

Private Business Action for Biodiversity

Biodiversity Friendly Production and Commercialization of Mexican Agaves

Situation

Mexico is the country with the highest agave diversity in the world: Out of the 266 species known to date, about 210 are native to Mexico and 176 of them grow exclusively in Mexico. However, unsustainable cultivation of agave leads to deforestation, loss of biodiversity and damage to ecosystems.

Agaves are used to produce fiber materials, sweeteners and distillates, such as mezcal, tequila and pulque, among others. After blooming once in their lives, agaves die and are no longer useful for harvesting. For this reason, many producers do not allow the plants to bloom preferring to reproduce with offshoots (clones). This reduces the genetic variability of the species and makes them more vulnerable to pests, diseases and climate change.

Bats are essential for agave reproduction, as they pollinate the plants. At the same time, agaves are important for bats to survive, as they provide a source of food. With producers preferring the asexual reproduction, bats lack food and their survival is threatened.

Objective

The 'Private Business Action for Biodiversity' (PBAB) project strives to identify and analyze promising mechanisms and instruments for promoting biodiversity-friendly production and commercialization and to test pilot approaches in three partner countries – India, Brazil and Mexico. The project aims to learn from the pilot implementation, to further develop the mechanisms and instruments where

required and to systematize the experiences gained in a way that enables both the private and public sectors to use them. The results will be discussed on the national and international level.



Strengthening the conservation of agaves and bats

In Mexico, the project aims to help strengthen biodiversity-friendly agave production initiatives.

These include:

- The initiative Bat-Friendly (production of bat-friendly tequila and mezcal)
- The development of the label 'biodiversity-friendly' for agave products
- The recognition of sustainable agave production in protected areas
- The strengthening of the biological monitoring capacities of mezcal, tequila and pulque producer groups

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Such a strategy aims to ensure the conservation of the biodiversity of agaves and their pollinators. Additionally, it promotes added value of products produced under biodiversity-friendly practices and creates incentives for sustainable production.

Approach

The project contributes to the conservation of the biodiversity of agaves and bats and the sustainable production of agave derivatives, which are of great economic, environmental and cultural importance in Mexico.

Developing monitoring manuals for a biodiversity-friendly production

As part of this effort, the Bat-Friendly initiative received legal advice for the protection of the label and was strengthened by a cost-benefit analysis of its monitoring system. Furthermore, the circle of producers was expanded and additional criteria for sustainable production were

defined together with them. In addition, work is being done with the public sector to define clear criteria that identify biodiversity-friendly agave production. The results are presented to partners and key stakeholders in international forums.



Contribution to the 2030 Agenda



The project contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production patterns and SDG 15 with the objective to conserve, protect and sustainably use terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity.

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