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*Artículos Científicos*

**La importancia de los factores socioculturales en la  
competitividad de la empresa rural. El caso de la empresa  
apícola Miel Tierra Grande**

*The Importance of Sociocultural Factors in the Competitiveness of the Rural  
Company. The Case of the Apiarian Company Miel Tierra Grande*

*A importância dos fatores socioculturais na competitividade das empresas  
rurais. O caso da empresa apícola Miel Tierra Grande*

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## Resumen

La presente investigación analiza si los recursos de índole sociocultural que posee una empresa inserta en el medio rural tienen influencia en su competitividad y desarrollo. El objeto de estudio es una organización rural productiva denominada *Miel Tierra Grande*, localizada en la comunidad de Hueyitlalpan del estado de Guerrero. Su giro es la apicultura, dedicada a la producción de colmenas para la extracción de miel y sus derivados como polen, propóleo y jalea real, que son transformados para generar otros productos desde el ramo alimenticio hasta productos para el cuidado e higiene personal. Para analizar su competitividad, se realizaron entrevistas semiestructuradas; la primera a uno de los socios de la empresa encargado de la planta de producción; ocho entrevistas a habitantes de la localidad, y una al comisario. Además, se realizaron seis visitas para observar el proceso de producción, distribución y comercialización de los productos. En cuanto a los aspectos sociales y culturales que poseen las organizaciones rurales, se realizó una búsqueda de bibliohemerografía para asentar las bases teóricas. La empresa rural analizada posee un estilo particular de organización derivado de las características socioculturales de la población; se trata de una de las empresas más importantes de la región centro del estado. Se detectó que factores socioculturales como la religión, la relación con el entorno, la población, las relaciones familiares y el conocimiento local influyen en la construcción de una forma de organización en la empresa rural, todo lo cual la hacen capaz de ser competitiva. Se redefinió el concepto de *competitividad* aplicado a las empresas rurales; aquí se trata de la capacidad que tiene un sistema organizado de individuos para generar bienes o servicios de calidad a costos mínimos, que estén en posibilidad de mantenerse en el mercado (local, regional, nacional o extranjero), con la finalidad de lograr un beneficio económico y social.

**Palabras clave:** competitividad social, cultura, empresa rural, identidad, territorio rural.



## Abstract

This research analyzes if the socio-cultural resources that a company has in rural areas have an influence on their competitiveness and development. The object of this study is a rural productive organization named *Miel Tierra Grande*, located in the community of Hueyitlalpan of the state of Guerrero, Mexico. Their main production is the beekeeping, dedicated to the production of hives for the extraction of honey and its derivatives such as pollen, propolis and royal jelly, which are transformed to generate other products, ranging from the food industry to personal care and hygiene products. To analyze their competitiveness, semi-structured interviews were conducted: the first to one of the partners of the company in charge of the production plant, eight interviews with locals and one with the commissioner. In addition, six visits were made to observe the process of production, distribution and marketing of the products; visits were made to outlets outside the town. A search for bibliohemerography related to the social and cultural aspects of rural organizations was carried out. The rural company analyzed has a style of organization derived from the sociocultural characteristics of the population; it is one of the most important companies in the central region of the state. Sociocultural factors such as religion, relationship with environment, population, family relations and local knowledge were found to influence the construction of a form of organization in the rural enterprise making it capable of being competitive. The concept of *competitiveness* applied to rural businesses was described as the ability of an organized system of individuals to generate quality goods and services, at minimum costs, that are able to remain in the market (local, regional, national or foreign), in order to achieve an economic and social benefit.

