

National Immigrant Farming Initiative

Latino Farmworker to Farmer Forum

Hosted by the Agriculture and Land Based Training
Association (ALBA) ~ Salinas, California

July 28-30, 2004

Meeting Notes

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Latino Farmworker to Farmer Forum - Meeting Notes
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** Please note that the information in this document was not fact checked. The information in the following pages is presented as it was recorded during the meeting.*

Latino Farmworker to Farmer Forum Introduction and Background

Purpose and Rationale of the Latino Farmworker to Farmer Forum

Latinos are the most rapidly increasing demographic sector of farmers. According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, the number of Hispanic farmers has increased by 50% over the past five years. Farmworkers in this country are predominantly Latino and many are applying skills and experience developed as farmworkers to start their own farm businesses. While the rapid increase in the numbers of Latino farmers is indicative of the passion, experience, and motivation necessary to start a new farm business, this population also faces particular challenges to running financially viable farm businesses and being successful farmers.

The Latino Farmworker to Farmer Forum meeting brought together Latino farmers, representatives from agencies that support transitioning Latino farmers, representatives of farmworker organizations, and others to share insights into the particular opportunities and challenges associated with this new farmer group. The meeting provided a valuable opportunity to explore the current situation and landscape, and generated information critical to the National Immigrant Farming Initiative (NIFI) and other agencies' efforts to increase Latino farmers' visibility, access resources, and support in creating profitable and sustainable farm businesses.

Purpose of This Document

This report seeks to document and share the discussion and information gathered at the meeting. Beyond aiding NIFI's strategies for support transitioning Latino farmers, we hope these meeting notes will inform current and future work with Latino farmers, help document the broader needs and opportunities associated with Latino farmers, and prompt further discussions, research and funding. Over the next few months, we will synthesize and analyze this information to share and help determine next steps for NIFI.

Methodology Used for Gathering Information and Compiling Notes

The information contained in this report was gathered through small group discussions focused on nine separate topic areas. At two points during the meeting, we broke the larger group into several smaller groups. Each group focused on a different topic area, with about an hour and forty-five minutes for discussion. Groups had a moderator and a designated recorder. After the small group discussions, we reconvened as a full group and each small group shared a summary of their conversation. Participants wrote any additional comments pertaining to that topic area, and these comments were added to that small group's notes. At the close of the meeting, each person identified a next step that s/he could take to following the meeting. A full agenda for the meeting is provided on page 30 of this document.

The following pages were compiled from the notes captured by the recorders for each small group, along with the additional comments written during the full group sharing. In some cases, participants and recorders were contacted after the meeting to clarify or fact-check a particular statement. Some very light editing was done to make the notes easier to read.

Meeting Attendees

The meeting involved thirty-two participants total, representing 20 organizations, groups, and institutions. Five attendees were farmers. Other attendees represented grassroots farmer organizations, nonprofits and foundations that work with farmers, Extension and other university programs, and USDA. Four of the agencies represented focus specifically on farmworkers (in some cases in addition to farmers). Attendees came from states in the following break down: fourteen from California, six from Washington, two from Michigan, two from New York, one from Missouri, one from Texas, one from Florida, one from Arkansas, one from Georgia, one from Massachusetts, and one from Washington D.C. The meeting facilitator was from Ohio. A full list of contributors and attendees is appended to these notes.

1. Access to Land

Land - Current Situation

California

- In California, farmers rent land at the cost of buying land in Washington.
- In the Salinas area, small farmers can't purchase land, they continue to rent each year.
- The majority here rent, those that can buy farms already have houses.
- One example of a farmer here, he started with a small farm, and bought another, and another, and now he has three farms that he is renting out to earn money.
- People who buy land have access to credit and those who've been struggling still rent.
- If we don't speak English, we can't access credit, and you can't get anything without credit.
- To get credit, you can't have debt and you need to have a house or other assets.
- It was a dream of AMO Organics to buy a large tract of land and divide it between ten or twelve families.
- If we rent land, we are focused on exploiting the land, not in investing a lot of money in the soils.
- Agribusinesses here have a lot of power to rent land, and they increase the cost of renting land by offering more money to rent land. By doing this they can take away the contracts of other farmers.
- To buy land here, you must present your papers/documents.
- We have been involved in organic vegetable production for 5 years. Here at ALBA renting land is cheaper. We are at the Rural Development Center (of ALBA) because the price is low. If I wanted to rent land for strawberries outside of here, it would cost \$1,400-\$2,000 per acre per year. Purchasing land would cost \$40,000 to \$50,000 per acre. I have to rent land in a cooler climate for strawberries, and in a hotter climate for vegetables. It's hard to rent multiple plots of land. I am renting some land in San Benedito for \$350/acre, but it is not the same climate. I am experimenting with producing strawberries there but it is not as productive. I need several years to improve my credit. The only change that will happen is within us – we have to buy a house to get credit, and to get a farm. After 10 years we still don't have a farm, which is our ultimate goal. My wife can buy land because she is a resident. The only change is going to happen with the farmers. My wife was working to have a W2 form, but now we have changed our plan and we are both working on the farm to improve our production.
- For the bank, if you want to buy land without a house they are not interested.
- In order to get a loan, you must have a marketing plan.
- The bank isn't interested in people who make a living from farming; they prefer people who have regular or 'normal' jobs. For this reason you have to go to FSA to take out a loan to buy a farm.
- For a direct loan from FSA you can take out 200,000.
- You can rent land without papers, but you can't take our federal loans, or bank loans.
- USDA helps the conventional farmers more than organic farmers.
- It's hard to have the energy to continue farming as you get older.
- There is competition for land from hobby farmers.

- Salinas is a niche area because the climate is very desirable and you can produce many crops here, and that's why it's so expensive.
- Often one person has a contract with a land owner, and then has verbal subleases with four or five families who rent land there. This is very risky – for example, someone could leave the land without paying the rent.
- In California rental contracts tend to be for one year, it gets more expensive every year because people often offer more money, competing for land.
- Corporate farms are growing, making it inconvenient for the owner to give you a long term lease, because of competition for land it gets much more expensive every year.
- There are some land owners who are NGO's, like land trusts, that don't have to earn money with rent. Sometimes they rent out land.
- In general, the majority of farmers who don't speak English don't understand the contracts that they are signing.
- 70% of the land in California is federal land.

Washington State

- Access to land is difficult because of the cost, but there is a lot of land available. Money is the principal problem.
- In the central region where farmers produce apples and crops, it can cost \$3,000-\$10,000 per acre to buy land.
- The Center for Latino Farmers supports farmers to take out federal loans to buy land.
- There are farms of all sizes.
- If you buy land without fruit, you'd have to wait five years for new trees to produce fruit, so farmers buy land with mature fruit trees.
- Those who are successful try out new varieties and maintain everything well.
- Many landowners no longer want to farm, so they are renting to their neighbors or other farmers who then only have to pay the taxes on the land.
- If you don't manage the farm as a business, you won't be successful.
- You have to change from thinking of farming as a job to thinking of it as a business.

