

THE CANADIAN EXPERIENCE

Trimex International Inc., from Kitchener, Ontario, first attempted to supply housing in Mexico in 1991. It tried to promote a variety of Canadian housing technologies before finding its niche after three years of tough slogging in the market. "Not all housing technologies are appropriate to Mexico", advises Dennis Kuchma, International Director of Trimex. "Exporting prefabricated wood structures seemed to be an opportunity. Our technologies offered construction efficiencies, esthetics, comfort, all at an affordable price. However, we had misjudged the market reception to these advantages. The cultural limitations were major hurdles to overcome, particularly in the lower to mid-range housing markets."

Trimex made its breakthrough in 1993 by offering a brick-based technology to the lower middle-income market.

The tremendous demand for housing coupled with a shortage of capital is forcing Mexican builders to consider any technology that can reduce costs and construction time. Economizing on material costs is the primary focus. About 80 percent of housing costs are for materials and only 20 percent for labour. Many builders are investigating prefabricated building techniques.

FOVI and INFONAVIT have recently financed housing projects that use prefabricated components such as slabs and beams. In addition, both agencies have pilot projects underway using wood prefabricated housing for low-income housing projects. These agencies are working with universities and other entities to research building systems and materials. In the private sector, the prime customer base for housing materials consists of small and medium-sized builders and wholesale/retail building supplies dealers.

BUILDING MATERIALS USED IN HOUSING

IN PERCENT

	Material	Relative Use
Floors	cement or concrete	53
	mosaic and other coverings	19
	earth	27
	others	1
Roofs	concrete or brick, earthen brick over rafters	51
	metal or asbestos sheets	18
	tile	10
	cardboard	10
	palm or wood	9
	others	2
Walls	brick, block	70
	adobe	15
	wood	8
	mud	2
	reed, palm or bamboo	2
	cardboard	1
	metal or asbestos sheets	1
	others	1

Source: Eduardo Carrera Cortés (Ed.). *Catálogo CIHAC '93*, 7th edition. Mexico City. Centro Impulsor de la Construcción y la Habitación A.C. (CIHAC), Promotion Centre for Construction and Housing. p. 281.

