LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

First, I want to extend a warm thank you for taking the time to read about our ongoing work here in Guatemala. It has truly been the most exciting year yet for Semilla Nueva. We have grown tremendously in 2012 and are ready to grow by leaps and bounds in 2013. We refined our mission and vision, and built the foundation of our Board of Directors. We have extended our services to over 150 farmers in 10 communities, sharing sustainable agriculture techniques. We identified and proved the potential of pigeonpea in a pilot nutrition program, laying a strong foundation for our Food and Nutritional Security program in 2013. We laid the foundation for long-lasting, collaborative partnerships with other NGOs and government institutions that will help ensure the sustainability of our programs far into the future. We have proven that with the right care, Semilla Nueva can and will accomplish the ambitious and impactful goals we have laid out for ourselves. I still feel the adrenaline and satisfaction go through me every time I meet a farmer who tells me they learned about one of our techniques from a neighbor and are now sharing it with others. Semilla Nueva is happening.

While 2012 was an excellent year for farmers, the struggle for them to break even on investments still persists. Excessive tillage and over-use of agro-chemicals has weakened the soil, causing more and more dependence on conventional, high-input, high-cost agriculture every year. Alternative, high-impact growing techniques have been developed around the world to help farmers increase their income while protecting their land; however, the institutions and technical assistance to disseminate these techniques are lacking. We are here to bridge the world’s best innovations in sustainable agricultural development to the rural, poor farmers that need them the most, and to support their continued innovation and prosperity.

What has most inspired me about Semilla Nueva is something more. We have begun to build an international community of changemakers. Promoting agricultural development requires sound research and extension, the audacity to believe that we can change the status quo, and the will and dedication to make it happen. From our Associate Board to the volunteers who helped us promote an online fundraiser, from the scientists in Africa who developed new seed varieties to the farmers who experiment with them, and from the Rotary advocate to the Board of Directors – we have done something in 2012 that truly shows that Semilla Nueva has a future. We have built the long-term relationships and the culture of a movement, a movement that we believe can and will build a different future for agriculture in rural Guatemala. The year of 2012 was the year that we proved that Semilla Nueva can succeed at its mission. I am excited to watch this spirit carry us into 2013.

We owe a huge thanks to the passion of the staff, volunteers, supporters, and especially the farmers who have allowed us to get where we are – this is your victory too. Thank you.

Curt Bowen
Executive Director
Our Mission: to develop locally-led farmer education programs that increase the income, rebuild the soils, and improve the food security of Guatemala's rural poor.

Our Vision: A world in which small farmer organization and sustainable agriculture can substantially decrease rural poverty, protect the global environment on which we all depend, and give farmers control of their own destiny.
Guatemala’s farmers are trapped in a cycle in which the way they farm is slowly eroding their livelihood. The vast majority of farmers rely on a system of chemically-dependent conventional growing methods and little technical assistance, which has slowly and drastically degraded their soil. Impoverished soils produce less and less, leaving many farmers barely breaking even every year.

Semilla Nueva aims to provide the missing link between leading agricultural research institutions and poor farmers. We bring simple, sustainable growing techniques to the rural, poor farmers who need them the most. Employing the Farmer to Farmer methodology, Semilla Nueva partners with community leaders to test sustainable agricultural techniques on a small portion of their land, assists in the recording of the results from the experiment, and facilitates farmer-led conferences to share the results with neighboring farmers. By training local farmers to lead the movement, the movement begins organically reproducing itself all over rural areas previously untouched by extension services. We look for technologies with triple-bottom-line benefits that can reverse environmental degradation, improve food security and raise farmers’ incomes.
SUSTAINABLE AGRONOMY PROGRAMS

Semilla Nueva promotes agricultural productivity through high-impact, low-risk technologies that allow farmers to increase their income while protecting their soils. In 2012 we facilitated experiments with farmers on a range of technologies including conservation tillage, green manures, seed spacing and native seed varieties. Our most successful project was the green manure and nutritious food crop pigeonpea. Farmers reaped over 2,000 pounds of seed from their experiments with this crop! We also made great strides on further developing our Farmer to Farmer extension model, gaining invaluable experience in data collection and the standardization of our field systems. 2012 was a year of transition, learning and seeing the enormous possibility of our model.

CONSERVATION TILLAGE SYSTEMS: SAVING SOILS AND INCREASING INCOMES

Conventional farming systems in rural Guatemala include burning fields between harvests and excessive tillage every year, practices that release large amounts of greenhouse gases as well as reducing the natural organic matter of the soil. Conservation tillage helps farmers cultivate without burning their crop residues or plowing their fields, saving their soils and saving them money. This practice decreases losses due to flooding and drought, as well as eliminating fuel and machinery costs. In 2011, Semilla Nueva was only working with twenty farmers practicing conservation tillage. But after a drought swept through the country and participating farmers watched their neighbors’ crops wilted as their corn survived, many more farmers jumped on board in 2012. In total, we had 36 farmers practicing conservation tillage in 2012.

