

# SAFE-World Project/Initiative Summary

**Country:** Mexico

Project/Initiative Title: HPI Dairy: Multiple, Sustainable, Diversified Livestock Projects' Program

Nos. farmers: 11

Agro-Ecological Zone: V

Improvement types

1x	2	3x	4	5x	6x	7	8	9x
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## A. Key Impacts

### A1 - Productivity

	Before/Without	After/With	% change
Dairy cows			New food- milk

## D. Contact Point for Project/Initiative

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## E. Project Narrative

**Project:** Multiple, Sustainable, Diversified Livestock Projects' Program

**Location:** Mazapiltepec, Puebla City, Puebla State, Mexico

**Partners:** Central de Servicios Para el Desarrollo de Puebla (DEPAC)

**Description:** This project provides in-calf dairy heifers to selected members of the Multiple, Sustainable, Diversified Livestock Projects' Program, Mazapiltepec, Mexico.

The town of Mazapiltepec is approximately one and a half hours east of Puebla City in Mexico. It is a small town and is the place where Heifer Project International, through an organization called DEPAC (Central de Servicios Para el Desarrollo de Puebla, A.C.), started working with a group of people through the Dairy Termination Program (DTP) in 1988. This association officially ended in 1996, when the required reporting period ended. This story deals with the issue of poverty and changing consumption/production patterns.

The original group consisted of twelve families, but, after some difficult times as beginners, the group size diminished to five families. They named their group Unidad y Progreso

(Unity and Progress), and continued working together, inviting and motivating other people to participate. Later, DEPAC was able to get a line of credit established for those who wanted to buy cows and increase their herd size. One member of the group, Mr. Wilfredo, bought six cows on credit through DEPAC. The herds of the other members have grown slowly, one cow at a time. Not only have they grown individually, but they have also grown as a group, participating and reaching the group's goals. They have participated in many training sessions on dairy cow management as well.

The third president elected by the group, Mr. Rosendo Perez, encouraged integrating the agricultural aspects into the livestock program. The group members began to pay more attention to their fields and to improving their cows' diets. They worked to improve their soil-tilling techniques (almost zero tillage) and to lower their production costs. Some members of the group made a trench silo and others planted alfalfa and grasses, knowing that one day they would have pasture land.

As of 1997, the group has grown to eleven families. Mr. Gabriel Hernandez, the secretary for the group, initiated the sale of excess milk. The group first sold its excess milk to a middleman. When the middleman discontinued purchase of their milk, a local milk buyer offered to purchase their excess. In order to make a profit, the local buyer cheated and swindled the sellers out of a good selling price. The whole group agreed to look for a solution to their problem.

After visiting a couple of different companies, the group applied to the Nestle corporation. Their application for the acquisition of a cold milk storage tank was accepted by Nestle and, on August 17, 1996, the group received with great joy a milk storage tank. All twelve families contributed money and labor to prepare the room that would house the milk tank and equipment.

Nestle and the group agreed to a six month trial basis, before any payments were made for equipment. After the trial period (beginning in January 1997), each family made payments of 500-600 pesos (approximately US\$6.60) every two weeks to pay for the milk tank and equipment. Nestle and the group agreed that the group would pay for the equipment within two years and would not be required to pay any interest. The group agreed that their product must meet the quality and hygiene requirements established by Nestle: the milk must contain 3.5% milk fat, must be free of antibiotics, must have no water added, and must come from cows free of mastitis.

**Results Achieved:**

Family income has increased through a return to diversified farm enterprises. Combining crops and livestock has improved crop yields and lowered production costs. Crop residues, in turn, provide additional fodder for the animals. Compost generation from manure and crop residues has reduced chemical fertilizer costs by more than half; soil organic matter has been increased, which augments soil capacity for water retention and reduction of soil loss. The group is able to utilize collective bargaining for marketing their milk. Migration from the farm to seek seasonal employment is greatly reduced. Also, family savings accounts have been established, as well as a group savings account to be used to provide revolving loans to group members.

**Lessons Learned:**

A long-term commitment and plan, developed by both the NGO and the grassroots farmer organization, is needed. The plan should include continual training, and the new skills learned by the group should be monitored for a minimum of five to ten years. The community group itself should develop a sense of self and group responsibility to make positive things happen when decisions and plans are made. Agricultural improvement activities should start small and be low-tech to build the self-confidence of group members. Productivity should be increased, including crop, forage, and livestock production systems. Income should be increased quickly and in a planned, sustainable manner to reduce dependency on off the farm employment. This will improve the presence of the men in community activities and in family life. Periodic self-evaluation meetings should be held to evaluate the actual activities against the planned activities.