

MECHANIZATION ALTERNATIVES FOR THE  
MOST COMMON SIZES OF FARMS IN GUATEMALA

by

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## INTRODUCTION

Guatemala is the northern most country of Central America. It is located between 14<sup>o</sup> and 18<sup>c</sup> north latitude and 89<sup>o</sup> to 92<sup>o</sup> east longitude. The Guatemala economy is based upon the export of agricultural products. The principal exports are coffee, cotton, sugar cane, beef and bananas.

Guatemala has undergone a rapid process of industrialization since 1960 when the Central American common market was founded. Despite that, agriculture still remains the largest employer of labor and is the first branching sector of the economy.

Guatemala has about seven million inhabitants. Of these, about sixty-five percent live in rural areas (Censo General 1979). Its total area is 108,889 square kilometers (45,452 square miles).

The physical features of the country are quite variable and are characterized by a south coastal plain where the best soils of volcanic origin in the country are located. They are very deep and fertile. The northern plains are characterized by very shallow sedimentary soils which do not adapt well to intensive agriculture. Between the plains there is an east-west mountain range which crosses the country from Mexico to the west and Honduras to the east. The soils are of volcanic origin, but difficult to farm because of the steep slope of the land. Part of this land is planted with permanent crops, such as coffee and rubber. Another part consists of natural forest. The rest is planted with annual crops such as maize and black beans which causes a very serious erosion problem.