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Foundation
for Puerto Rico



Puerto Rico's Agroecological Sector Receives \$500,000 grant

The grants are part of a group of initiatives aimed at jump starting a sector that suffered great losses after the passage of Hurricanes Irma and Maria

San Juan, Puerto Rico – *Para la Naturaleza, Visit Rico, Foundation for Puerto Rico, and PRxPR,* joined forces to inject half a million dollars to local farmers whose operations suffered significant losses after the passage of Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

"Agroecology, a sector that was growing rapidly in Puerto Rico, suffered a tremendous blow with the passage of both hurricanes. Through the Para la Naturaleza Community fund, we seek to promote an industry that values and incorporates the conservation of nature as part of its business model", said the president of ***Para la Naturaleza***, Fernando Lloveras San Miguel.

Para la Naturaleza, along with ***PRxPR***, contributed \$250,000, and ***Visit Rico***, along with ***Foundation for Puerto Rico***, raised an additional \$250,000 through the ***Regrow Puerto Rico Fund***, which started days after Hurricane Maria passed. The funds have been designated to provide grants directly to a minimum of 100 farmers and artisanal producers nominated by the five farmers markets and two other agroecological organizations. Each grantee will receive \$1,500 per month, for three months to recover, restart its production and re-engage with the farmers markets and the agroecological economy including direct produce distribution to restaurants.

The initiative, led by ***Visit Rico***, brought together the main agroecological organizations in Puerto Rico and has exceeded the initial goal of \$450,000 set by the ***Regrow Puerto Rico Fund***. The agroecological sector has been active for many years working to substitute food imports with sustainable local produce. Currently, Puerto Rico imports at least 85% of its food.

"Agroecology is key for the agricultural recovery of Puerto Rico, because it has the potential to benefit many small farmers, protect our natural resources and the environment and improve our people's health," said Camille Collazo, President of Visit Rico.

Organic farming refers to a whole array of agricultural methods whose main concerns involve healthy ecosystems, long-term economic viability and community focus. Agroecology seeks sustainability and productivity through the application of ecological knowledge to the design and management of agricultural projects.

For the past 30 years, entities such as the **Boricuá Organic Farmers Organization, Madre Tierra Cooperative and the Placita Roosevelt Farmers Market**, and more recently other farmer markets, El Departamento de la Comida and many family farms and small food projects, have worked nonstop to grow a healthy food economy.

"It is vital to ensure that agroecological farms can resume operations. With our focus on local and sustainable projects we will increase local food production, promote agricultural practices that protect the environment and support good public health and well-being for all," said Collazo.

"At **Foundation for Puerto Rico**, we are committed to expanding our partnership and support to entities of great credibility and social and economic impact to the agricultural sector such as **Visit Rico** and **Para la Naturaleza**." We are encouraged by the overwhelming support to the Hurricane Maria Relief Fund. Individuals, organizations and private companies, local and foreign, have donated over 2 million dollars, which allows us to leverage the necessary resources and channel financial support to make viable initiatives such as these that are important pieces for recovery of our people and of a more sustainable Puerto Rico, "said María (Baby) Jaunarena, Executive Vice President of **Foundation for Puerto Rico**.

"Considering the devastating impact Hurricane Maria had on Puerto Rico's agriculture, we believe it is imperative to support our Island's farmers. We cannot think of better partners than **Para la Naturaleza, Visit Rico, and Foundation for Puerto Rico** to support this important sector of the Puerto Rican economy," said Carmen Báez, founder of PRxPR.

The granting process will be conducted by a committee led by representatives from **Visit Rico, Para la Naturaleza and Foundation for Puerto Rico** who will receive and evaluate recommendations from six nominating organizations: **Organización Boricuá de Agricultura Ecológica, Departamento de la Comida/Fondo de Resiliencia, Cooperativa Orgánica Madre Tierra/El Mercado de la Placita Roosevelt, Mercado Agrícola Natural de Ponce, Mercado de Aguadilla, and el Mercado Agroecológico de Rincón**.

Now more than ever, the group of farmers and organizations involved are asking for your contributions to expand support to more farmers and continue the work towards a growing, healthier and sustainable Puerto Rico.

Those interested in contributing to the Funds can access the websites of the organizations, www.paralanaturaleza.org, www.visitrico.org, and www.prxpr.org.

About the Para La Naturaleza Community Fund

Para la Naturaleza created a Community Fund to provide immediate relief to communities, support agroecological efforts, and start the process of reforestation and restoration of our natural habitats. One hundred percent of the proceeds will go directly to these three initiatives. The grants to the Island's farmers were made possible thanks to the contributions received through the Para la Naturaleza Community Fund, and in particular to the support of the following organizations and individuals: Robert & Encarnita Valdes Quinlan Puerto Rico Recovery Fund; SOMOS; the New York business community organized by the Partnership for New York City as part of Governor Cuomo's relief efforts; Hispanic Federation; North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE) through its Together for Puerto Rico fund; and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Contributions to this Fund can be made online by visiting: www.paralanaturaleza.org.

About the Regrow Puerto Rico Fund

Visit Rico created the Regrow Puerto Rico fund in collaboration with **Foundation for Puerto Rico** (501c3), to help the agroecological sector with direct help to farmers, artisanal producers and farmers markets in Puerto Rico.

About Para la Naturaleza

Para la Naturaleza is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that integrates society in the conservation of its natural ecosystems. Their goal is to increase to 33% the protection of natural areas in Puerto Rico by 2033. They provide transformative experiences in nature to inspire each person and community to take concrete actions to protect it, by donating time, money or land. In addition to organizing volunteer events, educational and fundraising campaigns, **Para la Naturaleza** protects 60 natural areas and is open to the public in visitor centers throughout Puerto Rico, including *Hacienda Buena Vista in Ponce*, *Hacienda La Esperanza in Manatí* and *Cabezas de San Juan in Fajardo*, among others.

About PRxPR Relief & Rebuild Fund

PRxPR – a RELIEF & RECOVERY FUND – is a private, non-partisan, no overhead fund to aid in the rebuilding of Puerto Rico by investing in communities with the most critical needs. The Fund was launched on September 20, 2017 by a small group of Puerto Rican business industry leaders in the USA with extensive experience, respected credentials and broad networks and resources. 100% of donations received will provide relief to those that need it the most, in a way that will have maximum impact on the neediest communities in the Island. All donations to PRxPR are fully tax-deductible.

About Visit Rico

Visit Rico is a non-profit organization that aims to strengthen the agricultural economy in Puerto Rico through sustainable agrotourism in order to contribute to the food sovereignty of Puerto Rico. Visit Rico believes in connecting more people to the agroecological movement through educational experiences that integrate the main stakeholders of the sustainable food network: farmers, fishermen, chefs, producers and visitors.

About Foundation for Puerto Rico

Foundation for Puerto Rico (FPR) is a non-profit organization established in 2011 by a team of over 15 people. The mission of FPR is to transform Puerto Rico into a world class tourist destination to develop and implement sustainable strategies that boost the economy of the visitor on the island. Due to the devastation caused by the impact of Hurricane Maria, Foundation has turned its traditional functions to focus on relief efforts that promote the recovery of the island and support the needy. For the time being, their work will focus on rebuilding the Island. Once this objective is achieved, the Organization will resume its original mission to continue strengthening our economy through the development of the Visitor's Economy.