

# THE RECIPROCITY FUND

FLOR DE MORA

GUATEMALA



Cooperativa Integral de Comercialización Flor de Mora R.L. is a cooperative that produces, collects, and exports blackberries. 15 years ago, 20 producers from a rural community in San José Poaquil, in the highlands of Guatemala, organized themselves to have a place to collect and sell their crops. Initially, they began to sell in the local market, but it was not until 2014 that they managed to export. Cooperativa Flor de Mora works 100% with indigenous communities of the Maya Kaqchikel ethnic group, of which 35% are women. It currently benefits 100 producing families by offering technical assistance to ensure proper maintenance of the land for high-quality blackberry production. Women associates experience economic empowerment by doing work they have learned from their ancestors while having their children around and caring for them. Overall, blackberry cultivation promotes prosperity for these families in six rural communities.

Flor de Mora collects blackberries from approximately 78 hectares of land. Each hectare produces about 7,000 kilos of blackberries per year. On average, each producer has less than one hectare of blackberries planted. Producers deliver crops to the collection center four times a week.

## IMPACT OVERVIEW

Description: Empowerment of indigenous communities in the central highlands of Guatemala through agriculture to produce high-quality blackberries for export.

No. of beneficiaries	100 families
% Women	35

## COMMUNITY



**Country:** Guatemala

**Municipalities:**  
Chimaltenango

**Communities:**  
Maya Kaqchikel

## Impact Background



San José Poaquil is a municipality in the Chimaltenango Department, Guatemala. 95% of its population is indigenous from the Maya-Kaqchikel ethnic group, and 5% are not indigenous. Poaquil, like many other indigenous people along the western Guatemalan highlands, suffered greatly under the severe military repression of the early 1980s. It has a poverty level of 65%, and 15% of its population lives in extreme poverty. The population is quite far from public access and has high illiteracy. The main source of income is agriculture, followed by trade, handicrafts, and transportation.

According to the Maya Oxlajuj Na'oj Council of Guatemala, 90% of men from Poaquil are involved in agriculture; it is their means of subsistence. Because of this, agricultural training, market strategies, the production of organic fertilizers, and other elements that can contribute to economic development are necessary. Few inhabitants of Poaquil earn a minimum wage, and there are no factories or other work sources. Women also do not have a direct and stable monthly income since most are engaged in domestic work and supporting agricultural work.

The Maya Kaqchikel have their own structure of thought through their language, costumes, and traditions. 72% of the population is in rural areas and 28% in urban areas. Poaquil is a member of the Kaqchikel Linguistic Community; almost 100% of its population speaks Kaqchikel. Some have learned Spanish.

Agriculture is so important in Poaquil that it has the first Creole and Native Seed Bank locally, which protects biodiversity and contributes to strengthening food sovereignty and security, preserving the Kaqchikel Mayan culture, and fostering relations of trust and reciprocity in the community.

Guatemala is the second-largest exporter of fresh blackberries to the U.S., averaging 2.454 million kilos (5.4 million pounds) a year, 2% of the total quota. It is second only to Mexico, which dominates the market with a 98% share, reaching more than 115.909 million kilos (255 million pounds) in 2023, according to USDA data. One advantage for Guatemala is that its main blackberry export window falls between August and September, when Mexico's season is over.

In Guatemala, the prices of kilos of blackberries have increased by up to 100% year-on-year due to the "El Niño" phenomenon. So far, this recent event has not affected the Mexican market.

## Impact Delivery

Flor de Mora seeks to contribute to the sustainable development of the indigenous Maya Kaqchikel, mainly through agriculture and larger-scale production. It currently supports 100 small producers and families, each with approximately 0.78 hectares of land. In 2023, each family sold about 5,500 kilos of blackberries to Flor de Mora. Each family could earn an average of USD 770 net per month. Flor de Mora pays weekly as they pass quality control. Once the product has been collected, it is placed in the cold rooms of the collection center. Flor de Mora offers technical

assistance to its producers in fertilizer use, compost, and pest treatment, among others. In addition, the staff who work in the production process have been trained in good agricultural practices (GAP) and good manufacturing practices (GMP).

Flor de Mora generates 15 part-time jobs for young people. These young people help with collection, quality control, packing, and storage. They receive a monthly income of approximately USD 200 for working an average of 3 days a week. This income helps the families economically and allows them to continue with their studies.

Families are more united because they have decent jobs. Over time, this retains young people in the villages. The ripple effect on the community is significant. Schools, worship places, and shops have sprung up in the city center as a sign of vitality that often accompanies good commerce.

**Outcomes**

<i>Improvement of livelihood.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Income generation for the producers, providing opportunities to improve families' health, education, and well-being.</li> <li>▪ Female empowerment and economic independence.</li> <li>▪ Employment opportunities for young people.</li> </ul>
<i>Cultural preservation.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Incorporate traditional and modern farming techniques, encouraging younger generations to continue with renewable farming.</li> <li>▪ Promote the participation of indigenous women in their space, in their language, and in their clothing.</li> <li>▪ Promotes the value of agriculture not only as a livelihood for the local market but also for export.</li> </ul>
<i>Environmental preservation.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adding ancestral cultivation practices to new ways of growing helps preserve healthy land.</li> <li>▪ Farmers moved away from unproductive agricultural projects or those that were difficult to produce and export and generated less income.</li> <li>▪ Promote the participation of indigenous communities in events, helping to preserve culture and traditions.</li> </ul>