**Keywords:** social competitiveness, culture, rural enterprise, identity rural territory.



## Resumo

Esta pesquisa analisa se os recursos socioculturais que uma empresa localizada no meio rural possui influenciam sua competitividade e desenvolvimento. O objeto de estudo é uma organização rural produtiva denominada Miel Tierra Grande, localizada na comunidade de Hueyitlalpan no estado de Guerrero. Seu negócio é a apicultura, que se dedica à produção de colmeias para extração de mel e seus derivados como pólen, própolis e geleia real, que se transformam para gerar outros produtos desde a indústria alimentícia até produtos de higiene e higiene pessoal. Para analisar sua competitividade, foram realizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas; o primeiro a um dos sócios da empresa responsáveis pela planta de produção; oito entrevistas com residentes locais e uma com o comissário. Além disso, foram realizadas seis visitas para observar o processo de produção, distribuição e comercialização dos produtos. Em relação aos aspectos sociais e culturais das organizações rurais, foi realizada uma pesquisa bibliohemerográfica para estabelecer as bases teóricas. A empresa rural analisada possui um estilo particular de organização derivado das características socioculturais da população; É uma das empresas mais importantes da região central do estado. Fatores socioculturais como a religião, a relação com o meio ambiente, a população, as relações familiares e o conhecimento local influenciaram a construção de uma forma de organização na empresa rural, o que a torna capaz de ser competitiva. O conceito de competitividade aplicado às empresas rurais foi redefinido; aqui se trata da capacidade de um sistema organizado de indivíduos de gerar bens ou serviços de qualidade a custos mínimos, que sejam capazes de se manter no mercado (local, regional, nacional ou estrangeiro), a fim de obter lucro econômica e social.

**Palavras-chave:** competitividade social, cultura, empresa rural, identidade, território rural.

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## Introduction

In general, the term rurality has been related to poverty, backwardness, marginalization, and the productive activities carried out in this area are linked to subsistence agriculture and livestock. Currently, the concept in question has been subjected to an analysis that allows us to visualize that rural territories are being disrupted by the phenomenon of globalization: both cultural and geographical borders are incessantly modified by technological connectivity, which impacts social processes through which the inhabitants of rural areas established their worldview of the world.

One of the main characteristics of the economic activities of a rural territory, whether agricultural, livestock, tourist, artisan, or small businesses, among others, is their anchoring to the territory. This territorial anchoring has as its main scale of analysis and socioeconomic impact the local, and therefore, the identity attachment of the population with its territory by sharing a culture, which influences the construction and reconstruction of its space and the reassessment of its environment, in addition to promoting the organization and participation of local actors in solidarity production entities that aim to generate community development and self-knowledge.

The difference between the rural company and the capitalist company is that the latter has freed itself from territorial limitations, its shareholders make decisions at great distances and can move their company from one place to another; the local is only interested in the exploitation of natural resources, cheap labor or capturing the market for the consumption of its products; In this way, they can leave a territory if it suits their interests, forcing the locality to deal with waste, environmental impact and the restructuring of social cohesion (Bauman, 2001, p. 15).

On the other hand, the rural company has as a differentiating characteristic from the capitalist company its attachment to the territory, resources such as local knowledge and knowledge, the family as a work force; characteristics that, for the purposes of this work, have been included as socio-cultural characteristics of the company. Based on this, the question arises as to whether it is possible that these characteristics influence a rural company, particularly the beekeeping company Miel Tierra Grande, to be successful and competitive.



It should be added that rural companies, being social economic units, not only seek the economic benefit of their members, but also have a social purpose, which is to contribute to social welfare as one of the ways to create business fabric in rural areas. Mozas and Bernal (2006), based on the analysis of the social economy in urban and rural areas that they carry out, come to the conclusion that this type of companies are agents of economic development in the locality where they are established, since they “create employment , fix the population in their territory, cause business growth, improve the social welfare of citizens and favor improvements in social relations, encourage culture and training ”(p. 137), among other benefits. However, despite the fact that social enterprises exist in both urban and rural locations, it is in the latter that the relationship between rural enterprise and community can be clearly visualized.

In this sense, the general objective proposed in this research is to analyze what are the sociocultural aspects (culture, identity, knowledge, family relationship) that make a competitive rural company. Derived from this goal, three specific objectives were proposed: a) describe general aspects of the rural company (background, organization, way of working) to support why it is competitive; b) highlight the importance of local knowledge, social cohesion and the rural family in the functionality of a rural company, and c) analyze the importance of the activity carried out by the rural company and the relationship it has with the lifestyle of the people that make it up. The achievement of each of the objectives helped answer the question that was posed at the beginning of the investigation.

