

THE COINTZIO WATERSHED, MEXICO



L'Institut de recherche pour le développement (IRD), France



1. *Agave inaequidens*, natural vegetation used for local production of Mezcal alcohol, Potrerillos, 2009
2. Ecological oven “Patzcuari” developed by SEMARNAT, Family Domínguez ,San Rafael Coapa, April 2010
3. Filtering stone walls to control erosion, Potrerillos, 2009

In 2007, according to a Federal law, the Commission of the basin of Lake Cuitzeo, which includes the Cointzio watershed, was created. The integrated management plan of the natural resources of the basin of lake Cuitzeo was the result of the work of 50 stakeholders (administrators, scientists, citizens, farmers, fishermen, NGOs, etc.) during 4 workshops of 2 days, and small meetings of the coordination group during 2008.

The DESIRE Project was included in this, especially in a “strategic watershed plan” for one sub basin of Cointzio (El Pedregal-Potreriillos). Workshops showed that people are most worried about poverty and water availability, and see environment degradation as a consequence of poverty, along with unemployment and low prices for agricultural products.

So, after identifying the problems and discussing the causes, solutions were proposed and evaluated. Ideas and practical actions included: construction of family ecological ovens, construction of water distribution systems and reservoirs, construction of filtering stone walls to control erosion, development of pasture and

minimum tillage practices, and reforestation.

Now new projects are starting: mushroom production, fencing cattle out of fragile areas, use of local agave (*Agave inaequidens*) (keeping biodiversity) for land protection and remediation with agro-forestry systems, as well as a new Mezcal (alcohol) production system in the new official production area.

There are hopes that all these efforts, discussions and workshops will convince stakeholders to create a local watershed commission. This should help to better integrate all the members of the communities, give more visibility to the institutions, and coordinate community actions, with a special focus on controlling cattle, as these are the main cause of land degradation.

These results are possible only because the actions have become part of regional and local policies. The involvement of the Secretary of the Environment (SEMARNAT) of Michoacán state, gives DESIRE legal recognition as well as promoting best use of resources and a framework for action.



© IRD, Prati, C.

A publication from the DESIRE project - funded by the European Union's 6th Framework Program 'Global Change and Ecosystems'

Newsletter 3

Scientists and stakeholders learn to listen to one another

Knowledge exchange is the key to sustainable action



© RD, Prat, C

How should scientists approach all the stakeholders that can contribute to ensuring that the research has practical uses? How can the interest of the stakeholders be maintained?

By stakeholders we mean everyone who has an interest: from farmers to national policy makers, from schoolchildren to the UNCCD. The DESIRE Project has included a series of stakeholder workshops in all study sites. This has allowed full discussion of ideas to combat land degradation and desertification, many of which are now

being trialed on experimental plots. Local stakeholders are involved in monitoring the trials where possible, and all stakeholders will be invited to consider the evaluation of success, and contribute to future recommendations.

The most rewarding workshops are where there is full support for seeking sustainable options from a wide range of people. It is important to try and include a range of ages and standards of education, and as many women as men.

Each page is from a DESIRE study site partner:

University of Aveiro, Portugal (Mação site); Democritus University of Thrace, Greece (Nestos river basin); University of Botswana (Boteti site); L'Institut de recherche pour le développement (IRD), France (Cointzio site, Mexico); Instituto de Investigaciones Agropecuarias (INIA), Chile (Secano interior)

Edited by Nichola Geeson, July 2010

For more information and contact details see:

- The DESIRE Harmonised Information System: www.desire-his.eu and DESIRE website: www.desire-project.eu

The DESIRE project (2007-2011) is funded by the European Commission, VI Framework Program, 'Global Change and Ecosystems' and brings together the expertise of 26 international research institutes and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This project is implemented by ALTERRA - research institute for the green living environment in the Netherlands.

Copyright and Disclaimer:
www.desire-project.eu/disclaimer

Contact DESIRE coordinator: Coen.Ritsema@wur.nl
Contact DESIRE Communications: ngproject3@googlemail.com

The opinions expressed in this newsletter and on the website are those of the DESIRE project consortium and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Commission.