Land - Strategies

- You need an organization that helps farmers fill out papers at USDA, like the Center for Latino Farmers.
- The personnel from federal programs should be bilingual, provide information in Spanish, and should understand agriculture.
- There is a need for land trusts that buy land to sell it to small limited resource and new farmers. Nature conservancy has done this (bought land with farmers). We also need to participate on the board of directors of open space districts, county land, and land trusts. We should also create agricultural industry parks where the city pays taxes and helps small farmers sell their products in farmers markets and to other institutions.
- Use USDA programs. A place like the Center for Latino Farmers has someone helping to guide people in filling out forms, and learning how to access the forms.
- There needs to be personnel on days that farmers are available who speak Spanish.

- Installment Sales, where credit comes from the previous owner, can be an advantage for sellers. Also, if someone defaults on a loan from FSA, FSA has to offer the land to small farmers for six months after the default.
- The New Farmer Development Project in New York negotiates contracts between land owners and farmers with the help of pro bono lawyers.
- Each is the architect of one's own destiny. Farmers are where the solution lies – they have to develop their own credit.
- Another strategy for renting land is forming a corporation.

Land - Challenges

- Access to Credit
- In California there aren't many small farms that you can rent, there are a lot of big farms that owners don't want to divide between multiple farmers, so it's hard for small and mid-size farmers to rent land.
- The land trusts don't usually rent to small farmers if they don't have much machinery or experience or power. They don't want to rent to small farmers, instead focusing on people who have a lot of capital. (Depending on their vision.)
- It is hard for a family to survive off of just 2 acres. Five acres is good for direct selling.
- Water access is also an issue.
- Bank needs a W2 form.
- USDA isn't going to seek you out – there is a lot of bureaucracy
- In Washington many people rent and buy land who don't have papers. If you are undocumented you can't go to USDA.
- In California you have to possess documents to purchase land – due to change in security – now they ask for two pieces of identification from California to buy anything.
- It is hard for Latino farmers to read contracts. They sign contracts that they don't understand because this is their only choice/option.
- When approaching a bank for a loan, if you want to buy land without a house they are not interested.
- Discrimination is an issue – when I go to a federal agency, they see my face and then say you know what, let me attend to this other person first. Also, for a family to live, one or two acres aren't sufficient. The only alternative is to form credit little by little and my dream is to have my land and farm and to work – the American Dream.
- In summary, obstacles to access land are credit, language, no information (in Spanish), bureaucracy and discrimination. Producers need to start building a credit history. Long term access to land is very difficult.

Land - Additional Comments from the Rest of the Group

- There should be some kind of exchange of information of where land may be more affordable and available. Is this available?
- \$ (Cost of land)-from east to west, from north to south, prices are very different...the quality of the land/soil varies → types of operations
- How much per acre – 2,000-3,000/acre? Maybe some of you should come to Washington's Columbia Basin where you can rent irrigated land for as little as 150/acre!!

2. Resources for Farming

Resources - Current Situation

- In Arkansas, Tyson offers contracts to farmers in which they provide the animals, the feed, and the technical assistance. The farmer takes care of the animals but their profits are just enough to survive. The farmers are responsible for infrastructure and the care of the animals. They have many family problems because the parents are working all the time. The land in this part of Arkansas is poor quality and is not suitable for growing vegetable crops. It's only good for poultry and livestock. Farmers don't have access to capital. They can buy land for \$400 to \$600 per acre. Some Mexican people are trying to raise goats and sheep.
- In Arkansas, the other side of the Delta is very good for farming but it's mainly controlled by African American groups.
- Some farmers don't have bank accounts and don't know how to start credit history.
- In California, ALBA provides an example of farmland available for lease that offers some advantages to beginning farmers, such as six months of classes and a cooperative marketing.
- Farmers who go through ALBA's program don't have to buy land to start, but when they finish their program are unable to acquire land because it is very expensive.
- In Florida, people use the "Second Crops" practice, where big companies come and get all of the best crops, and then farmworkers come afterwards and harvest what is left and sell that.
- Some African American farmers (more than Cuban and white farmers) are helping Hispanic farmworkers try to get into farming.
- It is hard to market to big companies such as Krueger and Wal-Mart because they have rules and regulations that are too strict and not feasible for the new and small farmers.
- There is a diversity of needs in different geographical regions. (WA,CA,MI,FL,NY)
- In Florida, Cubans are the number one minority land owners, and then African Americans.

Resources - Strategies

- Extension systems should be more involved in immigrant farmer issues. For example, in Florida, extension should offer more technical assistance to the immigrant farmers.
- It is necessary to have a needs assessment of new immigrants to work with them in the transition from the factory/farm work to become independent farmers.
- We need to build awareness in all of those who are involved in this movement.
- Organizations like Opening Doors in Sacramento, CA are trying to develop marketing strategies to for example open commercial kitchen (as an) incubator that can benefit the farmers at ALBA.
- Small Business Administration has a program that offers business classes with the loans.
- There is an IDA savings program available to Latinos (as long as they meet certain criteria). For each dollar they receive two more to put into their funds.
- VIDA is a program in California that offers loans and business plan classes. They usually help people buy homes. Maybe if we make them aware of what's going on in the farming movement, they would help people buy farms, too.
- Department of Defense program.
- Heifer can help immigrant farmers to start with livestock, seeds, and trainings.
- USDA/RMA.
- Farm organizations.

- Churches and refugee organizations could be more involved with immigrant farmers.
- ALDC (Arkansas Land Development Corporation) like ALBA is an incubator program.

Resources - Challenges/Needs

- Access to credit is a challenge.
- Farmers don't always know about agencies who want to provide assistance to them.
- There is a need for clear information/statistics to develop marketing.
- First generation of immigrant farmers wants to farm but the second generation is not that interested.
- Farmers have the need to understand how NGOs and government institutions work.
- As for programs to help farmworkers start farms there is not broad availability around the country. Farmworker organizations are not connecting with the community or each other, with USDA agencies, or extension, around this issue.
- Farmerworkers are not interested in becoming involved in being leaders and in being involved in policy issues and the larger movement, perhaps because of limited time and language barriers.
- In Arkansas, big business does not allow the small farmer to get established, for example companies like Tyson.
- California has an advantage in comparison with many states because they have had more time fighting for their rights.

Additional Comments from the Rest of the Group

- Resources should be allocated where they are needed. Find or lose those resources. Is this available?