### **Conceptual framework**

As a first element of analysis, the concept of rural territory will be described. Echeverri (June 11, 2007) defines it in the following terms:

The territory built from the use and appropriation of natural resources, where productive, cultural, social and political processes are generated, born of the effect of location and territorial appropriation that follows from the fact that natural resources are localized production factors (p. 1).

This definition indicates that the characteristics of the territorial space determine the productive activities that will be developed in that territory. In rural areas, the population's productive unit is the family and its work base lies in the exploitation and management of natural resources. There are two elements that are fundamental characteristics of the rural



population. The first of this is belonging to a local community, where the construction of interpersonal networks is essential not only to manage the economic strategies of families and their members, but it is important for other areas of daily life, such as friendship, religion, recreation and a sense of belonging. The second element is to share your own sociocultural system, in which beliefs and norms complement relationships and social institutions and vice versa.

Rurality is not exclusive to agricultural activities, but in those territories the population performs various activities such as: agriculture, crafts, small industries, livestock, extractive activities, tourism, among others. The rural transcends the agricultural (Pérez, 2001), and maintains a strong exchange relationship with the urban: in the supply not only of food, but also of other goods and services, among which the supply and care of resources stand out. natural spaces, spaces for rest and contributions to the maintenance and development of culture.

### **The territory as a space for productive organization**

After defining the category of rural territory, we will analyze why an activity such as productive organization is a form of use of the territory. In the first place, the appropriation of space is called territorialization, and this appropriation of the territory manifests itself in different ways. Montañez (2001) points out that territorialization is:

The degree of dominance that a certain individual or social subject has in a certain territory or geographic space, as well as the set of practices and their material and symbolic expressions, capable of guaranteeing the appropriation and permanence of a given territory under a certain individual or social agent (p. 22).

Among the subjects that exercise territoriality, are individuals, social groups, ethnic groups, companies, the nation State, powers that be, among others. According to Gilberto Giménez (2005b), the appropriation of space can be predominantly utilitarian and functional, or predominantly symbolic-cultural. For example, when the territory is considered as an income-generating merchandise (exchange value), as a source of resources, as a means of subsistence, as an area of jurisdiction of power, as a geopolitical area of military control, as a shelter and a refuge area, among other. So, with an activity such as beekeeping, the

utilitarian or functional pole of the appropriation of space is being emphasized, since the physical characteristics of the territory are the main source of the activity they carry out.

The particular use of the territory is the manifestation of territoriality. This is observed in the small enterprises that arise in these spaces, most of them in the primary sector. Agriculture is positioned as the main activity carried out by the population of rural areas, and livestock appears in second place, both activities for self-consumption.

### **Culture and identity in rural areas**

Cultural identity is relevant for understanding the organizational processes of local actors in the construction of their development. According to Guerra (1997), it is about the following:

A process that is constructed at various levels of praxis, at different temporal rhythms and on various spatial scales (physical, symbolic, cultural, social) where, in turn, various logics and different types of social relations come together, being the representation that the subject has of all this fundamental process at the same (p. 112).

Therefore, cultural identity is of vital importance to understand the organizational processes of local actors, in this case the partners of the beekeeping organization, who have built their organizational style based on their culture. In addition, the concept of identity allows us to understand the reason for their actions and how, from their perspective, they create their own development alternatives.

### **Local knowledge**

Local knowledge is to be understood as the resource that the rural population uses to carry out their daily activities, including their economic activities. Echeverri (June 11, 2007) already pointed out when he spoke of the fact that the economy of the current rural world must be redefined:

It is necessary to include aspects, until now excluded, in the functions of growth and development, such as environmental and ecological economics, markets for environmental services, the sustainability of productive systems, genetic resources, knowledge and culture, as part of a more complex economy





than the agrarian economy that dominates the current public policy scenario (p. 1).

In this way, rural societies have in common that their survival strategy is based on the multiple use of their local space, that is, on its symbolic and cognitive representation and on the forms of organization and appropriation of the nature that surrounds it. space (Barrera, 2015).

