



As missionary disciples, we are called to urgently respond to the needs of migrants and refugees. Today, a staggering 70 million people are currently displaced. Changing climates make it difficult for farmers around the world to grow their crops and provide for their families, forcing many to migrate in search of work. We can lead the way to support farmers with innovative and sustainable agriculture practices that care for our common home.

Changes in climate force migration

Carlos Cano had grown coffee for around 15 years in Guatemala before *la roya* struck his crop. The fungus, also known as coffee leaf rust, attacks the leaves, prevents photosynthesis and ultimately kills the plant.

An emerging consensus among scientists points to changing temperatures for exacerbating the spread of coffee leaf rust, which has devastated Central America's coffee production. After the initial onset of the blight in 2012, many growers in Carlos' community of Nuevo Eden lost up to 85% of their coffee plants.

Without a crop to sell, farmers in Nuevo Eden and other communities who face similar challenges, were forced to find alternative ways to earn income. For many, like Carlos, this meant unwanted migration to Mexico to look for work.

Migration is traumatic. Time away from family puts stress on relationships, and when a farmer is not home, his land lies fallow. As day laborers and construction workers, migrants are paid little for difficult work and often live in dangerous conditions. For these farmers, leaving their communities was not a matter of choice—it was a matter of survival.

Recognizing that good stewardship of God's creation is deeply connected to healthy, thriving communities, Catholic Relief Services helps farmers like Carlos deal with the effects of a changing climate so they do not have to migrate for work.

Through the Green Coffee Initiative, CRS teaches farmers comprehensive soil management techniques, suggests production of new crops, demonstrates how to cultivate and graft rust-resistant varieties of coffee plants, and how and when to apply fungicides. They also help communities form savings groups.

At CRS, we know that the health of God's creation directly impacts the health of our families and communities. And as Pope Francis reminds us, while we are all threatened by a compromised ecology, there is inequality in the impact.

"One theme that was common in *Laudato si'* was this idea that the people that suffer most from a fragile earth are the poor. I think when you walk out to the fields with our farmers, this is something that hits you really hard," says Dan McQuillan, former head of agriculture for CRS Guatemala and Mexico. "Our farmers work with the earth every day. They work within a climate that is changing. And they're the ones that feel the impact more than anyone else."

Farmers like Carlos *do not* want to migrate. They *do* want to be good stewards of their land and providers for their families. Through innovative agricultural programs, CRS is leading the way to make sure they can.

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