3. Farming Goals

Current Situation, Challenges, and Strategies

- Marketing is a main factor. If I sell fruit at \$1/lb and make \$25,000 that will make me want to get bigger because I know I can make money. But if I produce blueberries and sell to a warehouse, then it's different. But if I had good storage and packing I could get more money, so that is a good start for a goal - to get a cooler in order to improve storage.
- As far as goals, you need to look not only at growing crops but also at the whole process of farming. So there has to be an understanding and training around the whole process – including a way to sell and market products as well.
- Most farmers in the United States make little money. The USDA definition for a farmer is earning \$1,000 – not much money – there are scales involved in farming. Most farmers are not in it to make money. Maybe new entrants have a goal to make money. (enterprise focus)
- Values - the main reasons for Chicanos is for independence, to get a better life for oneself and for the family. You get into it, your family is in it, you can work when you want, get free time if you want, and have independence.
- According to a USA Today article, people are buying small operations to get out of the city.
- This is one of main reasons we moved out of Chicago. We had two kids, ages 10 and 3. The first time we went to Michigan my son enjoyed it - he seemed free to run around. My wife had a cousin in Michigan and we went there and saw room for kids. I knew people make money in blueberries - this was a reason we moved, and also to get out of the city. I had worked at this place for 15 years, I was tired of it. I worked at a restaurant, with the same routine everyday. You get tired, it's hard work. I wanted to get out of it and try something different. I wanted to buy a farm, although I had no experience in blueberries, they are not same as vegetables in Mexico. To think this out I spoke mostly with my family. My wife's family had bought a farm the year before - but just for a place to go on weekends - not to farm per se. It had some blueberries - my father-in-law who lived in Mexico decided he liked it and stayed in Michigan and started to take care of the farm.
- The support system that exists is part of what helps farmers make a decision to go forward.
- Yes, my in-laws are already growing blueberries, they give me details about how to do it.
- I think people don't just go into farming to farm – they also need also to make a living. But what does it mean to "make a living"?
- My wife and I talked about how to do this, deciding that she would work, but there was illness in the family and she had to stop working and I had to stop for a while. 2002 was the hardest year. We had no money or income, it was a disaster. Things have gotten better, now I work as a part-time bus driver and a part-time farmer.
- Farmers often do off-farm work. Farming alone does not support them.
- Health insurance is also a factor. Farmers take jobs to get insurance for their families and then also farm.
- Vegetable farming is more intensive here and year round. Seasonality offers opportunities for other employment. It's not as easy here.
- Access to land is a big motivator. White farmers are getting out of farming and selling to their workers. The farmworkers know the land, if many farmworkers can buy land they will go in a minute - owning land is a key - they want to say "This is my land".
- Renting is a dependence, there are trust issues and you are not really independent.

- Even if its one acre or five acres or ten acres. They will buy the land even if the house is falling down - they OWN the land with pride.
- Mexican farmers start farms on their own. The majority already did it on their own - that is one of the challenges. They have no plan and they are not aware of USDA services such as loans or any of this.
- In Michigan, Extension offered a Blueberry IPM program. This helped me in many ways to learn production. Many farmers have a big language barrier. They do not speak English, but they can't do anything else (other than farming) because of the language barrier.
- We provide training in Spanish on how to do a farm and home (finance) plan. We talk about crop insurance - that is very important even if the farmers think they cannot afford it initially. Providing training in Spanish is very efficient. We have set up a financial management program as well. We have made them aware of Schedule F, record keeping factors - they understand what that means. This is very important to understand credit, finance, loan fees, etc. We prepare them for FSA.
- Marketing is a big issue. In my case, we get paid what they want to pay us, and I have to sell it or lose it.
- If farmers had post-harvest facilities and storage capacity they could compete better.
- Different marketing strategies are important to understand.
- How important would it be to explain farming in the United States at the onset? I think there is a need to reflect the difference between a home country and the United States.
- But it's different with farm workers, since they've been here for many years.
- Large farmers have big conferences that they go to. Our farmers cannot relate to this - there should be workshops in Spanish to talk about their level of farming. It is vital to do this in their own language.
- Language barrier is a main reason farmers will not go - and they are shy and reticent.
- Maybe large farm conferences should be made more accessible.
- Should immigrant farmers see these conferences as opportunities?
- I do not think anyone should farm with large conventional farms, but if you want to you should have that opportunity.
- There are conflicting goals with agriculture in general.
- The Latino farmers we work with want to farm because they are proud to work with what they can do - they want more land so as to survive, to be eligible for an FSA loan, etc., but are comfortable with what they have.
- But in Texas - they have a whole other perspective on how to farm. And the farmers want to have their information in English.
- What about English?
- The issue is more about access to services. If they prefer Spanish that should be OK, and they don't need to know English.
- It would be hard to do a CSA without English.
- But not in our area - English folks are learning Spanish. Farming is complicated already and it is hard to do translation as part of training programs.
- We are all urged to learn the language, but most of us have a second job - so after a long day at the job you want to farm, not go to school.
- If you go to any country you have to learn their language - but we in our positions are responsible to see that people get their information in their language.

- Sometimes people bring their kids to sessions to help translate.
- But that doesn't always work.
- We should have mentors. Farmers know how to grow, but not the other factors.
- A support system - farmers listening to farmers.
- Especially basics - not at a high level (of sophistication).
- Education and age are factors in learning.
- At the San Antonio conference, workshops were not in Spanish, so the farmers were not focusing. Finally one of the farmers got up and started to talk how he got started – it had nothing to do with the discussion about FSA loans. He was talking in Spanish. I stood up and said "This is the problem – he has not had an opportunity to participate."
- We need actual farmers need to be there at these meetings.
- We struggle to bring in farmers into the process (of planning and implementing programs and services).
- What about content for these training programs?
- It is important to tailor content to a community – it cannot be generic to everybody.
- I agree - one shoe does not fit all. Materials need to be short and simple. Strong financial management information is important from the outset.
- And to explain farming options - whether to do it as a part-time or a full-time occupation for example.
- Yes, there is a full range of options, and most farmers start by wanting to make a living out of farming.
- We need to empower the farm owners to show these farmers how to become independent.
- I agree with that, otherwise the farmers never get weaned from a program. We need to tell people the options with moving on, so that they are able to transition into training programs and then transition out to farm on their own.
- Especially in cooperatives. People need to know the next steps - what is next for them once they get a cooperative going?
- And what it takes successfully run a cooperative - the cost, equipment, and other resources needed to make it work well.
- Business planning is part of goal setting.
- If lifestyle is one of your reasons, you need to understand the opportunity costs of that decision and understand this is an acceptable choice of tradeoffs between lifestyles and money.

