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PennState
College of Agricultural Sciences

Program in the Molecular Biology of Cacao

Building Extension Education Capacity in Colombia: Cacao for Peace Extension Network

Challenge

In 2015, the USAID identified a need in Colombia for the strengthening of the extension capacity related to cacao, an important alternative crop for coca, grown in areas highly impacted by the civil war. Farmer education is critical to rebuild the knowledge of farmers that have experienced years of conflict and in many cases, a generational loss of knowledge. Enhancing farmer knowledge will improve productivity, quality and sustainability of this important crop. A review of the existing cacao extension and technical training activities in Colombia revealed that while there are many governmental, industry and NGO stakeholders working in this field, generally they are not well organized and do not work together.

Initiative

In 2016, USAID signed a Participating Agency Program Agreement with USDA-FAS to strengthen Colombia's key public and private institutions involved with cooperative research, technical assistance, and extension education for the cacao sector (Cacao for Peace – CfP). The goal of this project is to improve rural well-being through agricultural development that is inclusive and sustainable with positive impact on cacao farmers' incomes, economic opportunity, stability and peace. A component of the project includes capacity building for extension services in cacao. As a first step in the process, CfP implementers at Penn State University in coordination with USDA-FAS Colombia organized the first CfP Colombian Cacao Extension Educators Network workshop. The main objectives were: to create a functional network of the CfP extension partners; to inventory the partner's training materials and farmer assistance efforts; to create strategies and an action plan for coordinated efforts among the CfP extension partners.

Results

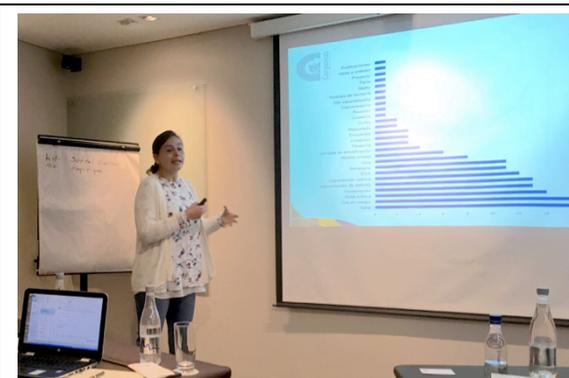
The workshop was held in Bogota in July of 2016. The meeting was attended by representatives of all the major organizations that provide extension and technical assistance to cacao farmers in Colombia including: CORPOICA, SENA, FEDECACAO, Red Cacaotera, Cacao de Colombia, Swiss Contact, and UNODC. Attendees included representatives of USAID, USDA-FAS, Penn State and Purdue. Each group presented introductions to their activities and an overview of their training curricula and materials. The general consensus of all participants was that there is a pressing need for farmer education in the cacao sector and also need for coordination among the groups providing farmer training and education. The main outcomes of the workshop include: establishment of a formalized network, Comité Colombo-Americano de Apoyo al Proyecto "Cacao para la Paz"; creation of listserve to support communications; development of a matrix of future potential contributions to collaborative projects within the CfP project. Several of the groups committed to working within CfP to conduct a baseline survey of cacao production practices in the CfP project areas, to contribute in establishment of CfP demonstration and education farms and organization of the first CfP Bootcamp, during which Peace Corps Volunteers and cacao leader-farmers received technical training.



Siela Maximova (Penn State) discussing CfP activities in Santa Marta with the members of Cacao for Peace Extension Network.



Presentation by Helga Quijano (Red Cacaotera) describing work with cacao farmer associations throughout Colombia.



Extension specialist Lina Marcela Tami Barrera (CORPOICA) discussing programs to develop educational materials.