



Scaling Regenerative Agroforestry 2025 -2026

Building Climate Resilience and Economic Security in Coastal Ecuador

Project overview

Once fertile and biodiverse, the landscapes of coastal Manabí now face drought, erosion, and unstable markets due to decades of deforestation, monocultures, and chemical dependency. This project supports smallholder farmers to restore their land, increase income, and build climate resilience through a replicable model of regenerative cacao agroforestry.

Since 2017, our team has implemented successional or "Syntropic" agroforestry across 70 acres at Los Arboleros Farm. In 2025, we trained 25 farmers across five regional hubs through Rotary Global Grant #GG2570132 in collaboration with the Rotary Clubs of Guayaquil Astillero (D4400) and Santa Rosa East/West (D5130). Each farmer established a 30×30 meter agroforestry plot that integrates cacao with fruit, timber, and biomass-producing species. These demonstration plots now serve as living laboratories and community learning centers, supported by monthly technical visits. As of mid-2025, 96 percent of plots show strong development, even in degraded soils. Perhaps most promising is the peer-to-peer support emerging through weekly workdays, where farmers actively help one another on their farms.

Traditional monoculture cacao systems in the region generate around \$6,660 (at 2025 market prices) per hectare annually and depend on costly chemical inputs. Our diversified syntropic agroforestry systems are projected to yield over \$9,000 per hectare by year five or six, using only on-farm resources. Farmers are expected to reach net positive returns starting in year five, while also gaining greater food security and access to premium markets that we are developing through parallel initiatives. Syntropic agroforestry restores ecosystem function, improves soil health and productivity, and reduces input dependency. It is a nature-based solution to increasing climate pressures and income instability.

Why This Matters

The region is home to ancestral cacao trees but faces growing climate and market pressures. Meanwhile, international demand for deforestation-free, traceable cacao is surging. This project connects farmers to that opportunity while restoring ecological and economic balance.

We are addressing the root causes of poverty and degradation by focusing on:

- Higher income and lower costs through diversified, resilient systems that eliminate agrochemicals and promote on-farm fertility
- Ongoing, hands-on training with follow-up support
- Development of living seed banks and post-harvest processing infrastructure
- Strong community networks built through local leadership, co-design and peer-to-peer learning

2026 Scale-Up Goals

- Train 60-70 new farmers in three rural hubs, each establishing a 40×40 meter syntropic agroforestry plot
- Support three-four top-performing 2025 farmers to establish 1-hectare demonstration plots and train 30 others on-site
- Build a fermentation and drying unit to ensure quality control and access to specialty markets
- Expand subregional learning groups and monitor ecological, social, and economic outcomes



Each new plot will build on eight years of applied experience at Los Arboleros Farm and lessons from the 2025 training program. Technical improvements will include deeper soil preparation, denser planting, direct seeding, and early application of biofertilizers and microbial inoculants. Tailored irrigation systems will increase climate resilience from the start.

Budget Summary

Category	Description	Total (USD)
Farmer Training & Support	Year-round technical support, training of 60 new farmers, and training of 3 -4 local farmer-trainers. Required food, lodging, and community facilitation costs.	\$40,200.04
Tools, Seeds & Trees	Distribution of essential farming tools, irrigation equipment, seeds, and grafted cacao trees.	\$66,519.00
Cacao Processing Facility	Construction of a fermentation and drying unit at Los Arboleros Farm to support post-harvest cacao processing.	\$10,000.00
Monitoring & Evaluation	Covers quarterly field scientist visits to farms, soil sampling, and testing.	\$13,900.02
Administration & Contingency	Includes program management, coordination, and allocation for unforeseen and extraordinary expenses.	\$15,951.00
Total		\$146,570.06

Why Rotary? Why Now?

This project advances Rotary's priorities in economic development and environmental stewardship. It supports rural families to break the poverty cycle through regenerative production, knowledge transfer, and access to high-value markets, while fostering strong local networks and peer collaboration.

Rotary Clubs are essential partners in scaling this approach. Your support will help transform demonstration plots into living classrooms and hubs of innovation, strengthen local economies, and restore degraded ecosystems in one of Ecuador's most vulnerable yet promising regions.

Support the Grant

We invite Rotary Clubs to co-sponsor this Global Grant. Contributions will be matched by the Rotary Foundation and go directly to training, tools, and infrastructure that empower farmers and restore ecosystems.