

8-26-1992

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### Recommended Citation

Ranieri, Steven. "80% Of Land Area Affected By Erosion." (1992). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/sourcemex/1963>

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## **80% Of Land Area Affected By Erosion**

*by Steven Ranieri*

*Category/Department: General*

*Published: Wednesday, August 26, 1992*

On Aug. 16, Agriculture Minister Carlos Hank Gonzalez told reporters that SARH (Secretaria de Agricultura y Recursos Hidraulicos) estimates that 80% of Mexico's 1,958,201 sq.km. are affected by erosion. Mexico loses a minimum 500 million metric tons of topsoil per year. The minister said erosion is the result of natural processes, such as heavy rains. However, deforestation and inappropriate agricultural techniques mainly corn and bean monoculture have significantly contributed to the problem. Hank Gonzalez stated that corn cultivation, which "weakens the soil," covers 38% of the nation's agricultural land area. According to SARH statistics, erosion causes the loss or degradation of an average 1.3 metric tons of soil per hectare every year in arid and semi-arid regions. The same figures for the highlands and "dry tropical areas" are 2.3 MT and 4.3 MT, respectively. (Sources: Spanish news service EFE, Notimex, 08/16/92)

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