

STRENGTHENING THE SUSTAINABLE AMARANTH VALUE CHAIN IN MEXICO

In 2024, the Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development (SADER) of Mexico has reported that FAO designated Mexico as a demonstration country for strengthening the amaranth value chain, a project created within the framework of the 2021-2025 International Program [One Country, One Priority Product](#) OCOP.



FAO has launched the “One Country, One Priority Product” Initiative to promote unique agricultural products with global potential. [This strategy seeks to strengthen the value chain of traditional and indigenous products, improving their visibility in international markets and fostering local economic development.](#) Its main objectives are:

- *Global recognition:* Increase the recognition of products such as amaranth at a global level, highlighting their benefits and uses.
- *Local Economic Development:* Generate economic opportunities for local products by improving the value chain and access to new markets.
- *Sustainability and Food Security:* Promote sustainable agricultural practices that contribute to global food safety.



[Amaranth is considered as one of the most complete foods of plant origin for human consumption](#), It is one of the most important sources of natural proteins, minerals and vitamins: A, B, C, B1, B2, B3; as well as folic acid, niacin, calcium, iron and phosphorus. Furthermore, it is one of the foods with a high presence of amino acids such as lysine. Amaranth can be used in its entirety as a resource to provide the population with protein and calories requirements, which in actuality can only be obtained from 20 plant species such as trigo, arroz, mijo, sorghum, papa, frijol, or soya.



The amaranth plant can reach up to three metres in height and can be used in its entirety. The plant can be used to extract natural pigments, which have various applications, not only in the food industry. In addition to human consumption, the plant is a good source of fodder, a source of colouring (amaranthine and betaine) and also an ornamental plant. In Mexico there are at least 11 species of amaranth, both in temperate and warm humid zones and warm dry zones. Its resistance to drought and heat, and the



fact that it requires less water, is a great advantage because it can thrive in regions with little rainfall where basic crops are usually not very successful.

Amaranth is one of the oldest crops in Mesoamerica. The grain was domesticated in America more than 4,000 years ago by pre-Columbian cultures and from there it possibly spread to other parts of the world. Amaranth is part of traditional Mexican agriculture, associated with the Milpa System, and is part of the [group of the 50 foods of the future](#).

Amaranth, by being included in the *One Country, One Product initiative*, receives support in Mexico to improve its production, processing and marketing. The focus is on supporting the entire value chain, covering all productive activities related to amaranth, starting from genetic improvement and seed conservation, planting, sowing, cultivation, harvesting, post-harvest processing, research, distribution and marketing. This not only helps revitalize its cultivation, but also promotes its integration into global food systems.

The strategy for the productive reconversion of amaranth focuses on transforming this ancestral crop into a viable and profitable option for farmers. [The main aspects of this strategy are:](#)

- **Crop Diversification:** Amaranth is being promoted as a profitable and sustainable alternative to traditional crops. Its versatility allows it to be used as a grain, vegetable and fodder crop, which diversifies options for producers and reduces risks associated with dependence on a single crop.
- **Processing and Product Innovation:** New technologies and processing methods are being developed to improve the quality and added value of amaranth. This includes the production of innovative foods, cosmetics and other industrial products that expand its market.
- **Training and Support for Producers:** Training programs are being implemented for farmers on best practices for amaranth cultivation, processing, and marketing. This support is essential to improve production efficiency and profitability ([Guide for Amaranth Production, 2023](#)).

In 2020, the Mexican government had already created a program aimed at 3,500 producers in Mexico City, Coahuila, State of Mexico, Hidalgo, Morelos, Oaxaca, Puebla and Tlaxcala to cultivate amaranth on more than 5,500 hectares. Amaranth production in 2023 recorded a harvest of 6,000 tons and represented an increase of 4.8% compared to the previous year. This increase was the result of a 4.3% growth in the area planted during the spring-summer cycle.

[Of the 6 States producing Amaranth in Mexico, the State of Puebla is the 1st in the national ranking](#) for planted area and production volume, concentrating 61% of national production. With a total planted area of 1,813 hectares and an outstanding production of 3,136.24 tons, this state not only leads in extension, but also in yield and economic value. According to the agricultural closing of 2023, the State of Puebla dominates the amaranth panorama with an average yield of 1.73 ton/ha, exceeding expectations thanks to the agricultural knowledge and commitment of its producers. In economic terms, Puebla contributes 17.3 million pesos to the national production value of 60.2 MDP, consolidating itself as a key player in the national amaranth market. All this production is possible thanks to the effort and dedication of farmers and rural communities who work



day after day to guarantee the quality and sustainability of their crops. The other producing states are Tlaxcala with 22%, State of Mexico with 13%, Mexico City with 3%, Oaxaca with 2% and Morelos with less than 1%. In 2019, 5,548 tons were obtained planted in 3,192 hectares nationwide.

The Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Government points out that with the appointment of Mexico as a demonstration country, within the framework of the global initiative "One country, one priority product", the FAO recognizes Mexico and, above all, its producers, researchers and agroindustry "for their work to intensify the production, transformation and promotion of this important grain as a true alternative to the process of desertification that many regions of the center-north of the country and the world are going through."

The recognition is also for the potential that amaranth and other ancestral crops have to improve the living conditions of producers in their countries and their contribution to food security, nutrition and well-being of the population in Mexico and the world. The purpose is to position amaranth as a food and an essential element of history, culture, agriculture and, above all, in national nutrition and food self-sufficiency and, with this, also contribute to the same cause at an international level.

To know more

[Article - Secretaria de Agricultura de Mexico](#)

[Article in swissinfo.ch](#)

[Article in jornada.com.mx](#)

[Article in forbes.com.mx](#)

[Article in enalimentos.lat](#)

[México, país de demostración del amaranto en centeotl.org.mx](#)

[Rentabilidad en cada cosecha- Estrategia Gobierno de Mexico](#)

[Article in Mexico.un.org](#)

[Article in Gobierno de Mexico](#)

[Article in FAO website](#)

[FAO- One Country One Priority product](#)

[Article in cimmyt.org](#)

[Los 50 Ingredientes del Futuro in unileverfoodsolutions.es](#)

[Future 50 Foods in awsassets.panda.org](#)

