Abstract

In México, in the 80’s, there was a change in the economic model which, along with recurrent economic crises, impacted Mexican agriculture. Within this context, a longitudinal study was carried out in the state of Puebla, to determine changes occurring over two decades in a minifundist peasant region with rainfed agriculture and where the main crop is maize. The objectives were: 1) to determine the main characteristics of peasant and technological aspects of the corn producing process; 2) to analyze changes in agricultural equipment and machinery. The information was obtained from three surveys carried out in 1975, 1983, and 1995, with a total number of 519 peasants interviewed. Results indicate that, in the 20-year period no relevant changes occurred in the agricultural surface under control, with approximately seven hectares. Peasants are middle aged with no relevant changes in the average age through the period involved. Regarding schooling, it is still low with an average of 1.87 in 1975 of 3.36 years of schooling two decades later. In relation to agricultural technology levels, changes were found in the amount of seeds used, with an average of 16 kg/ha in 1975 and 26.8 kg/ha in 1995. A similar situation occurred in the usage of nitrogen fertilization, going from an average of 45 kg/ha in 1975 to 121 kg/ha in 1995. Almost all the peasants used native seeds during the three time periods of this study. Regarding property of agricultural equipment and machinery used in rural activities by the peasants it was found that no changes had occurred in animal traction equipment and few in manually operated ones. This situation indicates that agricultural practices used by peasants in this region continue being basically the same, with a very low level of capitalization of peasants units.

Keywords

Peasant agriculture, traditional technology, animal traction implements.