



**CENTRAL  
DE ABASTO**

FIDEICOMISO PARA LA CONSTRUCCIÓN  
Y OPERACIÓN DE LA CENTRAL DE ABASTO  
DE LA CIUDAD DE MÉXICO



# **TRUST FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF THE WHOLESALE MARKET OF MEXICO CITY**

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND  
FOOD SUPPLY IN MÉXICO CITY**

Almost 600 years ago, the legendary market “The great Tlanechicoloyan” was founded, which is the historical background of the wholesale market of México City, where, as in the old square, the great variety of products that change hands in it, come from many corners of México.



UNKNOWN AUTHOR  
MAIN SQUARE OF MEXICO CITY AT THE  
END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

## Historical Background

In 1427 the market of Tlatelolco achieved an unlimited catalog of products never seen before in the basin of Mexico. The great growth of the sister cities triggered a war in which Tenochtitlan was victorious and the market went into his hands.

The tlahtoani Axayacatl restructured his organization, established the Petlascalco, which was the administrative unit of the market that would regulate the flood of goods and built the great Tlanechicoloyan, a place where things are gathered, storing food, objects, animals and materials from all over the empire and even more distant regions.

However, the prehispanic market of Tlatelolco, so praised by the Spaniards who recognized its good organization and variety of its products, was replaced by the market of San Juan, located next to the Alameda, where the aztecs would sell their fruits and vegetables. It stopped working as a result of the flooding of the city in 1629 and therefore many traders migrated to the main square in the Viceregal Palace, which is today the National Palace.

The visitor José de Gálvez chose the El Volador Square (Plaza del Volador) where currently the Supreme Court is located, to establish a market that began operating in the late eighteenth century, and it was managed through a bylaw issued in November 1791, which considered this market as the most important one. In other words, similar to what today is The Wholesale Market of México City, where the satellite markets of the city were supplied. Fruits, vegetables, groceries, seeds, spices, meat, live and dead birds, shoes and blacksmithing items were sold in their stalls.

This market would supply other flea markets located in different parts of the city as Iturbide, Jesús, Santa Catarina y Cruz del Factor; Vizcaínas, la Paja, Concepción and Loreto, among others.

In the night of 17 March 1870, a fire destroyed the market; the fire only left on foot the brick pillars that supported the roofs of the stalls. And after it was remodeled, the market worked until 1914; that is to say, El Volador



CASIMIRO CASTRO AND J. CAMPILLO  
 Roldan Street and its landing  
 Colored lithograph, (1869)  
 24 x 33 cm.  
 COL. ROBERTO Y VERA MAYER

saw the end of the Viceroyalty, the Independent México, the Second Empire, the Restored Republic and the beginning of the Mexican Revolution.

México City had five markets until 1860: Antigua del Volador, located next to the Plaza Mayor, where they usually performed the prehispanic ritual El Volador, from where it takes its name; Iturbide, located in the old square of San Juan, which opened on January 27, 1850; the Jesus, established in 1857; the Santa Catarina, located in the square of the same name and which began operating in 1853, and the El Baratillo then the market par excellence and the most visited because the prices of their goods were the most accessible for most people.

The arrival of the railroad in the second half of the twentieth century in Mexico allowed the mobility of a large number of inputs and perishable food from distant places.

The Mexican National Railroad (Ferrocarril Nacional Mexicano), the Interoceanic Railroad (Ferrocarril Interoceánico), the Southern Mexican Railroad (Ferrocarril Mexicano del Sur) and the Railroad of Tehuantepec (Ferrocarril de Tehuantepec) would carry and distribute domestic and

