



Andrés practices and promotes water-smart farming.
Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS

Water-Smart Agriculture

Compromised land means a compromised way of life. We need a healthy planet for our food, our water and—for farming families—incomes.

Yet we are losing land at historic and shocking rates. From 2000 to 2015, more than one fifth of the Earth's total land became degraded. And the people most affected are those most vulnerable among us, especially small-scale farm families in developing nations.

Going Far

Without respecting our natural resources, we will never overcome global poverty. Through **Go FAR: The Campaign for Catholic Relief Services**, we are tackling these issues in tandem by helping farmers grow successful harvests while protecting and restoring their land.

Together, we will transform lives and landscapes across the world. In prioritizing our efforts, we bring these practices to scale across entire agricultural regions, including an initiative spanning El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Mexico.

Because we should, and because we can.

A Land Of Need And Opportunity

Need: About 75% of farmland in Central America suffers from degraded soil. Extreme or erratic weather makes it even more difficult for more than 2 million farm families to grow crops on their damaged lands.

Smart agricultural choices are vital—now more than ever—but some traditional farming techniques have become detrimental in the long term. Common practices like overgrazing or agricultural burning can strip soils bare. This reduces the land's ability to capture and store rainfall, thereby depleting groundwater supplies and causing silt to build up in waterways. Without healthy farms, families are driven deeper into poverty.

“We’re improving our soil, and growing and earning more, with less cost.”

—Andrés

Opportunity: The good news is that we can restore soil health, recharge groundwater and kickstart family economies, all by changing the way agriculture is practiced. We’re on the right track.

CRS’ global strategy, Vision 2030, is transforming lives and landscapes from the ground up by building farmer knowledge of water-smart agriculture. We help people learn practical, effective methods to grow plentiful harvests, restore soil, manage water and adapt to increasingly volatile climates. This people-centered approach empowers farmers—honoring the dignity of work and the care for God’s creation, just as Catholic social teaching calls us to do.

OVER THE
NEXT 10 YEARS

CRS WILL ENCOURAGE
IMPROVED FARMING
PRACTICES ON

4 MILLION
ACRES OF LAND



With campaign support, CRS will help farmers restore soil and manage water to maximize their production.

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Through the Go FAR campaign, CRS will equip farmers to shift away from harmful agricultural practices that degrade precious resources and jeopardize their productivity. By operating with focus and coordination across whole agricultural regions, we will reverse longstanding trends, sparking a movement that reaches beyond individual farmers.

The Impact

CRS puts people first. We help farm families maximize the potential of their land, resulting in sustained production levels rarely seen by small-scale farmers in Central America. By regenerating and protecting soil, and making efficient use of water, we optimize productivity. Now farmers can get the most out of every raindrop. Our focus on water-smart techniques includes:

- **Cover cropping:** Farmers plant a second, low-growing crop among their staple crop to maximize groundcover. This improves soil moisture and fertility, controls weeds and reduces erosion. Crops are better able to survive drought, while reduced soil runoff improves water quality.
- **Soil fertility:** Farmers receive better information on best practices for using fertilizer. This helps them yield healthier harvests and protects streams from toxic runoff.
- **Water management:** Farmers capture rainwater where it falls, helping it soak into the soil. This is especially vital on hillside farms, where rain runoff causes erosion and flooding. Measures like cover cropping and mulching lock moisture into the soil so that crops can withstand dry periods.

Dreams For The Future

Andrés has been a farmer for 20 years, but he's never seen healthier crops—or profits—than last year. He spent 15% less and harvested 35% more thanks to farming techniques he learned from CRS. Now he's stopped razing his land and started using crop covers. "We were killing our land—burning our Mother Earth, who feeds us," he says. "We were screwing up our soil and ourselves. It hurt us."

Sadly, it is common in El Salvador for farmers to suffer from degraded soil and prolonged droughts. Too often they do not have the resiliency training to help their crops survive. Andrés says that while his own farm is thriving, his neighbors have stunted crops and poor harvests. "You can see the difference," he says.

Fortunately, Andrés has been trained by CRS to teach other farmers in his community how to get the most from their land, just like he did. Together, they learn farming techniques that produce healthier crops by restoring natural resources. "The hope is that all my neighbors do it. Let's do it, and we can change our lives," he says.

The Legacy

Water-smart agriculture is the win-win we need for true, lasting transformation. Over the next 10 years, CRS will promote land restoration models around the world and encourage improved farming practices on **4 million acres of land**. **We will help 1 million farmers** overcome poverty and hunger.

The link between land and life is clear. Now is the time to act boldly.

Learn More
about our vision for
water-smart agriculture:
crs.org/go-far-water



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