

Mezcales

Biodiversity

Currently about 200 species of *Agave* are known. These are all in the Americas, where just over half are found exclusively in Mexico. The richness of the genus *Agave* in our country is due to the fact that this lineage arose some 8 million years ago in the Mexican altiplano. This natural region is found from central Mexico to the North, and its eastern and western boundaries are marked by the Eastern and Western Sierra Madre mountain ranges. From this center of origin the species diversified and expanded its distribution thanks to its metabolism and storage of sugars, fibers and water. These properties allowed them

to withstand drought conditions and to develop close interactions with their pollinators.

The human groups that settled in these regions developed one of the main agricultural centers in the Americas. Through the use of the maguey, these people made Mexico the center of its domestication and diversification. In addition to selecting for the fibers or sap, those which had higher concentrations of sugar were identified and managed to ensure supplies for the **mexcalli (mezcal)**.