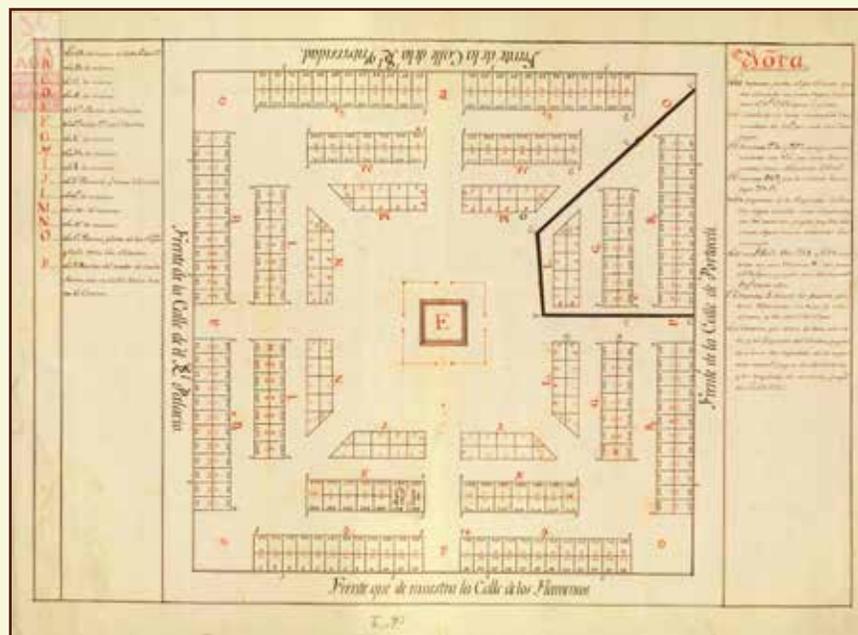
foreign goods throughout the country, allowing different regions to stock up on products that were not produced in their region. One of the important points of supply in the center of the country was, undoubtedly, Mexico City.

The La Merced Market began operating as a new marketplace in 1863 in the area of the demolished church and convent of La Merced, but it was not until 1880 when it opened.

Soon it gained a boom in supply, because most vendors who were in the market El Volador took refuge there.

In 1900 there were twelve markets located in various parts of the city, including La Merced, San Juan or Iturbide, San Cosme, Martinez de la Torre, in the Guerrero colony; and El Baratillo in Tepito. The first two concentrated the majority of tenants of the city, not only inside but in the crowded thoroughfares around.

The remaining three became referents of business: San Cosme west, Martinez de la Torre near the railway station of Buenavista, and Tepito to the northeast, near major roads leading to the north, especially the Villa de Guadalupe and Veracruz.



UNKNOWN AUTHOR  
 First known map of the market El Volador,  
 ca. 1790



CIF.  
San Juan Market



CIF.  
La Lagunilla Market, 1922



CASASOLA FUND.  
General appearance of the La Merced Market. 1927

In 1903, the markets of La Merced and San Juan had the highest number of tenants in the city: 618 seats, unlike the total of only 561 positions of seven markets that followed them in importance.

The proximity of La Merced with the main ports of the Canal de la Viga (La Viga Channel) made it become a privileged place for storage of vegetables, cereals, meat, game, eggs, dairy, fish and fruits mainly. From there the supply to other markets of the city in the late nineteenth century was distributed.

La Merced, once restored, was inaugurated by Don

Porfirio Diaz in 1890. It was considered the quintessential big market for seven decades, and it witnessed the modernization and urban growth. From 700,000 dwellers in 1900, the population of México City grew up to one and a half million people in 1930 and up to three million in 1950.

In the fifties the government began to replace numerous markets, which were wooden and sheet metal barracks, by modern buildings. The market La Merced began its boom as introducer center and wholesale distributor since colonial times, for there were the jetties to receive the merchandise that came from the waterway.

In 1957 an ambitious project was developed involving the demolition of houses in several blocks located to the south and east of the La Merced, in the neighborhood of Santo Tomás de la Palma

The project included a series of seven retailer markets, large decks made of steel and cement, adequate ventilation and, in general, significantly improved sanitary conditions.

Two of those units were for fruit, vegetables and edibles,



FONDO CASASOLA.  
Inside the La Merced Market  
in the early sixties



and two to clothing, footwear and other goods; while the remaining three for household items, flowers, candy and foods. The old market disappeared completely, granting their land to a garden.

On the other hand, and as part of the same improvement program, the Jamaica market was built, where, in previous decades, the wholesale trading of fruits, vegetables and flowers had been concentrated.

Also, during the fifties, the national products began to engage in an unprecedented speculative auction. The storing raised the price control of supply and demand, and the direct producers became the hoarders of distribution

Furthermore, the excessive population growth in the twentieth century caused serious problems of health, safety and vehicle congestions in the area, which provoked severe delays in the loading and unloading of products. Therefore, it was urgent to look for a better option.



