

## MASFRIJOL: Community Seed Depots- A Business Opportunity for Highland Bean Farmers

MASFRIJOL launched 35 Community Seed Depots (CSDs) in Guatemala's western highlands in 2016 to empower these local communities to grow quality-declared seed of improved varieties of beans for their local farmers. MASFRIJOL provided these communities with the training required on the unique management practices needed for the production, harvest, storage, and marketing of quality seed to select leader farmers who have made a commitment to be seed multipliers. Along with an initial start-up technology package containing registered seed, pesticides, and fertilizer, MASFRIJOL and ICTA extension specialists make periodic visits to these farmers to provide technical assistance and to verify that bean fields are disease free and well managed.

One of the CSD seed producers is Mr. Hector Bamaca, an entrepreneurial farmer who lives in San Miguel Ixtahuacán, San Marcos, one of the most collaborative municipalities supporting MASFRIJOL's engagement.

Mr. Bamaca and his family live in the community of Maquivil and are dedicated to agricultural activities through the use of sustainable and environmentally friendly integrated management practices. Beans, a nitrogen fixing crop, fit well into his smallholder cropping system. Mr. Bamaca garnered attention by obtaining a yield of 150 pounds of black beans on just half a cuerda (roughly 220 square meters) from an



Mr. Bamaca's family in Maquivil, San Miguel Ixtahuacan, San Marcos



View of a Community Seed Depot managed by Mr. Lopez Chivalan in Planes de Sta. María, Cunén, Quiché

improved ICTA variety, *Altense*, during the 2015 season. Half a cuerda is equivalent to approximately 2.8 MT per hectare, an impressive bean grain yield to attain even by advanced commercial farmers.

In keeping with MASFRIJOL's agricultural and nutrition educational messages, the Bamaca family stored and consumed most of their harvest and planned to expand their bean production area in 2016. Because Mr. Bamaca has access to irrigation and is thus able to plant

during the dry season, MASFRIJOL saw his potential as a CSD owner and convinced him to participate in this newly launched endeavor. Persuaded that he could build on his previous success with ICTA *Altense*, Mr. Bamaca is now working hard to replicate his productivity achievement and to grow beans both for household food security and to generate an income through bean seed multiplication.

Farming families such as Mr. Bamaca's and Mr. Lopez's (featured in one of the photos, above) are leading community-based bean seed production through Community Seed Depots. After a successful

season producing grain with the improved varieties distributed by MASFRIJOL, they're confidently adopting the seed production and handling practices that MASFRIJOL requires. Because of such leader farmers, MASFRIJOL's impact will be multiplied and sustained over time in Guatemala's western highlands.