Therefore, local knowledge means an understanding of the local product of experience and observation of agroecosystems. This knowledge is the basis for carrying out any activity; However, agriculture has become more technical with the use of machines for plowing, sowing and harvesting, and traditional agricultural practices have been put aside, mainly in areas where there is proximity to urban populations.

The way of working of rural production units has its own characteristics. Spicer (1971) emphasizes the symbolic elements that help some peoples to endure, while others disappear. In this sense, the values, the link with the land, with the seeds, with their ancestors, with the place itself, are fundamental elements of peasant persistence that configure their identity, which can be much stronger than any economic rationale. More than a mode of production, the form of peasant organization should be considered as a way of life (Mora, 2008, p. 126).

As can be seen, in these definitions it is mentioned that the use of knowledge is mainly related to the indigenous population, however, according to various authors, local knowledge is used by the rural population in general, because it is the basis for perform any activity.

Local knowledge, according to Farrington and Martin (1988), is considered as: “The body of knowledge, beliefs and customs consistent with each other and logical for those who share them” (p. 23). It is made up of knowledge and perceptions unique to a given culture or society (Grenier, 1998). Generally, it derives from daily observations and experimentation with life forms, productive systems and natural ecosystems. This unique knowledge is the advantage that the rural inhabitant has to better carry out his activities, since it allows him to look for a solution to emergent or unfavorable situations.

The information obtained on local knowledge is difficult to measure, as mentioned by Mora (2008), since the quantity and quality of local knowledge about the environment and nature vary among the members of a community, depending on socioeconomic factors, such as gender, age, social position, intellectual capacity and profession. Mora (2008) adds



that this information is common to present varying degrees of complexity in a given population and its level of consistency varies among those who possess it.

For their part, Nettin and Pimbert (cited in Mora, 2008) consider that knowing that the rural population possesses the natural environment and its production systems allows them to function better under adverse, ecological or market conditions, and thus achieve their objectives of production.

### **The rural company as an element of local development**

A local development process supposes a culture of collective proactivity, which leads local actors to take risks, take initiative, seek alternatives, learn from mistakes, be creative and make planned things happen. These attitudes become a condition for all social actors to become subjects of local development. Development must come from within societies, that is, from an endogenous effort, “mobilizing the social energies that make a society feel responsible for its actions and for their results” (Cárdenas, 2002, p. 63 ).

As already mentioned, agricultural activities are not the only ones in the rural sector, but rather various activities are carried out, depending on the physical and socio-cultural characteristics of the territories. The number of activities carried out by the population of rural areas will guarantee that there is more or less development. In a broad sense, rural development is:

A process of improving the level of well-being of the rural population and of the contribution that the rural environment makes in general to the well-being of the population as a whole, whether urban or rural, with its natural resource base (Ceña, 1993, p. 32).

The enterprises that arise in the rural area are mainly managed by entire families. From the peasant logic, it is extended families that are engaged in the same productive activity. From this perspective, according to Shanin (cited in Schejtman, 1980), the peasant unit is a “consumption-labor enterprise, with the consumption needs of the family as its objective and the family labor force as the means, with little or no use of wage labor ”(p. 125). Here it is considered that productive activities are rooted in a culture and identity of the rural population, that it is part of the day to day and that this is reason enough to last.

On the other hand, the rural company has a double purpose: economic and social. Economically, it generates profits, pays work and produces goods and services that satisfy



consumer needs; and in the social sphere, it contributes to the integral development of partners and workers, and helps to obtain the common good (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food [Sagarpa], 2006). In the beekeeping company under study, the business was leaving profits to the partners. One of them puts it this way: "My older brothers and my father were inclined to invest in beekeeping, it was more profitable to work with bees" (Morales, April 14, 2016, personal interview). That is, they realized that in beekeeping they did not have to work every day and the activities and time used were minimal, so they decided that this would be the family business.