In July 1969, it became public knowledge that the government was developing a project to create a new supply center far from downtown and strategically located, in which the La Merced stall holders would provide part of the capital for its construction.

# The Wholesale Market of México City emerges



Ground and foundation of the Wholesale Market, 1980.  
Pictures: Archive Arq. Abraham Zabludovsky

The initiative was formalized on April 17, 1970, when the construction of the Wholesale Market of México City was declared of public interest.

At the same time, an area of approximately 324 hectares was expropriated; this area was known as the Chinamperías Zone, and it was located in the Iztapalapa Delegation. The expropriated land bordered on the north by The Santa Cruz Meyehualco garbage dumps, with the Plutarco Elías Calles Avenue and the Rio Frio Railroad; to the east, its boundaries were marked by Calle 71; to the south by Calzada Ermita Iztapalapa, and to the west by the Calzada de la Viga.

The next legal step occurred on September 17, 1970, when such land was desincorporated from the public domain, authorizing the then Department of the Federal District to carry out the actions for the construction of a Wholesale Market.

Then, this body of government was empowered to hold a trust agreement and to begin development work in the

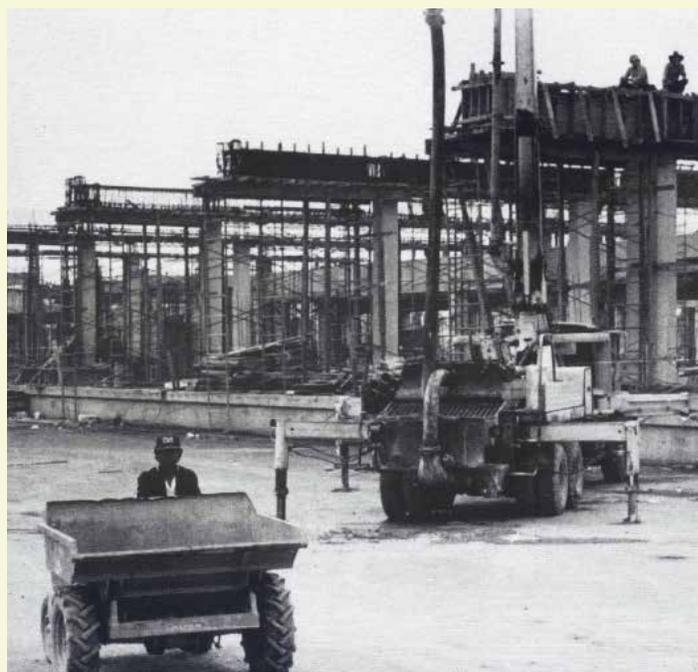
area, including the piping of Río Churubusco and the construction of an avenue on its surface and a collector in the Canal de Tezontle channel and extending the Calzada del Moral avenue.

For some years this project was dormant, until January, 1976, when it was decided to resume the project. The simultaneous construction involving two properties, adding up to more than 800 hectares was proposed: the one





ber of stalls that would be built and the surface of each one. In view of the fact that the selected area was a typical “chinampería”, which is an elevated area with mud and organic matter founded on a swampy soil, the soil mechanics studies determined to build on compensated foundations, and, in the northern zone, to back them up with friction piles (cohesion piles).



## The Huge Construction Work starts

In March, 1981 the building works began, which were assigned to the company Consorcio CEDA, S.A, which arose from the association of five construction companies.

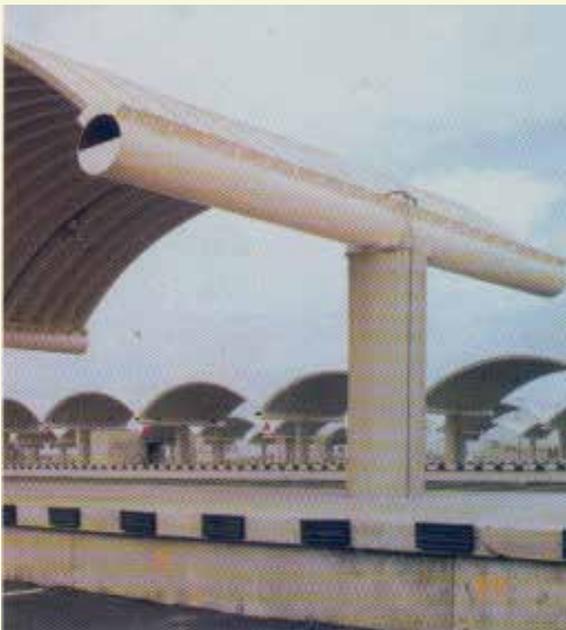
The construction was integrated with 14 areas arranged to urbanize two million square meters, and the other buildings would be built in another six hundred thousand additional square meters. The work was carried out in 14 months and the original cost of the work was estimated at 16 billion pesos, which was equivalent to half the cost of the purchase of the land.



