

# News from Venezuela

## Summer 2020

Though we do not yet know the full consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, we all know the world has changed. For many of us, the last few months have been a chance to reflect on how we live our lives and how we treat the planet. But for the majority of the world's population who live in poverty, their struggle for survival has intensified.



In Venezuela the political and economic crises have worsened during the pandemic, as could be expected. From the middle of March, there has been a strict lockdown with the obligatory use of face masks on the streets and gloves in the stores trying to control the virus. But of the millions of Venezuelans that fled the economic crisis during the last three years, thousands are now coming back, some of them walking all the way from Ecuador, Peru and Colombia, often bringing the virus with them. Having lost the possibility of day labour, they are now joining the millions of hungry Venezuelans that remained in the country.

Local food production is low. The government buys food on the international market with increasing difficulty.

Centro Madre started its activities in Barlovento in the year 2000. It is an area of many farmers with small plots of land. Barlovento was hit hard in the year 2016-2017 by the ongoing economic crisis and high crime rate. The people learned, and now everybody is growing food and selling it on the local market. Many people learned from Centro Madre how to live on a more varied diet that is more plant based with more local vegetables and roots. Centro Madre will continue to support local farmers to grow a variety of crops for local consumption and for export to Caracas.



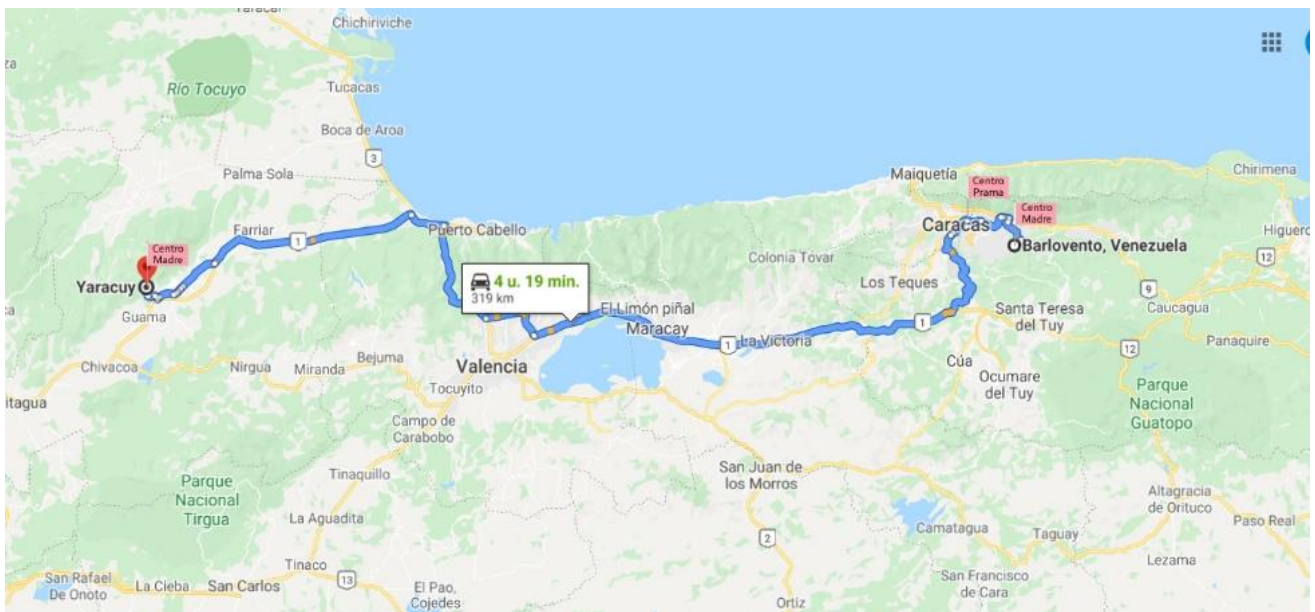
In 2016 a film group, called *Sembrando un Pais*, made a documentary of agricultural projects in Venezuela in which Centre Madre features as a model farm. The

documentary is still aired on national television and people are sending me messages with pictures on WhatsApp, saying how much they loved our presentation.

Centro Madre supports Centro Prama, a community centre in Caracas. They are distributing food twice a week in the streets feeding the hungry, including many children.



Another project that has renewed our attention is an agricultural project in the western state of Yaracuy. The farm has two hectares of land with many fruit trees in the middle of the village and outside the village it has 19 hectares of farmland with much potential.



Yaracuy – Caracas – Barlovento, with red flags

When the lockdowns end, we will start to build some low cost homes in Yaracuy to attract volunteers to come and live there and help develop the land. There will be a need to dig water wells and plant a variety of trees.

I was in March for a short working visit in Bogota, when Venezuela had its lockdown and it was impossible for me to return to Venezuela. Luckily the Dutch government organised repatriation flights which allowed me to travel to the Netherlands from where I am now running Centro Madre. I am eagerly monitoring the travelling options to return to Venezuela, but at this stage it is not clear when this will be possible.

We are very grateful for your generous contributions which allow us to continue to bring help to Venezuela during these pandemic times.

Much love from Centro Madre

Hendrika Renkers

For more information about Hendrika's work in Venezuela please refer to her website [www.centromadre.org](http://www.centromadre.org) . If you want to contact her, or support a project, please write to [centromadrebarlovento@gmail.com](mailto:centromadrebarlovento@gmail.com) .

You can also contact our Dutch organisation: [www.centromadre.nl](http://www.centromadre.nl) .

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