Resilient Central America (ResCA) 

Guatemala is Central America’s most diverse country, with a rich Mayan heritage and over 20 indigenous languages spoken across a varying landscape that includes cloud forests, coastlines, volcanic peaks, tropical forests and breathtaking lakes. Considered one of Central America’s fastest growing economies, Guatemala is a country with abundant natural resources and regarded as one of the 18 most biodiverse countries in the world.

Resilient Central America (ResCA) aims to tackle two principal challenges: food security and vulnerability to climate change. Through piloting innovative solutions and by working across different scales, this program will develop new agricultural models that build resiliency to climate change, conserve natural habitats and strengthen local economies.

THE PROBLEM

While Guatemala is a country that offers immense potential, it is also one of the world’s most vulnerable to climate change. In the Western Highlands region, which is a mountainous stretch nestled between the volcanic chain of Guatemala and the towering Cuchumatanes peaks, is considered the most disaster-prone area of the country.

In this region, the population consists of many indigenous cultures and poverty rates are astonishingly high at 76%, amongst the worst in Latin America. Chronic malnutrition is also at record highs, around 67% of the population and with approximately 120,000 residents migrating north every year. Many of these social issues have been magnified in the face of a changing climate.

With the increasing severity of droughts, deforestation and soil loss, the security of basic food and water resources for the over 275,000 small-scale subsistence farmers in this region are in serious jeopardy.
Although the Western Highlands is extremely vulnerable to climate change, the landscape also has high amounts of intact forest which can serve as a natural buffer to climate change and help protect local communities. To foster a sustainable economic development of the region, TNC is working with diverse partners to create a multi-sector compact that will transition the region to a climate-resilient agricultural approach. This model will allow for the conservation of these natural habitats, secure food and water resources and safeguard these communities from the impacts of climate change. TNC and partners from the private sector, public sector and civil society are proposing to address this through three key pillars:

1. **Policy Strengthening and Implementation:** To focus on three innovative policy achievements at the national level - the Irrigation, Low Emissions Livestock and Climate Change. By identifying key policy initiatives and areas of intervention, TNC and partners will work to strengthen the policy frameworks and incentivize the private sector to shift towards a climate-resilient agricultural approach.

2. **Local and Regional Value Chain Linkages:** Due to a lack of access to credit, markets, and technical capacity, many small-scale producers are unable to connect into the value chains of agricultural export products. Through academic analyses, TNC and partners will identify intervention plans, technology opportunities and best management practices that improve the terms and conditions of trade so farmers can strategically invest in sustainable production.

3. **Territorial Landscape Management Planning:** To promote the implementation of urgent interventions for climate change adaptation through capacity building, scientific and technology tools and to secure private sector commitments for ecosystem protection. This component will be achieved through pilot projects and will focus on the conservation of forests, wetlands, water availability and soil retention practices by training governmental representatives and local producers.