Mission:
To help rural communities gain economic independence and rejuvenate their land through hands-on education and collaborative sustainable agriculture projects.
2011 was an amazing year of growth for us at Semilla Nueva. Our programs expanded in area and grew in depth. We welcomed new staff and volunteers, including our first Guatemalan agronomist. We developed stronger relationships with our donors. And together, we discovered new ways to help Guatemalan farmers lift themselves out of poverty.

Development is often an area of large, ambitious, and well intentioned ideas. But transforming those ideas into a reality requires patience, critical thinking, and an ability to openly admit mistakes to those you are trying to serve. True social change always requires a passion for long-term results and the long-term well being of the communities one works in. For all of us at Semilla Nueva, the sacrifices we have made in the past years has been justified by our dedication to this principle. Rural poverty and environmental destruction will never be ended without the participation and leadership of farmers themselves, and so we will continue working to help these farmers develop the tools they need for their own growth and the leadership to change their own villages.

This dedication to truly sustainable development is why Semilla Nueva continues to grow. We hope that as you learn more about our work in 2011, you can feel this passion in everything we have done.—From the farmer to farmer movement helping stop soil degradation (p7) to the new crops that can help end malnutrition (p5), to the new relationships with organizaitons like Rotary that are making it all possible (p9).

It has been an honor to dedicate ourselves to this work over the past two years and our pleasure to see so much interest from donors, activists, and the Guatemalan farmers themselves. As this path of growth continues, we will do our best to keep this spirit alive and not lose the passion that first brought us here. We welcome you to join us in this work, whether as a donor, farmer, volunteer, or simply through spreading the word. Thank you for making a difference!

Sincerely,

Curt Bowen
Executive Director
Guatemala’s farmers are fighting for their livelihoods against worsening weather conditions, land degradation, and pressure to sell their land to multinational corporations.

2011 Accomplishments:

- Farmers experimented with conservation tillage, green manures, agroforestry, and alternative food crops such as pigeonpea (for an in depth look see page 4 for conservation tillage and pages 5-6 for pigeonpea)

- Successful pilot experiments generated more community interest in our programs. Consequently, Semilla Nueva increased our presence from 4 communities in 2010 to 6 communities in 2011; and from work with six farmer volunteers in 2010, we expanded to work with sixty in 2011.

- Participating farmers hosted two national conferences to share their results, observations from experimentation, and to create long lasting connections (see pages 7-8).
Semilla Nueva promotes agricultural productivity through high impact, low risk technologies that can help farmers increase their income while protecting the environment. For example, conservation tillage helps farmers cultivate without burning their straw or plowing their fields, two of the practices most responsible for soil degradation. Through recuperating soils, this practice has been proven to decrease losses due to flooding and drought and eliminate fuel and machinery costs.

In 2010, Semilla Nueva traveled to Mexico to learn about how conservation tillage was being successfully promoted there. Seeing its success, we began working with farmers in four communities to experiment on its use in Guatemala. Farmers observed that their protective layer of straw saved their soils from the heavy rains that caused 30% crop losses in most areas.

By 2011, over twenty farmers were experimenting with conservation tillage. As a drought swept the country, participating farmers watched as their neighbors lost crops while their corn survived. As farmers share these results with their communities, the momentum is building, and 2012 will bring us even more farmers trying and adopting conservation tillage.

Photos--
Top left: Farmers weigh crop residues in a Semilla Nueva workshop, to calculate the worth of residues.
Top right: Healthy corn grows up through the leftover straw on a farmer’s test plot in La Maquina.
Bottom left: Farmers are increasingly vulnerable to the effects of climate change; extreme weather events like flooding and drought are more common each year.

“I know that if we continue to cultivate our lands as we have, in the conventional manner, we are going to finish our soils. And what can you do with a barren soil? Absolutely nothing.”

~Iréne Celedón

“After the drought ended, I saw with my own eyes that the experimental plot was taller than my other corn. The reason is clear: the organic mulch is helping to keep humidity in the soil.”

~Miguel Angel Portillo

“My perspective has changed 180 degrees from two years ago, when I thought that crop residues were garbage. Now, I take advantage of the organic material left available from my previous harvests, improving the quality of my soil and my crops.”

