

The Mexico and Central America region includes six countries: Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua, with a large variation in agroecological conditions and production systems. Maize and beans are essential components of the diet of people and occupy a large proportion of the cropped area (Table 1). Wheat is particularly important in Mexico as rice is in Nicaragua. Bananas, sugarcane, and tomatoes are crops for export, grown normally in plantations.

The variation in crop yields (Table 2) is consequence of the contrasting agroecological conditions and production technologies under which they are grown. Average yields might be high in small areas under favorable conditions, such as sugarcane and rice in El Salvador.

Table 1. Harvested área (ha) for eight crops in Mexico and five countries in Central America. 2009. Source: FAO Stat

crop	México	Belize	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua
	(has)					
bananas	75,810	2,641	6,876	59,391	23,643	
lemmons, limes, and oranges	475,307	15,298	7,042	12,157	18,307	19,123
maize	6,223,050	15,308	261,628	855,646	335,514	334,528
sugarcane	710,585	24,292	62,419	213,446	77,484	54,769
tomatoes	99,088			10,271	6,231	
dry beans	1,205,310	6,168	104,062	230,576	104,059	248,592
rice (paddy)	54,230	4,579	5,823	8,385	9,090	73,755
wheat	828,408			5,161	1,960	

Table 2. Yields (kg/ha) for eight crops in Mexico and five countries in Central America. 2009. Source: FAO Stat

crop	Mexico	Belize	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua
	(kg/ha)					
bananas	29,446	25,774	11,351	42,838	29,210	
lemmons, limes, and oranges	13,296	14,729	19,396	21,115	11,978	4,665
maize	3,236	2,942	3,004	1,971	1,750	1,560
sugarcane	69,650	37,779	91,896	86,165	80,057	85,639
tomatoes	26,152			35,530	26,561	
dry beans	864	765	769	819	678	858
rice (paddy)	4,850	4,502	6,901	2,796	4,937	4,535
wheat	4,968			1,743	575	

According to FAO data, except for Guatemala, the countries in the region have increased their food supply for their people, which has resulted in less undernourishment (Figure 1).

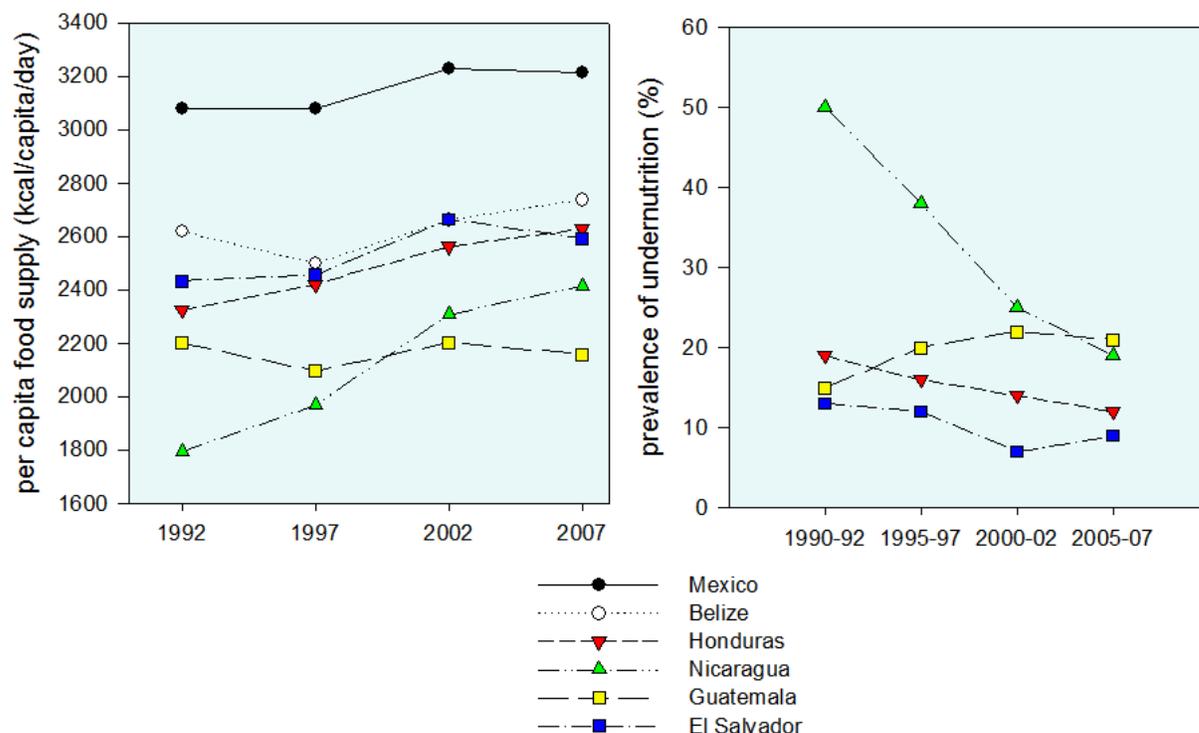


Figure 1. Per capita food supply (kcal/capita/day) and prevalence of undernutrition (%) in Mexico and five countries in Central America (FAO Stat).

The lack of adequate education is one of the most critical limitations in the region. This shortcoming is evident from pre-school to college education. At the professional level the most serious aspects of this limitation manifest themselves in the lack of clarity and integration of basic concepts. Education is therefore, a priority area for IPNI, in which we are interested in working in all possible ways, including formal and non-formal approaches. We wish to establish solid relationships with schools of agriculture and supporting organizations, through the varied alternatives available for communication, in order to promote scientific knowledge in agriculture.

Supporting research efforts is another critical area of priority for IPNI. Effective and efficient research is frequently limited by a variety of reasons that include the lack of adequate diagnoses of the main limiting factors, the absence of integrated methodologies — which is often linked to excessive professional specialization — limited financial resources, insufficient participation of stakeholders, and emphasis on short term projects. IPNI is interested in strengthening research systems through the support to the development and solidification of competent research teams.