

Sustainable Agriculture Internships – Soil Fertility with CRACYP for Progreso Verde (“Green Progress”) 2013



Introduction

This document should be read in conjunction with the Internship Information Pack available at www.progresoverde.org/internship.html

CRACYP has helped to develop the community business CADO, an organic sugarcane farmers' cooperative, since 2000. CADO farmers produce organic, Fair Trade aguardiente (cane alcohol) for export to companies such as The Body Shop and Dr. Bronner's Soaps. CADO's farmers in their cultivation and production processes and CADO in its buying and export practices both differ markedly from their non-organic, free trade counterparts in the region. While non-organic farmers can use artificial fertilizers to boost production, CADO farmers rely on natural soil amendments for the plants' nutrient requirements. For 2013, CADO has around 300 farms in 26 communities.

Objectives

We need interns with experience in soil science to investigate methods for improving soil fertility and therefore sugarcane yields via organic methods. Likely projects might include holding workshops on compost production from locally available materials (manure, weeds, food scraps, etc), starting a worm composting demonstration site, the incorporation of nitrogen fixing intercrops, or crop rotation.

Farmers here, like anywhere, have a very practical attitude towards new practices: if it makes work easier and increases yield, they might accept it, if not, they certainly won't. So keep in mind that with any project, there will be an emphasis on farmer-to-farmer learning and the establishment of on-farm test plots to show the practical value of any new practice.

Location

You will be based in the picturesque little village of Jilimbí in Bolívar Province, close to the border with Cotopaxi Province. The nearest town you might find on a map is Moraspungo, about an hour's journey up into the mountains from the main road between Quevedo and Ventanas. You will work in various communities near the border between the Bolívar and Cotopaxi provinces.

Requirements

Interns will need to either be fairly independent or else have access to advice by email from their university or other sources (e.g. former employer, conservation organizations, etc.), if needed. Classwork or work experience in soil science is preferred. Interns will need to do background research on tropical soils and the nutrient requirements of sugarcane before arriving. Interns should also have experience working outdoors in a somewhat physically demanding environment. Spanish language skills would be useful; however, CRACYP's Volunteer Coordinator can help with translation.



How to Apply

Read the Internship Information Pack for details of how to apply.