Summary:

- There is not a lot of formal goals setting or related assistance going on
- Way of life is more important in the decision to farm than making money - being independent, for example.
- There is a lack of good understanding of what is going on from both sides (service providers and farmers).
- It is important to invest the farmers in the process - engage and empower them in developing the programs and services they want and need.
- Language is an issue - responding in the language of the farmer - in Spanish - is much more efficient and effective.

- Farmers with experience should be mentors in this process and become a support system as well.
- Financial training is a key element - understanding the economics and business of agriculture.

Farming Goals - Additional Comments from the Rest of the Group

- Whole farm planning – how should it be included within family operations: trying to integrate the following farming components: 1) economic; 2) family values (time, labor, etc.); 3) natural resource management (managing on-farm resources)
- Farm planning is a new concept for new immigrants.
- For new immigrants, legal status (legalization) counts a lot in determining their goals.
- *Haciendo camino al andar* - Making the road by walking - is the way that immigrant have done things in their home countries.

4. Farming Expertise and Experience

Farming Expertise - Current Situation

- FIELD has researched education and training available to farmworkers and current education levels of farmworkers in San Joaquin Valley, looking at 400 workers and 4 crops. They found that the average education level is 4-6th grade (in Mexican schools). In their view:
 - The money available for job training does not include agricultural jobs.
 - The money that is available for education requires classes to be in English, meaning there are few educational opportunities in Spanish.
 - Federal programs are available only for documented workers, thereby excluding the majority of people who need these programs.
- In Texas, bilingual education is under funded. Classes are important to success.
- Adult education classes are housed in Dept of Labor, not USDA. One strategy might be to amend the wording in the next Farm Bill to make funding available for bilingual, ag-related job training.
- In some instances alternative identification numbers may be available. For instance, registered students at community colleges can get legal identification numbers.
- How many Latino farm owners are undocumented?
- Our agricultural school employs up to 90 people during cherry harvest. When you hire these people you look at their two pieces of ID, and you have satisfied the requirements of the law. Questioning those pieces of I.D. is against the law, even if they look suspicious. But I think at least half of these people are undocumented.
- I think that there is a significant percentage of farm owners in Washington who are involved in vegetables, cherries, pears, apples, goats, etc., who are undocumented.
- In order to buy property and get the title, the law requires Social Security Number/drivers license.
- There may not be a law about showing identification when buying land in Washington. When I bought land no one asked for my documents – both when buying land from a private either with a private owner or the Small Business Administration.
- The risk and fear of losing everything because of deportation is big factor in farm ownership.
- Organizations can support people to overcome fear and risk.
- Many immigrants don't know that there are laws that can support them and they lose everything when they are deported.
- A key point is that farmers don't come to trainings because they are undocumented and fear that they can lose everything.
- INS laws are very complicated.
- Federal law recognizes tax ID numbers. For some, there are ways to get Fed Tax ID (e.g. bank loan).
- In college applications, if you don't mark that you're not US citizen then the application goes forward and can get scholarships etc. If you mark that you're not a US citizen, it ends there.
- It is a problem in Texas that people apply for federal scholarships but aren't US citizens.
- The treasury department doesn't give you a social security number, but if you want to open a banking/checking account the Treasury Department gives a pin number.

- In my experience, farmworkers don't have habit of reading for pleasure, they read for necessity. This is important when thinking about how Latino farmerworkers acquire and absorb information and written materials related to legal and other matters.
- Most orchardists in the Wenatchee programs are organic and trained in sustainable techniques. The fruit tree industry is accepting organic more and more.
- Around the country, the organic market is growing and industry is recognizing this. This is where the opportunities are for smaller producers. Part of what we're doing is trying to create more opportunities for these producers.
- What is the level of info/knowledge in organic production?
- There isn't any (in Washington).
- Many farmers coming from Mexico were organic by necessity – not philosophically per se. Most calls that NCAT gets are to know what products -- or “remedio” as they call it – that growers can use. There is a high demand for this information.

Farming Expertise - Strategies

- It would be good to focus on key vocabulary/terms needed for agricultural work. Use same approach as you use for math.
- It is good to focus on basics; “kitchen table” education; popular education.
- Use visual communication rather than purely written communication.
- Create mentorship (empowerment program) with others.
- Wenatchee Valley College partners with Nana Simone on IPM classes for Latino producers in north central WA (her work has been funded by the EPA).
- Latinos listen to Spanish radio and *novelas*, don't read local paper or listened to English radio. Therefore, use this medium for outreach.
- Students qualifying for different sorts of funding and organizations can access job training money by partnering with local community colleges.
- I took courses in accounting (H&R block) and learned how to do income taxes for my farm.

Farming Expertise - Challenges

- Skills sets for farmworkers don't exist in Occupational Dictionary. Challenge for training programs. If skill sets aren't defined then it is impossible to create appropriate curriculums.
- There is no such thing as unskilled labor.
- USDA and the Department of Labor don't have money for worker training in agricultural job skills. Elected officials don't understand the needs of the farming sector in terms of the skills needed by employees working in agriculture, and government agencies don't communicate these needs to elected officials. One solution is to go to private foundations and get money to document the need and numbers so that you can make case to public entities to change policy and secure funding.
- Many Hispanic farmers don't know what paperwork and requirements they need to get from their employees, for example I-9 forms.
- Farmers don't get all the tax benefits they are entitled to – they lose a lot of money because they aren't doing taxes sufficiently, depreciation, deductions. They can't read a 1040 or Schedule F so they don't get deductions.
- This has been my experience as a farmer.
- Simply getting files in order is a huge job. This is an important first step in improving businesses.

- Research done by WSU Extension's Karen Lewis shows that recent Latino immigrants (in general – not just farmers) typically pay higher interest rates when they get loans. Both farmworkers and farmers end up paying more interest because they don't know how to access the formal infrastructures.
- Farm and financial management is a big challenge (taxes, record keeping, payroll, labor regulations etc.).
- It's important to consider that if employees leave, it's bad for the farmers. Crop and personnel insurance (health insurance) are both important. Farmers invest a lot in their employees, and employees have important skills, and should have health insurance in addition to crop insurance.
- It is also important to educate bankers because growers are ahead of the curve in terms of changes in the field and in laws.
- It is very difficult for small growers to qualify for loans due to lack of information.
- Education and training is very important. Producers have low education and that makes difficult to access services.

Report back to large group:

Importance of education/types of training:

- Low level of formal education and literacy.
- There is no job training money for agriculturally related careers or for farmers from Dept of Labor or USDA.
- Private foundations are a resource to document needs and create models so that groups can make case for public money and programs.
- It is critical to have education & training grouped by literacy level, so classes move faster.
- Training around technology, for example computer use, can happen through peer teaching and mentorships.
- There is no such thing as unskilled labor.

