

Mezcales

Conservation and management



Nursery of the SSS Tinemi Sanzekan with seedlings of *Agave cupreata* emerging from seeds. Chilapa de Alvarez, Guerrero (Photo: J. Larson).

In deserts, forests and jungles, from sea level to high mountain, in wilderness, rural and industrialized landscapes, the populations of over a hundred species of *Agave* occupy many areas in the Mexican countryside. In their use, we must respect and preserve this diversity so that they continue their evolution hand in hand with the landscapes in which they originated and the cultures that have given them their identity.

The types of production of mescal maguery range from intensive agribusiness to harvesting in the mountains, including small-scale cultivation in diverse rural areas.

Intensive cultivation and adoption of the same methods and technology generate short-term benefits, but have environmental costs such as erosion, pollution and displacement of the maguery native to each region. Meanwhile, indiscriminate harvesting may cause the disappearance of wild populations.

Production systems must adapt to the natural conditions in each region and to the availability of other resources such as firewood and water. The sustainable use and management of wild populations can contribute to the conservation of forests, lowland forests and thickets that provide habitats for other plants and animals. Furthermore, the diversity of maguery species in Mexico is an invaluable resource for tackling climate change and desertification. If we lose this diversity, we lose opportunities in the future.



Removal of the papalote (kite) maguery (*Agave cupreata*) inflorescence before harvesting. Ayahualco, Guerrero (Photo: J. Larson).