

PEOPLE & PLANET OVER PROFIT

SMALL-SCALE FARMERS ARE GUARDIANS OF THE PLANET'S HEALTH

Grow Ahead

5 Year Impact Report







Dear friends of Grow Ahead,

The last five years have been a testament to the resiliency and strength of small-scale farmer organizations. Rural communities around the world continue to confront the climate crisis, while simultaneously contending with the aftermath of a global pandemic, accelerating income inequality, and an unrelenting assault by industrial agriculture. Despite these challenges, small-scale farmers have persisted, utilizing agroforestry to feed their communities and protect the environment. Since its inception, **Grow Ahead** has been devoted to working in solidarity with rural communities across the globe and providing crucial financial support to help ensure their success. Our work at **Grow Ahead** would be impossible without your commitment and dedication to small farmers.

We are proud to share our Five-Year Impact Report and celebrate the organizations and farmers that have spearheaded the critical work of constructing food sovereignty while safeguarding biodiversity and stewarding landscapes around the world. With your support, **Grow Ahead** has funded farmer-led projects across 12 countries, addressing the root causes of poverty inequity, promoting social justice and intergenerational agroforestry knowledge.

Our work at **Grow Ahead** is far from over. Community-driven agroforestry has made great strides in recent years. Indigenous and Peasant farmers are finally gaining public recognition for their generational knowledge and contributions to both the food web and ecological conservation. Yet, many small-scale organizations remain underfunded and overlooked by governments, aid agencies and other funders. **Grow Ahead** occupies a unique role in the global landscape of funders, as we exclusively support farmer organizations committed to fair trade and social justice. We are grateful for the continued support of donors and business partners. It is only with your backing and partnership that are we able to accompany small-scale farmers in their journey towards economic and climate resiliency.

With deep gratitude,
Ryan Zinn

Director Grow Ahead





Who are we:

Grow Ahead partners directly with small-scale farmer organizations to plant trees in agroforestry systems including food producing trees for local consumption, as well as income generating crops, in a food-forest system.

These systems allow farmers to restore water and nutrients to their soil, which increases food production and pulls carbon out of the atmosphere.



Over the past 5 years we have:

Planted

630,000+

trees and supporting plants

Impacted

9,200+

farmers and

67,600+

community members

Crowdfunded

\$1M+

trees and
supporting plants

Increased yearly
funding by

330%

Supported 22 projects, impacting small-scale
farming communities in:

Honduras

Colombia

Guatemala

Nicaragua

Thailand

India

Ghana

Zimbabwe

Brazil

Peru

Mexico

Chile

Why Agroforestry:

Climate change is one of the biggest issues facing the world today. In order to combat climate change we need strong, multi-faceted climate action. We see reforestation as just one part of a much larger solution. Planting trees in agroforestry systems is one of the most readily available ways to pull carbon out of the atmosphere and support community livelihoods.



Grow Ahead's agroforestry projects are about more than just the environmental benefits; it is about supporting small-scale farming communities. Farmers and rural communities are the first to feel the effects of climate change despite having disproportionately low carbon footprints.

Working with these communities for climate resiliency initiatives is essential so that they can protect the land and continue to provide for their families. By planting trees in agroforestry systems, farmers are restoring the water and nutrients to the soil, providing food and crops for their families and communities, and pulling carbon out of the atmosphere. People & the planet: that's what we're all about.

CREATION OF
'MICRO-CLIMATES'
BY PROTECTING
PLANTS FROM INTENSE
SUN, RAIN & WINDS



BETTER
CROPS &
INCREASED
PRODUCTION

Where we started:

2013

Grow Ahead was launched as a cross-cultural initiative of Progreso and Cooperative Coffees geared towards pre-financing fair trade coffee harvests.

2017

Grow Ahead re-launched as a crowdfunding platform with projects in four main areas: Farmer-to-Farmer trainings, Scholarships for Women Farmers, Revolving Loan Funds and Agroforestry Projects. In our first two-years of operations we were able to fund 22 scholarships, 6 farmer-to-farmer training and 20 loans.

2017

Regional Farmer-to-Farmer Exchange for Coffee Farmers on Reforestation

Grow Ahead teamed up with Cooperative Coffees and Taking Root to fundraise for 30 coffee producers from across Latin America to attend workshops to knowledge share and train about reforestation. The training focused on the importance of reforestation and creating an agroforestry plan that adjusts to the local context and producer feedback. Cooperative member's sharing knowledge with each other on best practices under different local context allows broader learnings on different local, indigenous species and techniques. Working together also links farmer organizations to a broader, international movement aimed at combating climate change.



2018

Scholarships for Women Farm Leaders: Vasantha Kumari

Vasantha Kumari is a farmer and community leader from Karnataka in southern India. She has worked with a number of community-based organizations, promoting agroecology among rural communities. She now works with Amrita Bhoomi, an agroecology center in southern India. Beginning as a youth intern, Vasantha is now one of the coordinators of the seed program at the Bhoomi Center. She manages the seed bank and has conserved and collected about 200 seed varieties. Vasantha also oversees the youth interns and training programs to help women identify traditional herbs and plants.