Documentation is a significant challenge:

- Fear of deportation can keep people from participating in training opportunities.
- The risk and reality of losing everything (economic capital) is challenge.
- Discussion around what ID numbers people need and strategies to get interim numbers (student numbers, tax ID number). This is confusing because it varies by state.

Communication and outreach:

- The communicator is most effective if doesn't rely on written communication, use visuals other techniques.
- Use Spanish-language radio and media/TV.
- There is not a strong tradition of reading for pleasure, only for necessity.

Financial management:

- Farmers are at a disadvantage in regards to their business – they don't get full tax benefits (deductions, depreciations, refunds etc.).
- They are also paying more for operating capital (one survey found an average of 4% more)
- It helps to take courses and participate in programs that provide financial training
- Need employee "insurance" (to keep skilled and trained) as well as crop insurance

5. Farm Site Operations

Farm Site Operations - Current Situation

- I like what I'm doing, being my own boss and not working for anyone. It brought me new experiences and learning. I feel very content to be able to make my own decisions about production. I don't have to wait for orders or instructions from a patron. ALBA helped with information and renting land. My dream is to be the owner of the land. I didn't get any loan because I want to be sure to be able to pay my loan back. I have been successful thanks to the support of my family. They help with labor and to make the best possible decisions. I have started paying my children for their help in the farm.
- I agree with the importance of the family in the farm operations.
- I have seen that women/wives help a lot in the marketing aspect
- The family business is kept separate from the farm business. Labor is an issue especially when harvesting because it's very hard work. Packing and quality is very important.
- In regards to communication and support from/to other producers, I try to communicate and make suggestions to other farmers, but pride and envy is really bad.
- Perhaps 6-10 acres is the maximum for a farm to be run by a single family. It would help me a lot if I had a person in charge of the marketing so that I could focus on the production.

Farm Site Operations - Strategies

- I have specific goals at the family and farm level which I set through *consultas* with my family. And the work I do with family has been part of my strategy for success. ALBA has played a very important role in my access to information.
- I hire one-two people at a maximum. I have all of the necessary equipment for my farm, now my next step is to own land.
- He is one of the most successful farmers at ALBA.
- ALBA has a program to support the marketing efforts of producers.

Farm Site Operations - Challenges

- Marketing represents the biggest challenge/struggle for my farm. In Missouri this is also the case.
- Production – the quality of the product can make or break the market.
- Also the struggle between having to produce and having to sell is a big challenge. If someone could just worry about one of those it would be a lot easier. But I have an 'integral' way of doing things – I do both production and marketing.

Farm Site Operations - Additional Comments from the Rest of the Group

- The Wenatchee Valley College Agriculture Department has been facilitating the development of an "Association of Family Farms." Wenatchee Valley College and Dr. Larry Yi with USDA are helping small family growers in North Central Washington to market their product under a general brand name (umbrella). This is taking place right now in our area and is viewed as a viable option to help with the difficult task of marketing when you are a small producer. For more information please call Janet Heath with the Institute for Rural Innovation and Stewardship.
- Could you try to create a cooperative with the student participants?*Podrian volver a crear una cooperativa con los estudiantes participantes?*

- Marketing of produce grown by owner/operator could be done by another party whose only interest would be marketing. Recommend some type of consignment program that would be attractive to both parties?
- How do Latino farmers treat their employees? Do they all have worker's compensation for their employees? Do they pay minimum wage? Do they understand employee laws? *Como se tratan los agricultores Latinos a sus empleados? Todos tienen Worker's Compensation para sus trabajadores? Pagan el salario minimo? Entienden bien todas las leyes de empleados?*
- Do Latino farmers understand environmental laws? Do they follow rules for pesticide use? Is there enough training in Spanish about environmental and pesticide laws? *Entienden todas las leyes ambientales? Siguen las leyes de pesticidas? Hay suficiente capacitacion en espanol sobre las leyes ambientales y de pesticidas?*

6. Agricultural Programs and Services

- In terms of Hispanic farmers, we lack technical support, equipment, storages facilities, irrigation systems, financial planning.
- There is a lack of Spanish speaking on the part of USDA-Extension personnel and English on the part of the farmers.
- Most of the expertise/education is coming from ‘field-men’, who are really salesmen from chemical companies.
- There is a lack of good relationships between agricultural services and the new farmers. Part of this is because service providers are required to do so much paperwork they don’t have enough time to get out into the field.
- On disaster payments Hispanic farmers are the last ones to know about the application process. Then when they do come in to the office the dollar allocations have already been drawn down. NRCS has been an agency that has been more forthcoming, although you need to make farm visits and get to know the area Hispanic farmers. Although we have Hispanic Extension agents and the Anglo Extension Agents in Texas A & M Extension who speak Spanish, they are found mostly with the Anglo farmers. Hispanic farmers are the fastest growing farmers and they obtain the least attention.
- There need to be more non-profits among Hispanic farmers do some of the networking that farmers aren’t doing with the public and private sector (banks, USDA).
- It’s also healthy to be involved in working with Hispanic farmers when it’s “mission” driven.

How prepared are Hispanic farmers to receive technical information?

- The information at times is at too high of an educational level
- As Extension you need to get to the level of the farmer/learner.
- As Hispanic farmers we have to start the process of asking that we get the information at the working level that a Hispanic farmer can apply/use.
- We need to create an educational situation where both the educational institution and the farmer can gain meaningful information.
- Extension personnel need to have a working relationship with Hispanic farmers.
- Just having technical knowledge is not enough to have educational programs.
- The relationship is lacking between USDA and the new growth of Hispanic farmers.
- There should be more farm visits by USDA and Extension personal.

Hispanic Farmers’ Computer and Internet Knowledge

- Internet classes are full of Hispanic people in El Paso. We have a waiting list of participants.
- It’s not only good enough to know how to use the internet – it needs to grow into a market place for Hispanic farmers.

Agricultural Programs and Services - Strategies/Needs

- USDA-Extension needs to extend itself among Hispanic farmers
- USDA-Extension need to make more farm visits among Hispanic farmers
- There should be more information about sources of USDA funding for nonprofit organizations, and there should be more sources of funding. Also, Hispanic farmers need to be familiarized with ways to get help.

- Hispanic farmers need overcome their embarrassment in order to extend themselves to USDA-Extension personnel.
- More grassroots organizations on the part of Latino farmers.

Agricultural Programs and Services - Additional Comments

- Often the providers of information, especially about pesticides, are the salesmen too, so they are a biased source of information. In this area of California, farmers use Pest Control Advisors to make pest management decisions. These Pest Control Advisors often work for chemical companies and push their products on the unsuspecting farmers.
- Strategies:
 - Provide resources to Community Based Organizations to connect farmers to USDA Programs.
 - On their own turf; visual overheads with not too many handouts.
 - Visit farmers on a one-to-one at their own farms.
 - Need to set up a revolving loan fund for immigrant farmers for access to capital.
 - Computer training in Spanish for Latino farmers.

