

Mexican companies and government agencies are looking for low-cost systems that can become productive very quickly. There is a particular need for software that will run on desktop systems as opposed to workstations. Microsoft's Windows 95 is the dominant operating system. Most of the major American software producers distribute their products in Mexico, and the local software industry is limited mainly to custom products. Of the 130 member companies listed in the 1995 directory of the *Asociación Nacional de la Industria de Programas para Computadoras (Anipco)*, the National Association of the Computer Programming Industry, only one was located in Monterrey.

MINING EQUIPMENT AND SERVICES

Mexico's mining sector has probably been the biggest beneficiary of the nation's broad economic reforms. A new law in 1992 re-interpreted Article 27 of the Mexican constitution, which requires state ownership of all mineral reserves. Thousands of hectares of mineral reserves have been opened for development. The government has divested itself of virtually all its mining holdings, including a coal operation in Coahuila. New ownership laws have opened the doors to foreign investors. More than 60 Canadian mining companies have established a presence in Mexico to take advantage of these developments.

Mexico is one of the world's leading mineral producers, but there is only limited mining activity in the northwestern region. Coahuila's western border coincides roughly with a geological boundary between the Precambrian region to the west and the Paleozoic zone to the east. Mineral deposits are not nearly as common in the latter zone as they are in the rest of Mexico. There are several small copper deposits throughout the northwestern region as well as some deposits of manganese, fluorspar and lead. There is a silver mine at Encantada, and subsurface brines at Laguna del Rey produce sodium sulphate. None of these deposits is very large, however. Coal and iron deposits located in north-central Coahuila are the region's most important non-petroleum mineral endowment.

There are eight coal deposits clustered in central Coahuila, between Sabinas and Monclova in an area known as the Sabinas Basin. One of the larger deposits, known as *San Patricio*, is partly on the Nuevo León side of Coahuila's eastern border. In 1985, reserves were estimated at 1.2 billion tonnes.

Coal and iron mines in Coahuila are used to supply the local steel industry and there is also substantial production of steam coal, which is used mainly at the power plant at Nava, on the northern border. This plant is owned by the *Comisión Federal de Electricidad (CFE)*, Federal Electricity Commission. There are two