School Profile:
The Union of Agricultural Cooperatives of Nueva Segovia

The Union of Agricultural Cooperatives of Nueva Segovia consists of 35 cooperatives located in and around Somoto. UCANS works to strengthen collaboration amongst cooperatives and support the creation of new cooperatives. It was formed by the ATC founding member, Don Rafael Lovo, after the destructive Hurricane Mitch, and it still maintains close contact with the ATC’s cooperative programs today.

UCANS’s school focuses on capacity building of cooperatives and local communities. To this end, the school hosts courses to develop youth employment opportunities, build gender equity, and reduce illiteracy (successfully reduced from 40% to 2% in affiliated populations). The school also organizes various workshops and courses on value-added food product processing, community ecotourism, agroecology, and artisan manufacturing. The school’s fully equipped computer classroom, commercial kitchen, storage buildings, and tractors help facilitate the development of local agricultural businesses and markets. Staff also provide technical support and counseling to UCANS members to build capacity.

Climate change now affects the survival of peasant communities in this arid region. UCANS has organized 20 groups of students to plant native trees on the slopes in their communities, preventing soil erosion and raising ecological consciousness among rural youth. Participation in the ATC’s Agroecological Corridor and spreading agroecological practices among farmers is another step in increasing local resilience and food sovereignty.