Our results from no-till experiments in 2012 were very promising. On average, farmers earned 22% more on their no-till plots than conventional plots! Converted into local currency savings, that means sending a child to school for an entire year. The environmental benefit is even further reaching. Left over crop residues incorporated into the soil in no-burn and no-till systems allows for natural organic matter to be restored into the soil, reducing the need for fertilizer. Ciriaco Olmos in Willywood has been practicing no-burn for 4 years and has noted a 50% reduction in the use of costly fertilizers, saving him up to $300 a year. Farmers have been thrilled to see these signs of improvement and they are strong motivators to continue to experiment and adopt no-till and reduced-till technologies with Semilla Nueva.
Pigeonpea is a drought-resistant bean bred to grow in the dry-season with nearly no input. It cuts fertilizer costs by fixing organic nitrogen, decreasing soil compaction and erosion and providing high protein and nutrient rich food. It is a very practical crop for resource-poor farmers because it can be planted in between farmers’ existing traditional crops, providing an extra harvest without losing any income from other harvests. Pigeonpea is an example of how Guatemalan farmers can make small changes to their growing systems that reap large benefits – economically, socially and environmentally.

We started working with pigeonpea in 2011 and the results were staggering – farmers proved that they could earn up to $500 in extra annual income by planting this extra, alternative crop in the off-season. In 2012 we promoted pigeonpea in our communities primarily through our “Kuchubal” planting strategy. An ancient Mayan tradition of communal work days, the Kuchubal helped us plant directly with 51 farmers and give seed to 182 additional farmers. With all of these farmers harvesting their pigeonpea in the spring, we will be able to buy back over 2,000 pounds of seed from local farmers, allowing us to reach more than 500 farmers in 2013.

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<th>OVERALL TECHNOLOGY USE</th>
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<td><strong>TECHNOLOGY</strong></td>
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DEVELOPING FARMER TO FARMER EXTENSION

2012 CONFERENCES: SHARING THE KNOWLEDGE

Farmer to Farmer depends on the local civil will of communities and individual farmers. Over the course of the last three decades, the movement has proven to reach hundreds of thousands of farmers in rural areas previously untouched by extension services, primarily through farmer-led conferences and farmer field schools. In 2012, Semilla Nueva hosted our second annual National Conference in which over 89 farmers and their family members attended. The best part was watching rural empowerment happen right before our eyes – not one presentation was given by Semilla Nueva staff but rather the entire conference was led by local farmers. Promotores talked about the increased resilience that no-till and green manures had helped them achieve in the previous year, while women from our Food Security Program prepared lunch for the conference, consisting of tamales with pigeonpea to help promote the nutritional benefits of this new crop we were promoting.

One of the main principles [of Farmer to Farmer] is to do in order to teach. Doing things in order to teach others, that is the best method that exists to develop communities.
José Jesús Mendoza, Santa Lucia, Nicaragua

It's not us that have the have the answers, it's the farmers themselves that have the answer! They have so much capacity, I think they have capacity to do things better than we can! The only thing I think we are really trying to do is facilitate a change, in which one day they wouldn’t need any outside aid or assistance. And that is something I believe we can call true development.
Trinidad Recinos, Semilla Nueva agronomist
GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS WITH FIELD SYSTEMS

This is the first and most important facet of Farmer to Farmer development is experimentation. In the words of our Guatemalan lead agronomist Trinidad Recinos, “I have a special little word I like to use with campesinos - Try!” Our extensionists worked with farmers to facilitate experiments with several new technologies in 2012, including no-till, reduced tillage systems, native seed varieties, and green manures. An experimental plot and equally sized control plot are measured. Then, extensionists facilitate the recording of data from both plots throughout the year including dates of planting and harvesting, amount of inputs, costs, price, and overall return on investment.

Semilla Nueva significantly improved the standardization of our programs in 2012, allowing us to record a great deal of detailed data. Our extensionists worked with over 30 farmers individually to collect data on fertilizer and pesticide application (previously unseen in many of the communities), standardized visits to every two weeks for farmers with experimental plots, and were present for over 90% of the sesame and corn harvests.
FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL SECURITY PROGRAM

In February 2012, Semilla Nueva began a pilot food and nutritional security program to accompany our sustainable agronomy programs, focusing on promoting the local consumption of pigeonpea. Success was widespread as we continued to expand the project to all of our communities throughout 2012, ending with a bang by planting pigeonpea with over 30 women! We have learned so much about our communities, their needs, and our model throughout this pilot program. We are learning how to bring Sustainable Agriculture from the farm to the table, confronting food security and malnutrition head on in 2013.