Based on what has been analyzed, it is considered that the rural company is a socioculturally organized system that has as one of its functions that of offering a service or, with a minimum of technology, producing or transforming natural resources into consumer goods for profit. . And it differs from the company with urban location by the fact that it fulfills an important function in society, which is to seek collective well-being without neglecting identity with the territory, which also strengthens it and allows it greater sustainability.

Thus, the rural company has the advantage of the potential of the workforce, considering that they are entities where the human work structure is based on trust and defined authority relationships, which is key to making it competitive. The workforce comes from the family itself, and does not have a fixed salary for any of its members, so it is determined that income is variable and closely linked to results.

One of the characteristics of rural companies is that the family is the basis of most of the enterprises. The support of its members, mainly those who run the company, is to a certain extent disinterested, honest and frank because it responds, not only to the economic interest, but also to the affective, product of the consanguineous relationship.

According to Walters, Cintrón and Serrano (2006), the family is "one of the social institutions that influences, regulates, channels and imposes social and cultural meaning in people's lives" (p. 18). Palacios and Rodrigo (cited in Herrera, Weisser and Salazar, 2004), for their part, define the family as follows:

The union of people who share a vital project of existence in common that wants to last, in which strong feelings of belonging to said group are generated, there is a personal commitment among its members and intense relationships of intimacy, reciprocity and dependence are established" (p. 8).



From the involvement of the family in the work of the company, some other characteristics that are typical of this type of organization emerge, such is the case of social capital, product of the affective relationships that exist between the members of those who make up the family group . In this regard, Durston (2002) defines social capital as the “content of certain social relationships and structures, that is, attitudes of trust that occur in combination with reciprocity and cooperation behaviors” (p. 16). While for Bourdieu (1986) social capital is the sum of the real or potential resources linked to the possession of a lasting network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual recognition. Coleman (1988) suggests something similar, and adds that being another capital contributes to achieving the goals set, and that it is as important as financial, human and natural capital. Social capital is formed by characteristics such as support among members, trust, solidarity, honesty, savings, equitable work, respect, perseverance, continuity, communication, among others. All these values are the product of kinship ties and whose common goal is to achieve family well-being.

Therefore, in rural societies, from the perspective of the peasant economy, production processes are developed by family-type units, which ensures, cycle by cycle, that their living and working conditions are reproduced. And it guarantees, first of all, the means of biological and cultural support for the members of the family; and secondly, it allocates a fund for the replacement of the means of production to cover the eventualities that may put the family group at risk: illnesses, ceremonial expenses, among others. (Schejtman, 1980).

### **The competitiveness of rural companies**

With the advance of globalization, new ways of doing economy in rural areas are emerging. This despite the fact that the concept of competitiveness seems to have no place in rurality, since it has a purely capitalist origin, as is clear from the definition of Canada. Task Force on Competitiveness in the Agri-food Sector, cited by Solleiro and Castañón (2004), who, by the way, define competitiveness as the permanent ability to gain and sustain a profitable market share. However, in the new rurality, non-traditional production strategies have been adopted, and one of these is that small rural businesses can become competitive.

In this way, the challenge for rural companies is to become competitive to satisfactorily meet the economic needs of the family or families that comprise them, to ensure their development and consolidation, without neglecting the important social function they



have: to improve the quality of life of the families and inhabitants of the locality through its incidence in local development.

The competitiveness of the company depends on internal and external factors. Internal factors are those that condition its ability to create value; while external factors come from the environment (macroeconomic, institutional or market structure factors), which condition the competitiveness of companies within a region (Montes, Fernández and Vázquez, 2012).

For the term competitiveness to work in rural areas, the difference between the rural company and the capitalist company must be borne in mind, which is related to the social retribution it generates in the locality where it is inserted. Likewise, to redefine competitiveness in rural areas, the concept of social benefit that follows from the operation of the rural company must be considered:

When externalities are incorporated, that is, the social benefits of rural productive activities, it is possible to incorporate the concept of social competitiveness, as an expression of an efficiency economy that fully accounts for the rewards it has for the social group, including to entrepreneurs and private returns, but not limiting its assessment to this area (Echeverri, 2007, p. 2).

