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Promoting Sustainability in the Agave-Mezcal Value Chain through Restoration and Integrated Management of Biocultural Landscapes in Oaxaca, México
"Tierra de Agaves"

Reviving Oaxaca's Forests:

Mezcal, agaves, and the quest for ecological harmony

In the heart of Oaxaca, tropical forests —vital sources of life and livelihoods for local communities— are increasingly threatened by land-use change, agave monocultures, and the intensive use of firewood in mezcal production.

Although Oaxaca produces over 90% of Mexico's mezcal and is home to 58 unique agave species, this rapid growth has put biodiversity, fertile soils, and food security at risk.

The most affected areas —particularly the slopes and riverbanks of the Central Valleys and the Sierra de Yautepec— demand deep ecological restoration. Every restoration effort is an investment in the future, protecting strategic ecosystems, ensuring clean water, healthy soils, and essential pollinators, while preserving the cultural and economic heritage that makes mezcal a symbol of Oaxaca and its people.

Restoring these landscapes is more than an environmental commitment: it is a step toward a sustainable model where nature flourishes alongside communities and mezcal continues to symbolize balance, identity, and life.



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GEF ID: 10869

Duration: 2023-2028

GEF focal areas: Biodiversity, land degradation

Geographical scope: Biocultural landscape in Sierra de Yautepec and Valles Centrales, Oaxaca, México

Implementing agency: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Executing agencies: PRONATURA-Sur, in coordination with the Oaxaca Secretariat of the Environment, Biodiversity, Energy and Sustainability

From Purpose to Action:

In Oaxaca, every agave planted, and every landscape cared for, makes a difference

The project promotes sustainable mezcal production, where crop diversification and Integrated Land Management safeguard nature while strengthening cultural heritage.

Through Voluntarily Designated Conservation Areas (ADVC, Spanish abbr.), responsible practices, ecological restoration, and collaborative governance, we transform commitment into tangible results, demonstrating that protecting ecosystems also means preserving identity, well-being, and a sustainable future for communities.

**Rooted in Agave, Growing for Tomorrow:
Cultivating biodiversity and tradition**

We foster sustainable mezcal production where each agave and every protected landscape safeguards biodiversity, strengthens crop diversity, and conserves nature's richness for local communities and mezcal's enduring tradition.

Impact that Transforms Lives:

Protecting landscapes, empowering communities and nurturing tradition

- Over 9,000 ha protected: safeguarding biodiversity and landscapes that give life to mezcal.
- Ecosystem restoration: in collaboration with Government agencies.
- Sustainable mezcal: setting standards that unite tradition with best practices.
- Women leaders: empowering collectives like *Guardianas del Mezcal*.
- Shared knowledge: connecting stakeholders.

Pathways to Sustainable Change:

- Recover agave value: promoting distinctive features for added value.
- Coordinate efforts: uniting institutions for greater impact.
- Connect knowledge: combining indigenous, traditional and local knowledge with agroecology.
- Empower women: strengthening leadership and cultural traditions.
- Build bridges: fostering agreements among communities, government, and companies.



For further information about the project, visit our website

Para más información sobre el proyecto, visite nuestra página web

www.tierradeagaves.pronatura-sur.org

