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Past, present, and future of white
maize farming in Guanajuato

Author

Enrique Antonio Mejía
PhD, Economic History
enriquethinks@gmail.com

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Annotated Bibliography

Complex and Prices

1. Weis, T. (2013). *The ecological hoofprint: The global burden of industrial livestock*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Weis demonstrates that the global livestock sector is organized around cheap feed grains (primarily yellow maize and soy) produced at industrial scale and priced below their true ecological and social costs. What Weis labels as the industrial grain-oilseed-livestock complex. This framework supports the guidance memo's central claim that the Chicago Board of Trade price for U.S. No. 2 Yellow Dent is not a neutral market signal but the organizing logic of a system designed to keep grain artificially cheap. The memo draws on Weis to explain why Mexican white maize farmers cannot compete: they are not part of the complex but are priced against it. As a caveat, Weis writes like a storyteller and can seem to go off on tangent, however if you read on long enough, you will find that there is a purpose.

2. Wise, T. A. (2010). *Agricultural dumping under NAFTA: Estimating the costs of US agricultural policies to Mexican producers*. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Wise calculates that U.S. yellow maize enters Mexico at prices averaging 14 percent below the cost of production, a practice development economists call agricultural dumping. This finding is important for the memo's core economic argument: the price farmers receive in Guanajuato (4,500–5,000 MXN/t) is not a market equilibrium but an artificially depressed price kept in place by U.S. subsidies and trade rules. Moreover, Wise expertly covers how NAFTA has affected key agricultural policies at the expense of small-scale Mexican farmers. This document is perfect for those who need an approachable introduction into these issues, but there are richer analysis for those that want to dig deeper.

3. Yunez-Naude, A. (2003). *The dismantling of CONASUPO, a Mexican State Trader in Agriculture*. *The World Economy*, 26(1), 97–122.

Yunez-Naude provides the definitive account of how and why Mexico dismantled CONASUPO, the state enterprise that bought grain directly from farmers at guaranteed prices. He shows that by 1994, more than 80 percent of government-owned enterprises were sold off or shuttered, and guaranteed prices for most grains disappeared. In their place came ASERCA, an agency designed to integrate Mexican farmers into international financial markets rather than to buy grain. This historical analysis is important for the memo's argument that the Chicago price link was a policy choice, not a law of nature.

4. Baraibar Norberg, M. (2020). *The political economy of agrarian change in Latin America: Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Baraibar Norberg's excellent book on the political economy of soybean production in South America is not cited in the memo. But it is a critical resource in understand how government and private industry work in tandem to change institutions and norms to allow export-oriented commodity production to thrive in Latin America. She demonstrates that technological adoption is not neutral—it reconfigures who owns what, who does what, and who gets what. Her work on the soybean provides an important perspective on the industrial grain-oilseed-livestock complex.

Maize and Change

5. Fitting, E. (2011). *The struggle for maize: Campesinos, workers, and transgenic corn in the Mexican countryside*. Duke University Press.

Fitting provides an ethnographic account of maize politics in the Tehuacán region of Mexico, documenting how NAFTA, transgenic maize, and neoliberal reforms have reshaped campesino (small-scale peasant farmer) livelihoods. Although not cited in the memo, their work crucially documents how campesinos actively resist the displacement of native varieties by maintaining seed networks, participating in fairs, and organizing politically.

6. Warman, A. (2003). *Corn and capitalism: How a botanical bastard grew to global dominance* (N. L. Westrate, Trans.). University of North Carolina Press. (Original work published 1988)

Also not cited, but important is Warman's historical analysis of maize becoming a global commodity. Warman was a Mexican anthropologist and former minister of agrarian reform, traces maize from its domestication in Mesoamerica over 9,000 years ago to its central role in global capitalism. They argue that maize is a "botanical bastard"—a human creation that cannot reproduce without intervention—making it uniquely adaptable to capitalist agriculture. Warman's work could provide the deep historical context for the memo's finding.

7. Gutiérrez Núñez, N. L. (2023). *La agricultura del maíz y el sorgo en el Bajío mexicano: Revolución verde, sequías y expansión forrajera, 1940-2021*. *Historia Agraria: Revista de Agricultura e Historia Rural*, (91), 255–286.

Gutiérrez Núñez challenges the linear historiography that treats sorghum's expansion in the Bajío as a straightforward replacement of maize under the Green Revolution paradigm. Instead, he demonstrates that from 1940 to 2021, the relationship between maize and sorghum was shaped by three interacting forces: technological innovation, environmental conditions (especially drought), and shifts in Mexican political economy. Their findings supports the memo's claim that the Green Revolution's technological package did not work uniformly for all farmers or regions. This study is a critical resource for anyone want to study agrarian change in the Bajío, especially in the time since the Green Revolution.

8. Méndez Cota, G. (2016). *Disrupting maize: Food, biotechnology and nationalism in contemporary Mexico*. Rowman & Littlefield International.

Méndez Cota offers a critical reflection into Mexico's maize politics, challenging the dominant framing of genetically modified maize as an external threat imposed by corporate agribusiness. Instead, she argues that biotechnology is not external to Mexican nationalism but part of it—a provocation that complicates the idea that native criollo maize (good) and transgenic maize (bad). For the interested, they provide the conceptual vocabulary to understand why this conflict exists. As a philosophical exercise, this book may be more than the Sunday reader might wish for.

Guanajuato and Bajío

9. Tutino, J. (2011). Making a new world: Founding capitalism in the Bajío and Spanish North America. Duke University Press.

Tutino argues that the Bajío region of Mexico was the crucible where modern capitalism first took shape, driven by silver mining, indigenous labor, and a dynamic rural economy of family maize producers. Tutino shows that the region's maize-based agrarian economy has been central to global capitalism for five centuries, though in a markedly different way than what came about after the Green Revolution. The historical period under analysis in Tutino's work is much earlier than when this memo's timeline begins, therefore it was not cited. This is a massive book, with excellent source material. The argument is compelling, but may overstate the importance of the Bajío on the world-stage.

10. MVS Noticias. (2025, October 31). Agricultores de Guanajuato piden un “precio piso” para el maíz y denuncian abusos de los industriales.

<https://mvsnoticias.com/entrevistas/2025/10/31/agricultores-de-guanajuato-piden-un-precio-piso-para-el-maiz-denuncian-abusos-de-los-industriales-717968.html>

This MVS Noticias news report from October 31, 2025, documents the demands of Guanajuato maize farmers who were blocking highways to protest low prices and denounce abuses by industrial buyers. The report is important for the memo's central narrative in two ways.

First, it provides journalistic confirmation of the farmer protests that frame the entire memo.

Second, the report captures the farmers' demand for a guaranteed floor price of 7,200 pesos per metric ton, the same figure that appears throughout the memo's economic analysis in Section 4. This floor price scenario was not just a random number pulled out of a hat; it emerged from organized mobilization, highway blockades, and public statements reported by outlets like MVS.

For the memo's audience, this source serves as primary evidence that the price crisis is not just an analytical construct but a lived reality that drove farmers to collective action. It grounds the memo's quantitative analysis in the qualitative reality of protest and organizing.



Yellow and Red Corn on the Crates, Markus Winkler. No
Location: Unsplash. Free to use under the Unsplash License.

