

Prize of recognition to the organic project in Mexico:



## FiBL-supported Citricos Ex wins Prestigious Mexican National Export Award for organic citrus exports to Switzerland

Citricos Ex (Citrex), a Mexican company dedicated to processing fruit juices from the Veracruz region, was recently awarded Mexico's top National Export Award. The successful launch of the organic product line was a result of cooperation with FiBL, which has been providing consultancy all along the supply chain. FiBL's work has included facilitating organic certification according to the European Union Regulation and the most rigorous private Swiss organic standards – the Bio Suisse Standards.

The National Export Award is a milestone for Citrex and its employees. "The National Export Award represents the highest achievement in terms of export programs, export and import regulatory compliance, and world-class procedures for manufacturing and delivering products on time to our customers", said Arturo Marroquin, Managing Director of Citrex. A significant part of Citrex's organic programme success has been the adaptation of manufacturing and internal processes in the plant, including materials logistics and customs compliance. An interesting sustainability feature of the business's organic juice process is the recycling of citrus peel residues, which farmers now use as an ingredient in the organic compost production process. The award also recognizes excellence in environmental and social corporate responsibility.



The global market for orange juice is dominated by large-scale competitors in Brazil and Florida. Pricing follows the organic juice commodity pricing negotiated and set in the main international markets. In view of the highly competitive market conditions, Citrex needed to develop its own strategies in order to differentiate successfully. In consultation with FiBL, the company opted for organic certification as



a way to add value for its international customers, supported by an individualized product development process tailored to customers' needs. This included close cooperation with farmers. The "grassroots" approach, transferring know-how and methodologies to the small farmers of rural areas in Veracruz Mexico, has been one of the reasons for Citrex's success.

Citrex introduced its organic production line in 2007 in response to demand from Coop Switzerland. FiBL supported the company in all aspects of organic orange and grapefruit production and processing. Citrex interacted and collaborated with small farmers throughout the production, training and certification processes. The goal was to provide technical support and know-how in order to assure organic quality from the farmer's field to the point of sale in Coop stores. FiBL introduced new production strategies for farmers, including the use of leguminous cover crops designed to reduce the amounts of external fertilizers applied and protect soils against erosion. Farmers were also trained to produce and apply organic inputs such as organic compost and animal manure that provide essential nutrition for the orange and grapefruit trees. Preventive strategies for the natural regulation of pests and diseases were implemented, including guidance on how to create ecological areas where beneficial insects, local fauna and flora can proliferate.

The FiBL-supported organic project has enabled Citrex and its farmers to obtain better prices and sales conditions and to develop a non-commodity, premium-priced export business. Citrex currently produces around 2,500 tons of organic citrus juice annually. The organic project has allowed Mexican organic farmers to diversify their production and develop new organic products for sale in local markets as well. As a result, this Citrex-FiBL export-driven project has had a further positive effect for several of the citrus growing low-income rural areas of Mexico. It holds out new prospects for the sustainable development of these local communities.

#### **For further information:**

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