MARKETING DRIED PULSES AND SEEDS IN MEXICO

NARRATIVE

Beans

A wide variety of coloured beans (pintos, blacks, browns, yellows and whites) are grown in Mexico. Almost 50% of domestic bean production comes from the states of Zacatecas and Durango. Complementary to maize and wheat, beans contribute between 70-80% of the vegetable protein consumed by the lower strata of the population. Beans are a staple of the Mexican diet, and are used extensively in the large selection of foods characteristic of Mexican cuisine. Mexicans consume between 12 to 16 kilograms per capita annually, compared to a mere kilogram by Canadians.

The import market for beans varies from year to year, since domestic production is highly dependant on adequate rainfall and other favourable climatic conditions. Imports of beans reached record levels in 1980, 1981 and 1990, when the volumes imported were 443,066, 490,182 and 330,187 tonnes, respectively. These imports were reflective of the severe droughts which affected Mexico's agricultural production in those years, and shortfalls in the bean harvests.

Because temperatures are mild and adequate for the cultivation of beans throughout the year, they are grown in two cycles: Spring-Summer (March-July) and Fall-Winter (September-February). The Spring-Summer harvest is the most important, as it contributes between 70-75% of national bean production.

The state food agency, Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares (Conasupo), is the only entity permitted to import beans. Conasupo reports to the Secretariat of Commerce (SECOFI) and jointly with the Secretariat of Agriculture, coordinates its international purchases in accordance with internal production. The average annual production of beans fluctuates between 1.2 and 1.3 million tonnes, which is about sufficient to cover the domestic demand. When output falls below this amount, then Conasupo will arrange for supplementary imports. Considering Mexico's usually large import requirements, Conasupo is never officially a buyer in the international market, so as not to create speculation that could drive prices upward.

Lentils, peas and seeds

Conasupo does not control the importation of these products, which are freely imported by dealers. Although Mexico produces lentils, peas and canary seed, in recent years imports have increased significantly due to declines in domestic production, particularly of lentils and canary seed.