7. Farming Relationships and Connections

Farming Relationship and Connections - Current Situation

- In Georgia there are three predominant populations: whites, African Americans, and Latinos.
- In Arkansas there are many Asians, whites, African Americans, and Latinos.
- In a survey done in Washington State 80% of respondents answered that young people would stay in farming if they have more farming education.
- There are differences between the Latinos, and even between the states and regions from their native countries.

Farming Relationships and Connections - Strategies

- Strategies for farmers to link to the community are: do a mass education program of the farmers, institutions, and consumers about Latino farmers at the local level. Use flyers to share information; use of labels that identify and distinguish Latino farmer products; offer tours and farm visits. (*'latino grown'* could be a label)
- Provide education to children in elementary schools through higher levels to experience the farm life. This can be done at all levels (community and organizations).
- Develop a list of resources for projects and farmers – a brochure or pamphlet – in Spanish. Winrock's brochure provides a good example.
- We should develop resources, trainings, and other strategies to help older farmers understand new farmers.
- Build connections at the local, regional and national level, and use projects which are connected to the regional and national level to reach farmers. Use organizations like Heifer to build capacity and leadership.
- Build networks between farmers around thematic areas, for example in North Carolina with tobacco farmers.
- Look at sociology studies about how gender and children are successfully involved in the family farm.
- There are institutions which mediate and include gender issues when farm families have a crisis to help them keep the family together.
- We need to be aware of programs that will enable us to create the network necessary for immigrant farmers to be successful. For example, Winrock International is a nonprofit organization that works with people in the USA and around the world to increase economic opportunity, sustain natural resources, and protect the environment. It is one of the few international development organizations that have an active domestic initiative. Their USA program directs attention to activities that have long-term benefits to communities and their people, bringing people and organizations together to identify problems, set priorities, and plan for the future. The unit's programs focus on community and economic development, education and workforce training, and environmental and natural resource management.
- Washington State University offers a training in translation for staff who don't speak Spanish, Total Immersion in Spanish, which is 8 hours/day for 3 days per week.
- The Small Business Development Center (Farm Bureau) provides business assistance and counseling.
- The Horticulture Association Convention in December that includes all the producers – this convention provides a good example which includes the whole farm family.

Farming Relationships and Connections - Challenges/Needs

- One of the challenges is to promote unity in the farming community
- Another challenge is for individual farmers to set goals and do farm planning looking at economics, resource management, family values.
- There are different roles in the family farm according to gender and age. It is a challenge to successfully integrate the whole family into farming. There are differences in values between generations. There is a lack of interest in the younger generation because they are afraid to work hard (24/7) and young people don't have incentives to go into farming because they see their parents working so hard and don't have financial incentives. It would be good to involve children in marketing, value-added and other activities. Show the money to the kids to provide incentives.
- There is a need for cross cultural trainings for staff to improve sensitivity to different cultures.
- It is a challenge for Latino farmers to integrate in the community
- It is a challenge to accurately count Latino farmers in the census, to establish who is running the operation and who is supporting them.
- There are language barriers to understand these communities.
- Continuation of farmers – will Latino farmers' children go into farming? How are we going to make an impact on the next generation?

Farming Relationships & Connections - Additional Comments from the Rest of the Group

- It seems that many of the children of farmers and farmworkers raised in this country don't want to farm or have anything to do with agriculture. How do we get the next generation to want to farm? How do we make the career of farming more attractive?
- Strategies: Connecting with CBO's that are tied to the community involved in agricultural services population, i.e. farmworkers.
- NASS needs to utilize CBO's and provide money to those entities to help do the census.
- Developing CSA's for building relationships.

8. Farm Planning

Farm Planning - Current Situation

- Before I didn't do any formal planning, but now I have learned how to do planning. Now I decide what to plant by knowing how much I want to harvest. I also look at the market. And I look at the area that I am in - what you can plant during different season, what you can plant once the winter has arrived, since some plants survive the winter.
- Do you have target sales in advance?
- I have sales contracts for strawberries but not for other crops. I know that this year I can sell 10 acres of strawberries. Now I am selling to Dynasty. I have been selling to them for five or six years. I can plant cilantro and other things without a contract and sell them to Dynasty. This year they had an offer of \$6.50 per box of conventional strawberries, \$12/box for organic strawberries. Everything that I sell is organic but I can't sell everything on the organic market, so sometimes I have to sell organic strawberries as conventional.
- Last year NCAT had a training about this - about budgets, documentation, we covered almost all of the bases, we had six trainings and dedicated just one day to budgeting. We realized the financial problems that AMO was experiencing through those budgets, and that is when all of the problems came to light and the cooperative ended. After that, we realized the situation the cooperative was in and they decided to separate. But now I wonder if farmers like you, who participate in the trainings have changed your practices.
- That training was useful for us. The cooperative was both a bad and good experience.
- What we do in Washington is a little easier because there is just one harvest per year. You prune, spray and just follow the routine up through harvest. The only planning that one does is for the different fruits. For example, cherries start in June-July and for apples, it depends on the variety. In terms of cash flow, we usually have to get loans. In Washington the majority of farmers are big - companies that have thousands of acres and others. We are very small farmers in comparison. I have 80 acres but only use 50 acres for production. I grow alfalfa, wine grapes, cherries, asparagus, and other crops. We sell our wine grapes to wineries, which are wholesalers. Wineries weren't buying merlot grapes so we let a lot of our merlot grapes go to waste - we left about 10,000 tons of merlot grapes on the vine. We try to keep records for the past five years. We keep records of pesticide applications and we keep receipts and lists of what we've purchased and sold. I have production records for the last 5 years. Wineries request the records for the grapes of all the inputs and pesticides. The grapes are not organic. We measure production by the ton. Contracts for grapes are for anywhere from 1-5 years. There are some companies that pay us more but they have one year contracts.
- NOP requires that farmers develop a systems plan to think ahead and prevent diseases, and ALBA has drafted paperwork based on their requirements. Farmers must submit this paperwork prior to qualifying for land. This includes a personal evaluation about the resources farmers have, marketing planning, a planting plan, and a plan for managing soil fertility and disease control. Since the organic certification is in ALBA's name, ALBA acts as an underwriting rule to ensure that farmers are complying with the rules.
- I do planning based on marketing, on the strawberry market and the labor needed. I plant things that don't require a lot of labor - if I had to pay a lot of people I wouldn't earn any money. With strawberries, if I had to pay workers and materials and everything I would lose money. The majority of strawberries planted here are the variety called Diamante which

produces fruit all year long (9 months out of a year). Some wholesale buyers prefer red strawberries with better travel and storage characteristics. The majority of wholesalers prefer Diamante because its redder. Some buyers want a sweeter berry such as camino real, but it only produces a few months out of the year. I grow more than two acres of strawberries, and I have a small market for them. I try to sell the majority of them through direct marketing, but I also sell them wholesale. Lately there hasn't been a good market for strawberries. So now I am going to take out the strawberries and instead plant things like fava beans, zucchini, cucumbers, and other things that don't need a lot of hand labor.

