Abstract

The production and distribution of improved seeds are the link for technology transfer between plant breeders and farmers, to achieve competitive levels of production. However, in México only 30 % of the agricultural land is planted with improved maize (Zea mays L.) varieties. In this research, the domestic maize seed market was analyzed regarding the opportunities of development of small enterprises for seed production. The Production, Certification and Seed Trade Bill (PCSTB) published in 1961, created an institutional framework that allowed the Mexican State to promote the generation of varieties, as well as seed production and its trade. Seed production reached 350 000 tons in 1989, of which 28 000 were of maize. In 1991, a new PCSTB was published which allowed an unrestricted participation of the private sector on agricultural research, seed production and marketing, while the public sector became so restricted that the National Seed Producing Company was eliminated. This second bill resulted in a large reduction of seed production (163 000 tons in 1995, of which 15 000 were of maize) and the massive expansion of transnational mega-corporations in the national seed industry, which soon consolidated into an oligopoly. In 2009, 8 million hectares of maize were seeded in México, of which 1.5 million were planted with 45 000 tons of hybrid seeds. Most of these seeds (95 %) were produced by Monsanto and Pioneer, and the rest by small companies (3000 tons). In this study we propose participation of the local and regional small companies to address small-scale farmers in specific agro-ecological regions, so that the area planted with improved seeds would expand. This approach must be articulated with a dynamic agricultural system (value chain) that would generate new maize varieties along with seed production, distribution, technical service and marketing.

Keywords

Zea mays, seed production, history of agricultural research, seed market.