

Mexico City, Mexico

growing cities – growing food

Background information:

Location: Central Mexico (Deep Valley)

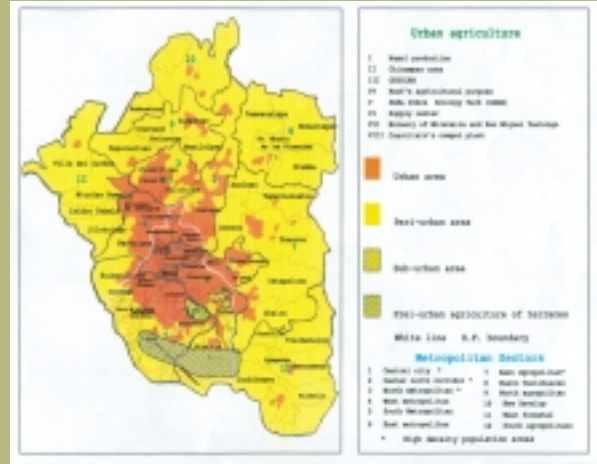
Climate:
 mean annual temperature: 13°-24° C
 annual rainfall: 700 - 1,400 mm

Total Population: 22 million (metropolitan area)

Population Density: 5,700 pers/km²

Size of the city: 7,860 km² (metropolitan area)

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The main urban agricultural systems

Urban – central city agriculture

Vegetable production in the central areas of Mexico City has only recently developed. Animal production has a much longer tradition, although it is still marginal and rather irregular. There are many farms dedicated to milk and meat production. Backyard agriculture is mainly found in poorer neighborhoods. Urban horticulture has largely been developed by ecological groups and NGOs for environmental education purposes. A central objective is to improve food production through organic production in any available containers and "high beds."



Chamomile and Vegetable production on raised beds. Central urban agriculture area. COCOMI (NGO); Izaapalapa. Mira.

Suburban agriculture

The main production system in the suburban area is known as "chinampa" and is mainly located in the southeast of Mexico City. In this area there are a lot of canals and few buildings and paved roads. The system occupies areas surrounded by water (the chinampa) and produces vegetables, cereals, forage crops and ornamental plants.



Ornamental plants production in suburban space. The seedbeds are made with sludge. They are called "chapiques". Xochimilco Chinampa system.

Periurban agriculture

Those satellite towns that form a transition area between countryside and city have distinct agricultural activities determined by labour input and environmental conditions. An example of the importance of production here is the intensive terrace farming of "nopal" (Milpa Alta catering for the entire Mexico Metropolitan area).



Terrace system with nopal, corn and vegetables production. Peri-urban area.

Functions of Urban Agriculture

Mexico City, Mexico

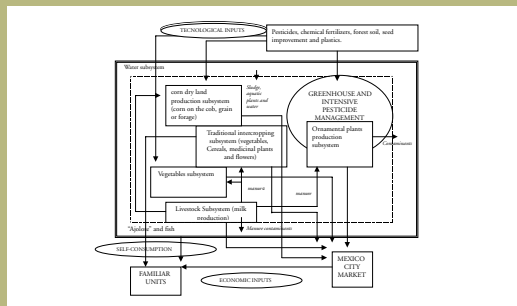
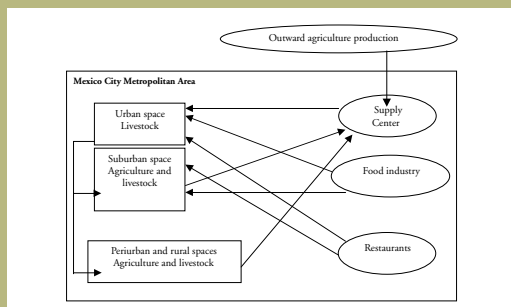
UA in Mexico City is mainly a subsistence activity, often run alongside other economic activities. This kind of agriculture developed outside the regulatory frameworks and institutional or government control. The production is organized in traditional forms of organization. Farming in the central urban area often violates government regulations.

The urban production of ornamental plants (Chinampa system) is particularly important for local markets: 45% of Mexico City's supply is produced in the chinampas. This system represents an alternative route for central urban agricultural development.

Nopal container production system. Human urine and garbage are used as organic fertilizer. CEDICAR (ONG).



Mass and energy flows between different urban agriculture areas.



The Chinampa Production System.



"PLANTS ON SALE"... The chinampa is an intensive ornamental production system in Xochimilco suburban area.

Lessons Learned with Relevance to Other Cities

- The old production systems, like chinampa, have adopted technological innovations (greenhouses, fitoregulators and improved seeds). Increased profitability of UA is helping to stop urban blight. However, innovations like chemical inputs can increase environmental pressures on less disturbed ecosystems around the city.
- Materials can be recycled for the construction of animal cages and container beds.
- There is great scope for re-using waste from the food industry and households to feed animals.
- Local knowledge and oral transmission is vital for successful dissemination and development of productive technologies.
- The sale of products in local markets helps develop important tourist corridors.
- The co-existence of urban activities, services and industry together with UA activities, including horticulture and floriculture etc. helps households find strategies that protect families against economic crises.