In January, 1982 the progress of the work showed 3 thousand and 5 hundred people working. The foundation was achieved through an excavation of 399 thousand and 692 square meters, using 17,000 tons of steel, 86 thousand square meters of concrete, 77 thousand square meters of slab lid and 14,000 meters of drainage pipe.

Because the land where the Wholesale Market was being built had been formed on chinampas, meaning wet and muddy soils, previously covered by the Texcoco Lake, they decided to use a two meter deep foundation, on which they layed a concrete slab which would act as a huge barge that would provide for some flotation on that peculiar kind of soil and, at the same time, bear the weight of the stalls. Also, a system of hydraulic jacks capable to cushion the effects of any earthquake was installed.

1,741 wineries were built, of which 1,437 were designed for fruits and vegetables and 304 for groceries and food. Both types of stalls were designed with a double road: one for cargo trucks with parking space and the second,



consisting of a platform for loading and unloading cargo. Proper spaces were included for storage and maturation and a central corridor for display, buying and selling and haulage. The roofs of the corridors of complementary services were conditioned as parking for cars, which allowed a double function

for these buildings. The magnitude of this work made it necessary to use 26 excavators, 112 motor graders, 35 concrete pumps, three and a half million cubic meters of falsework to roofing the industrial ships, 207 vibrators, 45 cranes (30 to 50 tons each), 160 dump trucks, 72 tank trucks, 68 forklifts, 86 steamrollers, 4 spray bar tank trucks, and above all, during the last stage, the labor and effort of 20,000 workers.



# Preparations for the Transfer and the Grand Opening

November 21, 1982 was the scheduled date for moving the traders from La Merced market to the new Wholesale Market.

The maneuvers began at 12 midnight of that day, and, at that precise moment, an operation was carried out all around the La Merced Market in order to prevent the passage of those trucks that would have supplied to the wholesalers. Thanks to these actions, it was possible to relocate almost 2,900 owners of the warehouses with such effectiveness, that by 9 a.m. on Sunday the 22nd, 60% of the wholesale traders were already settled in the Wholesale Market (Central de Abasto).

The commercial activity began in the areas of Fruits and Vegetables, Groceries and Canned Products, Auctions and Product Producers, and Packaging and Containers. In respect to wholesale and half-wholesale, the first products which were originally approved for sale were Vegetables, Greenery; as well as Groceries, Grains and Seeds, Poultry, Livestock, Fish, Dairy products and other. Because the grocery area lacked ceilings and curtains on the opening date, some traders of such sector did not move until January, 1983.

The opening of the new Wholesale Market (Central de Abasto) was held on 22 November, 1982 by



the President of the Republic, José López Portillo and the ruler of the Federal District, Carlos Hank González.

Two months after its opening day, the Wholesale Market (Central de Abasto) recorded the selling of 13,000 tons of food daily which amounted to more than 400 million pesos and a flow of 80,000 people

The Wholesale Market (Central de Abasto) is located at the intersection of the following avenues: Axis 5, 6 and 8 South (Ejes 5, 6 y 8 Sur); Axis 3 and 5 East (Ejes 3 y 5 Oriente); the General Ignacio Zaragoza Road (Calzada General Ignacio Zaragoza); the Internal Circuit Río Churubusco Avenue (Circuito Interior Avenida Río Churubusco) and the Apatlaco and Aculco Subway Stations of the Subway Transportation System.

Nearby it is the Sports City (Ciudad Deportiva), the Sports Palace (Palacio de los Deportes) and the Sun Forum (Foro Sol), as well as the borough headquarters of Iztapalapa and Iztacalco.