Grow Ahead funded a scholarship for Vasantha to further her skills in seed conservation over the course of one year and support the launch of Amrita Bhoomi's seed distribution program, a network of both men and women farmers who will save seeds and then collectively distribute them among farmers in India.



2019

We refocused our work to reach our collective goals of combating climate change, community preservation, income security and food sovereignty under one project umbrella: community-led agroforestry projects. These projects are at the intersection of climate change mitigation and community development.

These small-scale farmer-led reforestation projects are about more than just trees. Our approach also includes technical assistance for the management and implementation of the project, production and installation of seedlings, farmer-to-farmer education programs on the benefits of agroforestry on coffee systems and the development of community groups for implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Agroforestry projects are a great way to work at the intersection of climate change mitigation and community development.

Since 2019 we have partnered with small-scale farmer organizations in 10 countries and planted more than 630,000 trees in diverse agro-ecological systems.

2020

Reforestation and Beekeeping in Guatemala

Maya Ixil is a cooperative of 200 small-scale indigenous coffee farmers in the Ixil Triangle, a grouping of communities in the northwestern highlands of Guatemala.

The project worked with 200 members of this indigenous cooperative to establish trees and plants on their family farms that will serve as coffee shade trees and food for bees, while supporting organic food production and more biodiverse farms.



2021

Women-led Reforestation in Brazil

Central Cooperative of the Agrarian Reform Areas of Ceará (CCA) created an initiative 'Peasant Women, Planting Trees Producing Healthy Foods' to promote reforestation in agroecological production systems that guarantees healthy food, recovery of native forests, care for natural resources (water, land, biodiversity) and build peasant and popular feminism and income generation for peasant families. CCA and the Movement for Landless Workers in Brazil have a long history of *Campesinas a Campesinas* (Farmer to Farmer trainings) which has formed a network of peasant women who hold and share agro-ecological knowledge and practices in the region.



2022

Agroforestry & Cocoa in Ghana

Deforestation for cocoa production in West Africa is a major issue affecting the region. Kuapa Kokoo Cooperative is implementing agroforestry to ensure that people and cocoa are able to mutually exist in the same environment through farmer centered sustainable farming systems. This project's purpose was to restore ecosystems, increase biodiversity, sequester carbon and improve community livelihoods through income generation and food security.



Who we work with:

The Communal Commons of the Lacandona Zone (BCZL)

BCZL is an organization made up of Indigenous people descended from the Lacandona, Ch'ol, TZotsil and Tzeltal Mayans, which has authority over a territory of at least 500 thousand hectares, which cover a large part of the Lacandona Jungle in Chiapas, Mexico. Much of their work is built around using traditional Mayan agroforestry systems, called milpas, to regenerate the land. BCZL is focusing its work on reconstructing life networks in the jungle to support biodiversity of plants and animals, ensure food and medicine for the community, and strengthen Indigenous traditions that make the fabric of the Selva Lacandona community.



Café Orgánico Marcala (COMSA)

COMSA is a coffee cooperative and organization that is a leader in organic, biodynamic and agroecological practices which allows them to maintain the health of the soils, the ecosystems that surround it and the people who are in relation to it.

COMSA also focuses on sharing knowledge and community with future generations through the COMSA International School, where the cooperative has created a schooling system rooted in respect and care for the environment, for oneself and for the community.

*'To survive we must think and act differently
than the conventional [agriculture] systems, to
evolve with a view on the long-term,
diversifying, working with our children'*


-Fredy Alexander Perez Zelaya



Central Cooperative of the Agrarian Reform Areas of Ceará (CCA)

The CCA is an association of farmer families in Ceará, Brazil. The CCA is a solidarity network founded by Movement of Rural Workers Without Land (MST) to bring together organizations and cooperatives across Brazil that focus on agricultural production and training based on agroecology. CCA Ceará's main focus is on mobilizing peasant families towards food sovereignty, agroecology, and raising the level of autonomy of peasant women, valuing their knowledge in the construction of processes for the exchange of knowledge from peasant to peasant.

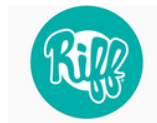


A man in a white shirt and dark pants is climbing a large, thick tree trunk in a forest. He is positioned on the right side of the frame, facing away from the camera and slightly to the left. The tree has a rough, brown bark and many thin, horizontal branches. The background is filled with green pine needles and other trees, creating a dense forest scene. The lighting is natural, suggesting daytime.

Grassroots-led projects are better equipped to address the local needs and ensure long-term success. As a result, communities have more sovereignty over their food and resources to spread knowledge on sustaining their communities and their lands.

Grow Ahead has a mission to support small-scale farmer-led projects that don't have access to funding from conventional lenders or charities. Our success comes from the **Grow Ahead** communities willingness to trust and value the wisdom of farmers and the climate solutions being implemented by frontline communities.

Thank You to our Business Partners:



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Our campaigns and work would not be possible without the support of mission-aligned businesses, organizations and individuals.