- Planning is based on the work you have to do to bring the product to the market.
- We are just starting to talk with participants from this a new project we are developing in Florida. We are working with small farmers who are going to provide technical assistance to beginning farmers, and we are taking their recommendations into account. We are also exploring potential markets - ethnic markets, for example with Mexican consumers. We are thinking about planting chile, habanero, collards. Originally we had thought about corn but we've changed our minds. In terms of how much land we are going to plant, that is very connected to the market we have access to.
- Just a few of the farmers that I have talked to in Missouri are vegetable or fruit farmers. Most are dairy farmers. Some are orchardists. Planning is a big challenge for all small farmers. It is hard to sit down and do a big plan, and this has resulted in a lot of problems and difficulties. Dairy farmers maintain records because they are required to by their buyer - the one big cooperative. The cooperative requires info on fat content, etc. I am trying to offer farmers alternative markets so that they can have more independence and freedom - this is also a big challenge. If the farmer says to the cooperative, 'I am not going to sell to you this month,' the cooperative can say they won't buy from that farmer anymore. Many people don't know how to do planning because there isn't the information about how to do it, and this is an impediment for access to credit. Since people don't have the records they can't apply for credit. There is some interesting software, such as Finpack, for farm planning, but to use this one needs to know how to use a computer. So you have to begin with computer training. This is a long process of training and education.
- Can you make a cooperative or organization, a for-profit or nonprofit to resolve the situation of undocumented people so that they can get access to resources such as financing? In the Northeast - Vermont, Massachusetts - they have big cooperative organizations. I've heard that it's possible to make deals with those cooperatives. Has anyone here explored this?
- It worries me that organic Latino producers have to sell their stuff as if it is not organic, because there is demand for organic products throughout the country.
- We have to sell locally, because how are we going to send our product to Massachusetts?
- We have received grants to work with organized groups, and they don't require anything. They give us the money to administer the program, but that is an education program. With financing, I don't know. AMO received money from Oxfam and they just asked us for the registration of the cooperative and to show that you were a member.
- What are the easiest and most successful aspects of planning and record keeping for managing your whole business?
- It has not been easy.
- What's been good for us is to grow food, and that's what we did with our parents. I have always just been working, not dealing with planning, computers and record keeping and papers, so that's been challenging. Organic production has been a good thing.

- You have been in the field, you harvest, and God guides you. If there's a market, you sell well.

Farm Planning - Strategies

- I am not working for anyone, I am following the rules of ALBA. I don't always answer questions because of a lack of schooling. What I have been doing here - with my family – it has gone very well, with the little that I am developing. I don't know how to read. My family is also in this program - I have 3 kids and my wife. My kids have helped a lot. Patrick (from ALBA) has helped me a lot with filling out paperwork. I am fortunate to have so much help with that. Since the training we have had better management of paperwork. My daughters help me a lot with that. I don't know how to take advantage of certain opportunities.
- If someone is starting a farm, they need a support like the Rural Development Center (of ALBA), children who can offer support. One person can't keep all of this information in their head, children are important. This is a key - there are many failures without this support. One of the things that has helped is having savings, people have worked and saved money. One guy arrived in the United States 20 or 25 years ago and has worked in dairy farms as a milker. He worked at a farm for years, and with the help of his boss he has bought some animals and some land. Now he has somewhere between 60 and 80 cows. He started working for gringos, and now they work for him. It is common with many Latino farmers to start with savings.
- One suggestion for improving planning is improving computer/internet access and training. A lot of this info is online in Spanish and English.
- More training on these things would be good.
- At ALBA, everyone is responsible in their 2nd and 3rd years to be mentor farmers, to give advice to new farmers. It would be great if there was a national effort to match up senior farmers with junior farmers. It would be good if the mentor farmer and even the apprentice farmer received a scholarship to compensate them for their work or advice to other farmers. This would encourage a lot more interaction between farmers.
- The only thing that would help us farmers do better is to be middle men instead of farmers. ALBA has offered trainings about computers, but because we [farmers] are out in the field, we don't have time to come.
- I don't understand a lot of this but my kids do, it is easier for me to focus on production.
- The help of the family is important. It would be good help prepare that farmers children so that they can do planning better. He knows how to do planning, but not the way that would be evaluated by a bank for them to see if this is effective. We have to support them, form more organizations like this to support people.
- There isn't a Hispanic Farmer organization here, if there were it would be easier to get grants to help farmers.
- Much of the planning is not written but is based on experience, so many farmers just based on experience know how much they need to be paid to recuperate their expenses.
- Organizations like ALBA are helpful with planning.

Farming Planning - Challenges

- An important challenge is the management of technology being able to manage records.

- In the Ejidos (commonly owned farmland) in Mexico, the government and the bank dictated what you planted, when you planted, when you irrigated, etc. Sometimes we lost harvests because we weren't efficient. In part, we come from that practice in Mexico so it has been difficult to adapt to another kind of agriculture. We didn't do any planning, we just followed instructions. We need a system, someone else, to help us with planning and monitoring. Technical assistance providers - do these people speak Spanish? Without having that person telling you when to do everything, here you are also going without a plan. Just making sure that there is enough to cover your costs, and then hopefully you have insurance too.
- I don't have a computer; I have very little schooling, as for my plan... I just do it how we do it in Mexico. I know that I am going to need this much for water, fertilizer, etc. If I have 20 acres of production, I know how much I need to come out with/end up with, give or take. I talk to other farmers to get ideas from them, to get information. The big packers buy from the whole valley (in Washington). If apple prices are low, the companies have their own apples which they will sell first, and charge the farmers for storage. So, some places, instead of sending farmers money, send them a bill. If apple farmers got together we could make a small packing company and sell to Mexico because they have a good market for apples. That way we could have a storage place because otherwise you have to sell the apples as soon as you harvest. It's not like storing grains.
- Latino producers are at a big disadvantage. They are in a very complex situation. For example, with apples you can store them until the price increases, same thing with grapes, to wait for the best moment to sell them (if you had the storage facilities).
- We want our farmers to be 'price givers'. If they're a price giver, they know how much it costs them to produce the crop and they set the price accordingly. If they don't know how much they've invested in a crop, they are 'price takers' and they are just taking whatever price they get offered, because they don't really know how much it's worth. The farmer should have at least an idea of what the crop is worth. Without the knowledge of the money that went into it, you don't know how much to sell it at in order to recuperate your money. You must know this before you go to market. We know that farmers shouldn't go to the brokers because the money they offer is never enough to cover costs unless you are huge farmer. In terms of keeping records, ALBA has organic certification through California Certified Organic Farmers, and because of this there is a requirement that all farmers have to keep records. We offered our farmers a course that focused on using Excel to do cash flow, where we took farmers' real figures to calculate their cash flow, but most of our farmers don't really do cash flow.
- Now that there is free trade, the price of asparagus has been reduced - now they are getting asparagus from Peru. Are these international markets affecting our markets?
- Yes, a lot, and it's affected small farmers.
- It is affecting farmworkers too, because people are earning less now because of importation from Brazil.