~Isaías Alvarado
Confronting Malnutrition in Rural Guatemala

Guatemala is the fourth most malnourished country in the world. While most children do get enough to eat, there is not enough nutrients or protein in their food to allow them to fully develop. Nationally, malnutrition has left 48% of Guatemala's children with stunted growth. This malnutrition doesn't just affect children physically, but also inhibits brain development and greatly reduces a child's opportunity in later life. In an attempt to understand how affected our partner communities were, Semilla Nueva staff and interns began a study on nutrition in the community of Willy Wood.

The plan was simple, we would start by measuring and weighing a few dozen children to get an idea of what was happening in the community. We put an announcement on the village loudspeaker that any parent who wanted to know the height and weight of their children could come to the village center. It was 10am, 95 degrees, and we were in the sun, so we doubted we would get too many takers. Within a few minutes families started arriving and we started measuring. Soon there was a line, and then it got bigger. We measured child after child for hours, hand writing the name, age, weight, and height into a binder and giving a copy to the parents. By the late afternoon we realized we had measured over 250 children and the line was still there. We asked all the parents to come back the next day, and then we measured another 150. We measured more than half of all the kids in the community.

The community's interest greatly surprised us. For water or even our agriculture projects, we would call for interested community members and have 10-15 people arrive to our meetings. But as soon as we mentioned the heath of children, we had over half the community wait in line to learn how their kids were doing. How could we get involved with this energy? How could we help parents really care for their kids?

Back at the office we ran the numbers and found that in Willy Wood, the malnutrition rate is above 80%. To give you an idea of what those statistics mean, some four year olds have similar heights to what a two year old should have. These numbers pushed us into action and drove us to find a way farmers could take better care of their families: pigeonpea.
A People Centered Approach to Improving Rural Livelihoods

The farmer to farmer movement is centered upon an emphasis upon people, rather than technologies, as the best way to improve rural livelihoods. Semilla Nueva is founded on the principle that local farmers leading by their own example will always be the best innovators and educators. Head agronomist Trinidad says, “As development workers, we will always be visitors in the communities where we work. The true strength and continuity of the movement will come from within the people involved.”

To truly inspire local change, Semilla Nueva harnesses the power of local leadership, experimentation, and results. The centerpiece of this work is the shift from our staff training local farmers to those farmers training each other. In 2010, two national conferences brought together participating farmers to learn about conservation tillage and green manures. The energy behind these conferences increased greatly in 2011, as farmers, instead of Semilla Staff, led the charge.

Semilla Nueva’s approach has three steps:

1) Learn to Experiment:
Most farmers in our communities never completed elementary school, which makes scientific management of their farms difficult. Semilla Nueva begins by teaching farmers how to scientifically try a new growing technique and analyze the results. In the process farmers learn the new technique and also learn how to effectively try new ideas in the future.

2) Build Community Groups:
As farmers begin to see their results, we bring these experimenting farmers in communities together into Sustainable Agriculture Groups. These groups share results, ideas, and facilitate group problem solving—creating a hub of agricultural innovation within communities.

3) Share the results:
Semilla Nueva works with Sustainable Agriculture Groups to pay it forward, organizing conferences in their communities to share what they’ve learned and developed with the rest of their community. Participating in Semilla Nueva’s programs includes learning how to train others, meaning that communities develop the foundation to make Semilla Nueva’s program their own.
Pigeonpea:
Nourishment for Soils, Nutrition for Families

Pigeonpea, or *gandul*, is a powerful tool to help our communities increase their income while fighting malnutrition. Pigeonpea is one of the most popular beans of small farmers in India and Africa, but is seldom grown in the parts of Guatemala where we work. It can be grown in between the rows of farmers' existing crops and produces a high quality and nutritious bean. In other words, it can help farmers grow something new without having to change what they already have.

**What are the benefits of pigeonpea?**

**High Protein:** farmers in the coast traditionally buy all of their beans. When money is short they can only afford to feed their family with corn tortillas, which are nutritionally insufficient when eaten alone.

**An Extra Crop:** because it can be planted in between farmers' other crops, pigeonpea provides an extra harvest for farmers without losing one of their already planned crops.

**Soil Reclamation:** pigeonpea has a strong taproot system, meaning its roots break up compaction in the soil. For farmers who are trying to begin using conservation tillage this is a perfect compliment.