THE KUCHUBAL: GROWING BETTER TOGETHER

The month of September was the month of Kuchubales, a Mayan tradition of communal work days, which helped us fortify our Food and Nutritional Security groups, as well as learn from local women what they wanted out of the program.

While field staff worked primarily with men to plant pigeonpea in the fields, our Food Security extensionist worked with the wives or daughters of these farmers to learn pigeonpea recipes so that when the crop begins to produce, the families can incorporate the extra harvest into their daily diet. This practice introduced us to a new group of women in each community who now had pigeonpea planted. It also helped us learn that it is more effective to choose a few high-impact technologies that groups could be formed around, gain momentum, and expand after successful implementation of these technologies. We can’t wait for Round Two of Kuchubales in the Fall of 2013!
HIGH-IMPACT TECHNOLOGIES FOR 2013

Through the pilot program, Semilla Nueva discovered how our mission could be expanded to use sustainable agriculture to help address poverty by increasing soil quality and creating economic opportunity, while also addressing malnutrition by producing more and better foods for family consumption. In 2013 we plan to work with three highly nutritious and locally producible foods: chaya, quality protein maize and pigeonpea.

We plan to mimic the farmer to farmer philosophy employed in our Sustainable Agronomy Programs, training local leaders in food and nutritional security principles. These local leaders will then be the voice in the community to share the results they are experiencing from the incorporation of these foods into their families’ diets.

I see changes taking place already as a result of Semilla Nueva’s work. Communities and farmers, especially women, are being empowered. The soil is healthier. There are lower rates of malnutrition. Local leadership and community organization are flourishing.

Anne Barkett, Semilla Nueva Food Security Director
In 2012, Semilla Nueva was awarded a Global Grant from Rotary International in the amount of $62,000. Involving 14 clubs, this great achievement is the culmination of two years of collaboration with Rotary. Funds cover seeds, soil testing, training, and additional resources for five communities as well as two vehicles and salaries for two Semilla Nueva extensionists. The money will be an enormous help to the efficacy of Semilla Nueva's programs in 2013.

The relationship Semilla Nueva has cultivated with Rotary is incomparable. In October 2012 we hosted 21 Rotarians to Guatemala for a chance to see up-close and personal the work they were supporting. The life-altering experiences speak for themselves: individuals from this trip have gone on to donate vehicles, join our Board of Directors and serve on our Technical Advisory Committee. At Semilla Nueva, we share more than technical assistance, we share birthdays and weddings, meals and laughter, and long afternoons harvesting corn with our families in the tropical heat.

What I appreciated most about my trip to Guatemala was being fully immersed in the work out in the fields. We worked hand in hand with farmers harvesting corn and comparing results. Some of us even walked barefoot in the mud!

- Mike Sieler, Rotary Trip Participant 2012
SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Semilla Nueva’s Sponsorship program is the most tangible expression of our public relations philosophy. We have designed a program of direct communication between supporters and a farming family they sponsor, exchanging letters and photos, and providing opportunities for sponsors to visit their family in Guatemala. In 2012 we were able to get 30 farming families sponsored and we are looking forward to expanding on this project in the following years.

MEN IN TIGHTS FOR SEMILLA NUEVA

Funding can come from all kinds of creative sources, and that has never been better proven than in the Mr. Whitman contest hosted by the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority of Whitman college. Semilla Nueva was selected from a competitive contest of non-profits based on our “impact, sustainability and scalability”. A variety of strategies were employed by participants (nude Whitman boys rock climbing to name one in particular) to raise money, with an overall amount of $36,000 raised! Way to go Whitties!

THE POWER OF OUR PEOPLE!

Our incredible network of supporters really showed their power through a Crowdrise campaign in the spring and the IGNITEgood competition in the fall. Crowdrise is an online giving platform where organizations can pitch an idea through pictures, video, and a description and then ask donors for help. Semilla Nueva raised over $6000 through the program for pigeonpea seed to distribute later in the year. IGNITEgood Millennial Impact Challenge was a contest put on by the Huffington Post and the Heartfelt Foundation. Among over 400 applicants, Semilla Nueva was selected as one of ten winners that received $10,000 as well as a fully-funded trip to New York City for a conference with all of the other winners.
**ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT**

**INCOME SUMMARY 2012**

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**EXPENSES 2012**

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SEMILLA NUEVA...

visit www.semillanueva.org or contact us

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