

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 24, 2019
Punta Gorda
Toledo, Belize



Recognizing outstanding farmers and their forest connections

In southern Belize, Ya'axché Conservation Trust recognized 3 outstanding farmers who are implementing climate-smart farming practices that the organization promotes in its focal area, the Maya Golden Landscape (MGL). The yearly held Ya'axché Farmers' Expo also celebrates the forest connections of farmers from 8 communities in which the organization works. The 7th annual Ya'axché Farmers' Expo was held in Indian Creek village on Saturday, 22nd of June 2019 under the theme, "*Empowering communities, Conserving biodiversity, Connecting the world.*"

Prior to the event, Ya'axché's agriculture extension officers assessed the farmers' successes in adopting climate-smart farming practices and their actions in helping to protect forests in the Maya Golden Landscape. At the event, the MGL Farmer of the Year was recognized as Premacio Che of Silver Creek village, and he received \$600 in cash and materials as prize. The second place winner was Oscar Zuniga of Trio village, who took to his farm a total value of \$400; and, the third place winner Orlando Cucul of Big Falls village will invest an additional \$200 on his farm.

The farmers brought farm produce to sell at the Ya'axché Farmers' Expo. There were various activities for children, youth, women and men, which included cacao drinking, watermelon eating, relay race, sack race, slow bicycle race, fire obstacle race, goal for fire, corn husking and shelling and egg toss. The event gave the Parent Teachers Association of Indian Creek the opportunity to fundraise for the primary school by selling food and drinks.

Ya'axché Conservation Trust has been conserving wildlife and empowering communities in southern Belize since 1998. Much of the organization's effort has focused on supporting the livelihoods of eight communities and climate-smart agriculture is a critical component of the organization's community outreach and livelihoods program in southern Belize. Ya'axché provides farmers with training, material, technical and field support in the transition to farming practices that help protect forests.

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