**Organic Fertilization:** pigeonpea is leguminous and can add up to half of the nitrogen in the soil needed by a future corn crop, helping farmers save on their biggest cost.

**Fodder:** pigeonpea not only has high protein beans, but also high protein in the rest of the plant, meaning it can be grazed by or harvested and fed to livestock!

In late 2011, thirty farmers planted small parcels of pigeonpea, utilizing their own planting and pruning strategies. The results were astounding. Several farmers quickly showed their growing methods as the best and grew yields of about 1,100 lbs per acre. For farmers with two acres of land, this is the equivalent of adding over $800 to their income and providing more than enough food for their families!

Next year's plans include working with 100 farmers to each grow ¼ acre of pigeonpea. Farmers harvests will be large enough to repay Semilla Nueva's loan of seed, to plant the entirety of their land the next year, and to eat and share with their neighbors.

Photos--
Top right: A farmer shows off some recently harvested seed
Middle right: A field of pigeonpea thrives during the dry season
Lower right: Women make tortillas with pigeonpea, a complete protein meal!
Below: Local women prepare pigeonpea alongside corn and vegetables
Farmers Shared their Results in Two 2011 Conferences

Noé Estrada, who has multiple years experience with conservation tillage, helped us hold the 2011 spring conference on his land. He pushed attendees to experiment with different ways of incorporating organic materials into their soils, to find what works for their situation. He says, “I know that it’s hard to change a mentality that has existed for over a generation,” referring to the practice of burning crop residues, “but we, as farmers, must constantly experiment and adapt to keep ourselves and our families alive.” The result of his technical assistance and energy was the biggest movement toward conservation tillage we had seen so far, with several dozen farmers starting plots on their land within the next month.

In November, farmers gathered on a local parcel in the community Willywood to see an exciting strategy for soil recuperation in action. Pigeonpea is an extra crop farmers can grow, but it also offers soil protection and renovation. One of the presenters, Carlos Hernandez, expressed his excitement for the potential of the crop, “I watched this crop grow in land that none of my other crops would grow in. It looks like it will bring a great production even in the dry season. From trying it myself I’ve realized that I can plant it a bit earlier and really increase my yields. Get some seed from Semilla Nueva or from me and try it yourself!”

Farmers taking the initiative to try, adopt and share practices with their own two hands is what fuels our inspiration here in Guatemala. We are excited to continue working as the connective tissue between these motivated farmers and others in the growing network of sustainability in Guatemala and around the world.
Semilla Nueva and Rotary International: Partners for Change in Guatemala

Rotary International is quickly becoming one of Semilla Nueva's most important partners. Rotary began supporting Semilla Nueva in January of 2011, when Idaho's Boise Southwest Rotary provided a $965 grant to help fund Semilla Nueva's work. Since then Rotary clubs in Guatemala, Oregon, Idaho and Colorado have come together around a Global Grant, which would help Semilla Nueva expand from its current six communities to ten. Just as exciting, Rotary members from around the US and Guatemala are beginning to visit Semilla Nueva's communities, including a trip of Guatemalan Rotarians in June of 2012, and a trip of American Rotarians in October of 2012. The more we learn about Rotary, the more impressed we are by the depth of their involvement locally and internationally and the values of friendship behind their work. We hope to continue working with Rotarians for the long-term, providing an avenue in which their leadership and good-will can become tangible results.

We want to specifically thank the following districts and clubs for their help on our latest project:

District 4250: Quetzaltenango, Guatemala
District 5110: Ashland
District 5400: Boise Southwest, Nampa, Boise East, Emmett, Eagle-Garden City, Boise Downtown, Boise Sunrise, Caldwell
District 5440: Fort Collins
**STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES**

**Use of Operating Funds**

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**Operating Revenue**

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# Financial Snapshot

## Use of Operating Funds

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## Operating Revenue

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Use of Operating Funds:

- **Management & Administration**: 2010: 12%, 2011: 11%, 2012*: 10%, 2013*: 17%
- **Program Activities**: 2010: 75%, 2011: 73%, 2012*: 80%, 2013*: 76%
- **Development**: 2010: 13%, 2011: 16%, 2012*: 10%, 2013*: 8%

*Estimated