

## LAND REFORM

The Zedillo administration is expected to accelerate the process of land reform begun by the government of former president Carlos Salinas. Recent amendments to the Mexican Constitution changed the system of land tenure to allow longer-term property rights, but the previous administration was slow to implement these reforms.

Mexico's system of *ejidos*, units of communally-owned land, was one of the cornerstones of the new constitution enacted during the Mexican revolution. The recent reforms are among the most radical of the sweeping economic reforms that began in the late 1980s. Indeed, the changes have been blamed for much of the political unrest in the state of Chiapas.

The *ejidatorios* are given the right to exploit land, but they do not own it. They cannot sell it, rent it, or use it as collateral. The rights to *ejidos* have been officially assigned by the *Secretaría de Agricultura, Gandería y Desarrollo Rural (SAGAR)*, Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock and Rural Development. Some of the land assigned as *ejidal* has been formerly private land occupied by squatters.

Amendments to the Mexican Constitution in 1992 changed the system of land tenure to allow longer-term property rights. Although this is usually regarded as an agricultural policy, it has important implications for industrial users of land. In particular, *ejidos* can now be divided among their holders or combined. It is expected that this will leave them in a better position to negotiate deals with private mining companies for surface rights, even though the mining concessions themselves must be purchased from the state.

## OPPORTUNITIES IN REMOTE SENSING

The *Consejo de Recursos Minerales (CRM)*, Mineral Resources Council, has a mandate to conduct the geological survey of Mexico. But so far the *CRM's* activities have primarily involved cataloguing mining concessions. Mexico does not have a comprehensive inventory of its mineral resources. The government has estimated that no more than one-fifth of the nation's territory has been systematically explored. Given the sheer size of the unexplored territory, there is considerable potential for multi-spectral scanning and other remote sensing technologies.

Although sales to the government offer considerable potential, so far the demand for remote sensing services has come from individual mining companies. Only the largest firms have access to this technology.

Mining companies interviewed for this study were asked to identify the most respected surveying companies operating in their sector. The companies mentioned were Kenecott, Placer Dome, Eldorado, Teck, DHP and *Minería Heda*.