The term social competitiveness includes the aspects of productive efficiency not limited to profitability, but adjusting it to what the rural economy is currently. A proper definition from those already analyzed would be the following: competitiveness is the ability of an organized system of individuals to generate quality goods or services, at minimal costs, that are capable of being consumed in the market (local, regional, national or foreign), in order to achieve an economic and social benefit.

## Method

In this analytical-exploratory research, a qualitative methodology was used. First, documentary information on studies of similar cases was sought, and subsequently Internet pages of agencies such as the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics (Inegi), the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (Coneval), the National Population Council (Conapo), Sagarpa and the Secretariat for Social Development (Sedesol), in order to have more information on the context of the town through general socioeconomic data, statistics and maps.

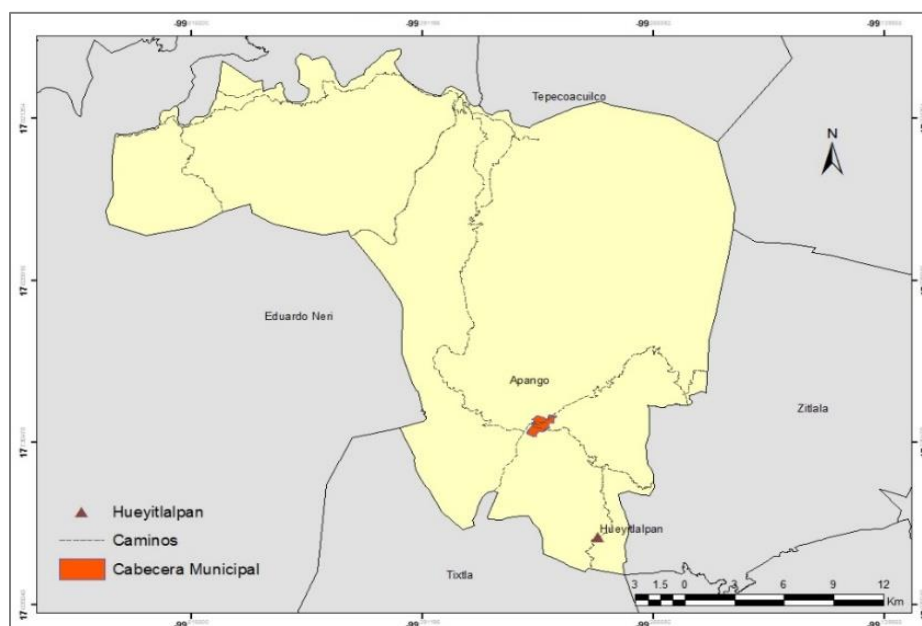


The fieldwork had two phases. The first consisted of conducting tours in the community for observation, in order to analyze the environment of the local inhabitants and the beekeeping company. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted; The first of them was carried out with one of the partners of the beekeeping company and in charge of the production plant, then eight more interviews were carried out with inhabitants of the town of Hueytlalpan. There was also an interview with the now ex-commissioner to learn about historical aspects and general data of the inhabitants of said community.

Hueytlalpan, in contrast to its meaning in Nahuatl, which is 'big land', is a small territory located in the area where the Mexica culture settled in the state of Guerrero; It is the entrance to the municipality of Mártir de Cuilapan coming from Almolonga; It is surrounded by great elevations that emerge from the Sierra Madre del Sur, which makes it a quiet place, with a pleasant, cool climate and fertile land, which allows the main livelihood of those who inhabit it: agriculture.

Hueytlalpan is, after Apango, the municipal seat, one of the most important towns in the municipality of Mártir de Cuilapan, due to its proximity to springs that supply the vital liquid to six of the towns in the municipal territory. The following map shows the location of the town where the object of study is established. In addition, the proximity it has with the city of Apango, municipal seat of the municipality, is visualized.

**Figura 1.** Ubicación de la localidad de Hueytlalpan



Fuente: Elaboración propia con base en Inegi (2009)

## Results

The Miel Tierra Grande beekeeping company has a family composition and its members are from the same locality; This means that they not only share family ties, but also identity and culture, which allows them to work together and transfer cultural values and family organization to the company. For example, being a rural family, they share values such as solidarity, cooperation, communication and respect, although they maintain a hierarchical organization.

