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## The Rural Social Enterprise and its Contribution to the Conservation of Amaranth as an Agrifood Heritage, Case Study: Centéotl, A.C. Zimatlán, Oaxaca, Mexico


**Beatriz Rebeca Hernández-Hernández**

*beatrizrebecahernandez@gmail.com*  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0804-7888>  
*Tecnológico Nacional de México, Instituto Tecnológico de Oaxaca*  
*Calle Porfirio Díaz s/n. Santa María Vigallo, Zimatlán de Álvarez. CP 71200, México.*

**Juan Regino-Maldonado**

*jregino@ipn.mx*  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2341-5703>  
*Instituto Politécnico Nacional, CIIDIR IPN UNIDAD OAXACA (Centro Interdisciplinario de Investigación para el Desarrollo Integral Regional Unidad Oaxaca)*  
*Calle Hornos 1003. Santa Cruz Xoxocotlán, CP 71230 Oax., México.*

**Andrés Enrique Miguel-Velasco**

*andres.miguel@itoaxaca.edu.mx*  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1525-5017>  
*Tecnológico Nacional de México/Instituto Tecnológico de Oaxaca*  
*Antequera 102, Col. Adolfo López Mateos, Oaxaca, Oax., CP 68030, México.*

### KEYWORDS

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There are initiatives in the rural environment inspired by the sustainability paradigm with innovative proposals in the social, technological, cultural and ecological, which are known as socio-environmental laboratories, and are called rural social enterprises ESR and are also organized around property assets common and in collective forms of production that seek to generate goods and services under the principles of sustainability, agroecology and the organic and fair market (Toledo, 2012). In Mexico they are represented by cooperatives, communities or diverse associations, dedicated to the management of forests and forests, organic production of coffee, cocoa, honey and other products, ecotourism, responsible fishing, wildlife management and community conservation. Today there are more than 2000 rural social enterprises distributed mainly in the center and south of the country, and some 18 regions identified as strategic by their valuable experience, which has made Mexico the first organic coffee producing country in the world and the second country in community management (Ortiz, 2015).

Among the initiatives in the rural environment is the community development center Centéotl AC, a civil organization that since 1990 works with Oaxaca communities in the rescue and promotion of sustainable dignified ways of life, through enduring socio-economic processes, harmonious relationships with the nature and equity of men and women, mainly the promotion of the cultivation of amaranth (*Amaranthus* spp), an ancient plant native to Mesoamerica with great nutritional value and ease of adaptation in the rural communities (southern highlands and central valleys) of Oaxaca, being these are the central social subjects for amaranth conservation and development at the national level.

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**Correspondencia autores:** [beatrizrebecahernandez@gmail.com](mailto:beatrizrebecahernandez@gmail.com) (Beatriz Rebeca Hernández-Hernández).



Some studies have reported that amaranth, an ancestral crop of the indigenous peoples of Mesoamerica, was included in the daily diet of the inhabitants because of the benefits to their food, nutrition and health (Martínez, 2016). In addition, it had a ritual use, the grain was the base ingredient for the elaboration of figures of Gods, which were consumed in different ceremonies (Sahagún, 2006).

From a phenomenological perspective, agrifood heritage lies in locating the local subject and his experience in the transformation of values, uses and meanings of agrifood resources (Harvey, 2014). In other words, the way in which producers manifest the different heritage positions in the daily life of the rural environment, as well as the relationship between heritage and popular culture in relation to the cultivation of amaranth. Speaking of amaranth cultivation, it is closely linked to peasant agriculture and this in turn with the continuity of agrifood heritage by being a recipient of traditional uses and customs linked to it, Cortés and Boza (2017).

Following Cortés and Boza (2017), the defense of the agrifood heritage requires that the means with which the producers keep the traditions in force, as well as their marketing systems, be improved. Regarding the latter, several studies have focused on two types of products that can be considered heritage, such as "local products" and "traditional products."

For this reason, this article "The contribution of the rural social enterprise in the conservation of amaranth as agrifood heritage, case study: Centéotl, AC Zimatlan, Oaxaca, Mexico" takes the social organization as a frame of reference, and its purpose is to describe the activities carried out by the rural social enterprise Centéotl, AC in Zimatlan, Oaxaca, Mexico, to promote the conservation of amaranth cultivation as an agrifood heritage. The temporality corresponds to the 2007-2019 period and the population delimitation is an intentional sample of 37 amaranth-producing families. The methodology is qualitative and descriptive, the instruments for collecting information are the interview, the observation and review of theories. The analysis was carried out through the statistical package SPSS v.25 and the frequency of affirmative answers with more than 50.0 percent was determined, to specify a positive impact. The results showed that the goods offered by the company contribute to the continuity of the crop (81.08 percent), and to a lesser extent services offered by Bancomunidad (51.3 percent). This case study shows that through production and consumption techniques this food can be adopted in the daily diet. It is concluded that the activities carried out by Centéotl promote the recognition of this crop as an agrifood heritage, and it is shown as an alternative that seeks to strengthen relationships of trust between producers and consumers, strengthening social capital and reducing intermediations, geographical distances and environmental impacts (Ranaboldo and Arosio, 2016).