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Agricultural Development in Zacatecas, Mexico

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Abstract

Agriculture still plays an important role in the Mexican economy and it has undergone a significant number of changes during the last 15 years, which have important impacts on the life in Mexican towns and villages.

After the Mexican revolution the new constitution of 1917 (article 27) aimed at distributing the large landed properties of the haciendas to the multitude of landless peones, forming the so called Ejidos, where the land belongs to the community, but each peasant works his share under his own responsibility. This agrarian reform and the formation of Ejidos was seen as a constant process. Most land redistributions were carried out in the 1930s and 1940s, however still in the beginning of the 80s some Ejidos were established. The Mexican agricultural sector was also strongly supported by subsidies and protected by taxes and tariffs almost prohibiting the import of foreign agricultural products.

During the government of president Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–1994) it was officially declared that the land reform was concluded, article 27 was significantly changed, now allowing the privatisation and sale of Ejido land. On the 1st January of 1994 when the NAFTA-treaty entered into operation this also meant the reduction of subsidies and opening borders for imports.

In my paper I will analyse the impact of these changes on the structure of agricultural production in Zacatecas, which is one of the Mexican states that still depend heavily on agricultural production. Special attention shall be drawn to the decay of agricultural prices in Mexico since 1994. In this analysis I will also distinguish between small and large scale farmers and have a look at the changes of the agricultural surface and the crops in the time span from 1970 to 2000.

Keywords: Agriculture, development, land reform, Mexico, NAFTA