Another aspect observed was that decision-making is guided by a religious-type behavioral doctrine. In this case, of the evangelical religion, which has among its principles the value of work, sacrifice, saving and a harmonious family relationship. These cultural characteristics are what guide their decision making.

On the other hand, their relationship with bees goes beyond seeing them only as honey producers, but they have incorporated part of their behavior into the cultural baggage of the family, such as collective work, the distribution of activities, the hierarchy in decision making, among others.

Another characteristic that influences the competitiveness of the company is the turnaround. As beekeeping is a sustainable activity, it preserves the natural environment, produces economic benefit among those who carry out the activity and a social benefit by improving the living conditions of family members and local inhabitants. With this activity, the partners of the beekeeping not only sell honey, but also sell a variety of products derived from it.

The local knowledge coming from the relationship with the territory is another characteristic that they have used in the work of the company. In addition to this, they have relied on systematized knowledge and technology to correct processes, adopt machinery, equipment and techniques in their work, thanks to which they have improved their efficiency in production and enriched their cultural background by building new knowledge that responds to their contextual interests and as a collective.

It was also observed that, although they do not have professional studies on business administration, they have been trained as they go along, since they have implemented organizational strategies for decision-making, which has allowed them to become self-sufficient and position themselves as an important company in the region.





As part of the organization of the productive activities of the family group, the division of labor is described below:

- Beekeeping. It is the main work of the family group. Honey is the main product extracted from the hive for further processing, packaging and marketing.
- Carpentry shop. In the workshop, the boxes they need to install the hives are made, but they also make boxes for sale to the public.
- Nursery of forest plants. The nursery is closely related to the first phase of beekeeping, it has the function of producing plants from the region in order to sow them in the localities where the hives are located, so that the bees always have the nectar they need within reach. it is needed to produce honey.
- Building. This area is the one in charge of carrying out all the construction, expansion and remodeling activities of the company's spaces, as well as the homes of the members of the family group.
- Agriculture and Livestock. These activities are part of the life of all the inhabitants of the area; for the family group they are activities that they have been doing for generations.

The areas in which the family group works were emerging from the interest of being self-sufficient, that is, of depending on their own work, in addition to using part of the knowledge that they had learned in the locality, such as carpentry or construction .

More than a duty, working with beekeeping is part of the life of those who started this project. There is a bond that goes beyond being just the means of family subsistence. Feelings, experiences, sacrifices and the effort they have put into keeping the business operating are involved in this bond. Also, the now partners, have grown together with the company. Although their main job was agriculture, out of necessity and to take advantage of the opportunity presented to them, they had to be open to learning about the culture of handling bees, which, from that moment, have accompanied them for more than twenty years.

Mr. Moisés reports that the population was already used to living with bees before their Africanization, but they had to adapt to the difficulties caused by the African bee and to specialize thoroughly in beekeeping. The rural family has a culture and identity that is closer to the territory, in addition to the fact that the family union is more valued, as is collective work; However, they are also influenced by the urbanization process and technological advances, so the beekeeping work they do today is far from what they did fifteen years ago;





They have technified their processes to improve quality and be in a position to compete nationally and internationally.

Although they have made their work process more technical, they have not abandoned the teachings that the bees showed them. This is how Don Moisés, one of the partners and manager of the production plant, tells it:

A bee has several jobs. She is born and her first job is to clean the royal cells and feed the larvae, that is her first job. She doesn't question, if she doesn't want to, and if she doesn't work: they kill her; if it is born defective, if it is missing a wing, if it is missing a leg: they kill it. There are no disabled people inside a hive, it sounds harsh but it is a reality (Morales, April 14, 2016, personal interview).

Mr. Moisés also related the importance of work for the bees. The bee lives its cycle by working, and to a great extent the family nucleus identifies with the work of these small insects:

After that he begins to do guardian work in the hive, for their safety, if he sees an object that moves, he goes, identifies it and if he gets aggressive he gives the alarm and they are the first to attack. When it is an adult bee, it is the one that goes out to the field and goes for nectar, it dies in the field, because usually there is no mortality in the hives, many adult bees die in the field and die at work, working (Morales, 14 de abril de 2016, entrevista personal).

