

MEXICO

BY THE NUMBERS

The Mexican Corn Issue Today

Mexico is the center of diversity for corn and its stock of germplasm has contributed in a decisive manner to global production of corn. It is the country's most important staple and an important source of livelihood support. However, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) threatens the ability of Mexican farmers to continue to grow this important crop and the ability of consumers to afford it. It also presents a serious threat to Mexican growers' ability to conserve and develop these genetic resources. Short-sightedness and short-term fiscal gains on the part of the Mexican government mean that NAFTA is pushing to eradicate corn's curators from the agricultural landscape. Such a move will have a profound impact on local and global food security in the 21st century." Alejandro Nadal, Coordinator of the Science and Technology Program at El Colegio de México



Mexico is the center of origin for corn. Corn provides the primary source of calories for approximately

1.5 BILLION

people in Latin America and Africa. In 2002 UC Berkeley environmental science professor Ignacio Chapela published in the journal Science that native varieties of corn had been contaminated by genetically modified (GMO) corn. GMO corn had been banned from planting in Mexico. (Grist)

Since NAFTA was signed into law, Mexican immigration to the U.S. has increased by over

300%



Though corn prices in Mexico dropped slightly in the early years of NAFTA, the US adoption and transition to corn-based ethanol raised corn prices in Mexico between

10-30%

in the last eight years. (Reuters/AlertNet)



US corn subsidies allow US corn to undersell Mexican corn

20-30%

below cost of production (Oxfam USA)



19 years after NAFTA, some

2-3 MILLION

farmers have been forced off their land by corn imports and "free trade" policies. (McClatchy News Service)

40-50%

of Mexican corn growers are family-scaled smallholders, playing an important role as the backbone for the local community food security and protecting corn biodiversity. (CECCAM)



82%

of U.S. corn exports are controlled by three agribusiness firms- Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), and Zen Noh. While family farmer incomes have plummeted during the first 7 years of NAFTA, ADM's profits went from \$110 million to \$301 million, while ConAgra's grew from \$143 million to \$413 million. (Global Exchange)

FACT:

60% of corn growers are indigenous peoples. The strong interaction between culture and corn's genetic variability is illustrated by the fact that many local languages identify more stages of plant development and a richer plant anatomy than conventional botanical literature.

(Alejandro Nadal/GRAIN)

