per weight basis, needs higher market price)
  + want to do this in addition to corn; gradual integration into overall crop production
  + want to look at co-ops for getting crops to market
    - 80-90% is for consumption, want to make them part of formal market system
* San Marcos is the region where we will be implementing the project
  + San Marcos info:
    - Located near the border with Mexico
    - high rates of chronic malnutrition
    - two municipalities (didn't catch)
    - visit will concentrate here (most potential, their partner is interested) but can be grown elsewhere
    - led by charismatic/strong bishop; worked for social justice; legacy remains (Msgr. Aravaro Ramasini [sp?]; now bishop of dept. north of SM)
  + Partner in SM - Caritas (pastoral social de SM) - one of various depts. in diocese
    - local NGO, housed in Diocese of San Marcos
    - strong and visible partner, well-respected
    - working with ~2,500 families in the two municipalities; ~5,200 in all of SM
    - admin
      * 3 in charge: program; admin; social/human (Susana)
    - CRS contacts
      * Sr. Bernarda ("big boss")
      * Venicio (on the programming side; direct project for current 6-yr project)
      * have intimate relationship in these communities
      * have a whole team
    - CRS has an experienced, multi-disciplinary team out working in these communities
      * require lot of education, adaptation
  + USAID and Title 2 Program
    - Title 2 in legislation for food assistance
      * Development Food Aid Program
      * called sega mil by CRS
    - "feed the future strategy"
      * Obama policy
      * Guatemala is one of the countries with this focus
    - rice, beans, oil, soy plants --> distributed (foundation)
    - work with same families in other forms (ag, nutrition, community organization, etc.)
    - program targeted to children under 2 (foundation for cognitive/physical development)
    - 6-year project, just starting (in year 2, but just starting in communities July/August '13)
    - worked in SM previously, previous cycle ended '13; continuous presence here for 15-20 years
    - 10,000 families for the next 6 years
* Follow-up items
  + night in community --> they need more specifics from us on that
  + David contact Juselle (sp?) for logistics
    - driver, van, translator (indigenous language in communities)
    - send them any dietary concerns
  + they will send us 6-year project document