This knowledge about the work of bees is a characteristic that as beekeepers adopt, complements their cultural values and strengthens their identity; It is no longer just the knowledge they had when they worked only as farmers, but now they have combined the knowledge about the life cycle of bees in the recreation of their identity.

## Discussion

During the course of the investigation, some difficulties arose derived from the problem of insecurity that exists in the state of Guerrero, particularly in the highway section from Chilpancingo to Tixtla, this being the access road to the municipality of Mártir de Cuilapan; The socio-political situation of the municipality also generated roadblocks in the main access roads to it, as a result of the population's disagreements with the city council authorities. These events prevented the fieldwork outlined in the town of Hueyitalpan from



being carried out on several occasions. However, the strength of the research lies in the study of a rural company that has been in the beekeeping industry for several years and that maintains its family structure as the basis of its organization.

At the end of the study and analysis of the case of the beekeeping company Miel Tierra Grande, it was identified that due to its size in terms of production and its impact on the central region of the state of Guerrero, it is an economically and socially competitive company, since it satisfies part of the demand of the local market and exports abroad through an intermediary, and the sociocultural characteristics that were identified were the type of religion they profess, the strength of family relationships and knowledge of their environment, which influence in building that competitiveness.

With the current constitution of the family business, the brothers are in charge of the organization who have divided the work by areas, the main one being beekeeping, then there are: the carpentry workshop, where the beehives and some other tools are made. ; the forest plant nursery, livestock and finally the agriculture area.

## Conclusions

Religion is considered the most important element in the construction of their work style, organization and life, it is a form of cultural expression and it is expressed in the behavior and way of thinking of people.

Religion as a cultural expression marks the activities carried out by those who profess it, since it influences the behavior of individuals in daily life, including the economic aspect, as is the case of evangelicals.,<sup>1</sup> who are faithful to what is written in the Bible, as Weber (1994) points out in his work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*; the Protestants<sup>2</sup> they highly value work, sacrifice, saving, family, and making wealth in the name of God. Unlike Catholics, who are conformists and prefer safety, Evangelicals are prone to risk; While Catholics emphasize confession of their sins for later forgiveness, Protestants focus on conduct: work, honesty, no alcohol, no parties, yes family, yes savings.

The Bible has been a guide for the whole family, it has helped them to carry out the work within the organization. This is a compelling reason why the family group dedicates a

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<sup>1</sup> Se hace hincapié en la religión evangélica porque es la religión que practica la familia que dirige la organización apicultora.

<sup>2</sup> Weber hace referencia a las religiones que se separaron del catolicismo, y pone especial énfasis al calvinismo ya que lo consideraba más influyente para el modo de vida de la clase burguesa.



lot of time to work, of those who profess the same faith orients them for the work of the group. The family group is convinced that if they did not abide by this premise they would not have achieved what they are now as a company.

Currently, the family business is certified in Good Production Practices, as well as in Good Management and Packaging Practices for Honey and the certification of Queen Bees and Bee Nuclei. Thanks to the latter, they not only breed for their own use, but also sell queen bees, bees and nuclei, as well as boxes for hives to the general public. These certifications will allow them to do business with larger distribution chains and will also allow them to export their honey under their own brand.

After having invested in their star product, honey, for three years to date they have been working on the large-scale production of pollen, the second product that generates the most profits, for export purposes through an intermediary that is located in the state of Querétaro. In the same field of beekeeping, they ventured into the sale of equipment for handling bees, such as gloves, smokers, veils, suits, among others, although they are not producers of these materials, they make them available to their customers.

After having analyzed the beekeeping company, it can be concluded that it is a competitive company both economically and socially, and that factors such as culture, identity, knowledge and family relationship have influenced the way in which they have been organized, which has been key to position itself as one of the most important rural companies in the region, not only because of the sales obtained locally, but also because of its importance at the national and international level.



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