

Principles Powering Lasting Impact

The project ensures *high impact per dollar invested* by leveraging community governance systems, reducing transaction costs, and securing long-term ownership of results.

Investments in VDCAs, restoration, and collective brands generate multiple co-benefits—environmental, social, and economic—beyond the original objectives.

By collaborating with public programs and private partners, the project maximizes impact without proportionally increasing resources. Focusing on local, *low-cost, and scalable solutions*—such as community monitoring, sustainable agave management, and women-led collective enterprises—has created a high return on investment, *paving the way for a stronger and more sustainable mezcal value chain*.

Impact That Transforms Lives:

Protecting Landscapes, Empowering Communities and Nurturing Tradition

- Over 9,000 ha protected: Safeguarding biodiversity and landscapes that give life to mezcal.
- Ecosystem restoration: In collaboration with CONAFOR and “Sembrando Vida”.
- Sustainable mezcal: Setting standards that unite tradition with best practices.
- Women leaders: empowering collectives like the Guardians of Mezcal
- Shared knowledge: Connecting producers and communities via a digital platform.

Pathways to Sustainable Change

1. Recover agave value: Promoting distinctive features that add value to agave and mezcal.
2. Coordinate efforts: Uniting institutions for greater impact.
3. Connect knowledge: Combining community wisdom with agroecology.
4. Empower women: leadership and cultural traditions.
5. Build bridges: Fostering agreements among communities, government, and companies.

Reviving Oaxaca's Forests: Mezcal, Agave, and the Quest for Ecological Harmony

In the heart of Oaxaca, tropical forests—vital sources of life and livelihoods for local communities—are increasingly threatened by land-use changes, agave monocultures, and the intensive use of firewood in mezcal production.

Although Oaxaca produces >90% of Mexico's mezcal and is home to 58 unique agave species, this rapid growth has put biodiversity, fertile soils, and food security at risk.

The most affected areas—particularly the slopes and riverbanks of the Central Valleys and the Sierra de Yauhtepec—demand deep ecological restoration. Every restoration effort is an investment in the future, protecting strategic ecosystems, ensuring clean water, healthy soils, and essential pollinators, while preserving the cultural and economic heritage that makes mezcal a symbol of Oaxaca and its people.

Restoring these landscapes is more than an environmental commitment: it is a step toward a sustainable model where nature flourishes alongside communities, and mezcal continues to symbolize balance, identity, and life.

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From purpose to action

In Oaxaca, every agave planted, and every landscape cared for, makes a difference. Our project promotes sustainable mezcal production, where crop diversification and Integrated Land Management safeguard nature while strengthening cultural heritage

Through Voluntarily Designated Conservation Areas (ADVC, as abbreviated in Spanish), responsible practices, ecological restoration, and collaborative governance, we transform commitment into tangible results -demonstrating that protecting ecosystems also means preserving identity, well-being, and a sustainable future for communities.

Rooted in Agave, Growing for Tomorrow: Cultivating Biodiversity and Tradition in Oaxaca

We foster sustainable mezcal production in Oaxaca, where each agave and every protected landscape safeguard biodiversity, reinforce crop diversity, and conserve the richness of nature, ensuring a prosperous future for local communities and for the enduring tradition of mezcal.

Rooted in Oaxaca: Protecting Forests, Empowering Communities

Supporting this project means protecting tropical dry forests and their vital services, strengthening rural economies, and promoting the fair, resilient, and sustainable growth of Oaxaca's mezcal. Every action creates a positive impact for local communities and for all who value Oaxaca's natural and cultural richness worldwide.

Accountable Investment for Lasting Results

The project ensures *rigorous financial management* through direct implementation under *UNEP*, following *GEF standards*. *Pronatura Sur A.C.*, as executing partner, operates with approved plans and budgets, internal controls, audits, and periodic reporting, ensuring accountability, transparency, and measurable results.

Resources are maximized by mobilizing co-financing from government programs such as *Sembrando Vida*, as well as partnerships with the private sector. *Adaptive management* guides all stages, from collaborative planning with communities and institutions to execution according to approved procedures. Community participation, gender inclusion, and multi-sector coordination are cross-cutting priorities, while a continuous cycle of planning, implementation, monitoring, and learning guarantees transparency, adaptability, and ongoing improvement of results.

Project Fact Sheet: Tierra de Agaves

Title: Promoting Sustainability in the Agave-Mezcal Value Chain through Restoration and Integrated Management of Biocultural Landscapes in Oaxaca (Mexico Agave)

GEF ID: 10869

Length: 1st 1st June 2023 - 31st May 2028

Budget: 5 M USD GEF - 23.7 M USD (cofinancing)

GEF Focal Areas: Biodiversity, Land degradation

Geographical scope: Biocultural Landscapes “Sierra de Yautepec” & “Valles Centrales” in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Implementing agency: United Nations Environment Programme

Executing agencies: PRONATURA-SUR in coordination with the Oaxaca Secretariat of the Environment, Biodiversity, Energy and Sustainability