9. Marketing

Marketing - Current Situation

- I farm 22 acres of diversified row crops in Hollister (hot climate), and 8 acres of strawberries at the Rural Development Center (ALBA) in Salinas. I currently work with a broker, which overall has been a negative experience. In order to be more effective at direct marketing, for example starting a CSA, I need more capacity and information, such as packing and transportation. I also works with a distributor (America's Fresh) who focuses on schools, restaurants and smaller grocers. Diversity/variety in markets and crops is the key to survival, without it, small farmers are sure to fail.
- I have a label for my farm produce. It is important to have a logo and a label, an image of your business, in order to have name recognition in the marketplace among buyers, not necessarily among the people who will ultimately eat the food, although this is important too. It is also important to have a planting plan with lots of diversity. It has taken me and my wife four years to get to this point.

Strategies

- ALBA Organics is a produce distributor and has been helpful in channeling product to the market and providing access to a cooler. Dina, ALBA's marketing coordinator, opens/accesses new markets of all types and sells the product on behalf of the farmers. ALBA Organics is a licensed produce distributor, purchasing (taking possession of) produce from the farmers both on and off ALBA land, and selling it to markets such as Stanford University Dining Services, Sutter Community Hospital, several restaurants, wholesale distributors, Half Moon Bay Farmers' Market, and a small CSA at ALBA. ALBA Organics is part of the non-profit ALBA. It's goal is to open up new markets, facilitate sales for farmers, pay producers a fair price, and cover its own operating costs.
- ALBA encourages farmers to diversify their marketing outlets, and to not depend solely on ALBA Organics. It is simply an option, but not an obligation. ALBA Organics is ultimately working to represent a collective of farmers in the marketplace.
- A question was raised about how long farmers can access ALBA's infrastructure. Generally it is three years, but there are exceptions. Access to land is a huge challenge and ALBA tries to accommodate farmer needs when land is available.
- Cooperatives have been most successful in helping farmers be the owners of the marketing channels, to increase their variety and volume to be more competitive. Cooperatives are important to markets. ALBA's farmers should focus on creating a coop.
- Three cooperatives have been started at the Rural Development Center over the years, and all have failed. Farmers haven't been prepared for the management aspects of running a cooperative and need more training in this area in order to be successful.
- Cooperatives are the key to control, ownership, and to growth.
- Farmers need stability, by working together in a coop, they could have ownership of the marketing channel, retirement savings options, health insurance. In current conditions, farmers are very exposed to potential financial problems without access to such financial services and benefits.
- There is a pension plan offered by United Farm Workers, even if you are not a member of the UFW or an employee working under a union contract, you can still access this pension plan.

It takes five years to be vested. Via FIELD, there are ways for farmers to get a pension plan, they just need to be explored.

- The government has money to help farmers form cooperatives and focus on marketing. Government money can also be important for emergencies.
- Cooperatives are good. Forming a marketing cooperative is ideal. There is a cooperative named Berry Bowl in Watsonville that has been very successful.
- African American cooperatives are marketing to Marriot, with connections made by the federal government.

Challenges

- Farmers are generally not trained sufficiently yet to manage cooperatives (based on my personal experience). In my experience, management earns living wage, not the farm workers. Having a contract with the cooperative is important to protect the interests of the farmer.
- The key to empower producers is to be owners/independent. I don't see anyone doing this.
- I disagree. I was involved in AMO, a marketing cooperative that failed. I personally lost \$30,000 in the experience.
- Financing for producers is scarce, making the marketing difficult.
- Empowerment of the farm family in determining their goals and representing themselves to markets is a big challenge for many farmers.
- Farmers need to produce a quality product, they need to know the game and how to play it and they need to know how to make deals – it's a business.
- Consolidation in the organic marketplace (wholesale and retail), for example Whole Foods, has hurt small farmers. Education of consumers is extremely important. Systemic change must start with people, programs, and stores. Whole Foods has changed their purchasing policies to buy from larger farms, locking out small producers.
- I believe that marketing should somehow be tied to security of access to land.
- Farmers must be able to compete with conventional producers in their volume. Changing to organic and doing value added are great, but the culture of farmers and culture of markets are different, making it difficult for farmers to access markets.
- There is preference among Latino consumers to buy from small Latino family farmers. I propose a marketing campaign to educate consumers and offer products on a large scale. We should look to Latino consumers to support Latino farmers. Fair trade marketing to Latinos (in large supermarket chains), focusing on fair treatment of workers, may be an option for Latino farmers.
- My experience has shown that Latino stores are not willing to pay the premium for local and organic.
- Small farmers should focus on small markets
- Small farmers can't make enough to pay their workers better wages.
- Fair trade was tried in Yakima but failed. There are really two markets for these farmers, the gringos/liberals, and the Mexicans looking for fresh products. I agree that selling in large supermarket chains targeting Latino consumers is key.
- I am skeptical of potential of this strategy, at least in the short term. It will require large investment in education and good leadership.
- I am also skeptical.

- Support from government and organizations that represent farmers would be needed in such a campaign.
- Campaigns are expensive, for example the Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign.
- I am encouraged by the sales that are happening to hospitals, with ALBA's help. Coops are not the only way. ALBA is selling to Stanford. I couldn't do these sales by myself. I am happy with ALBA selling.
- Establishing institutional markets is a long, bureaucratic process, one individual farmers probably wouldn't be able to invest in.
- Liability/product insurance extremely important to protect producers and coops.
- Farmers having good relationship with community is important for their marketing success.
- Access to capital is a barrier, developing a marketing plan is costly. Pikes Peak Marketplace provides loans for operating capital. Could this be a model? Like a CSA, where the farmer gets money upfront, and the buyer assumes some of the production risk
- Business plans and pilot studies are also important and expensive.
- It is important for farmers to know how to negotiate deals.
- Farmers must market to their productive capacity; more or less will cause lack of confidence on part of buyers.

Additional Comments from the Rest of the Group

- Specialize in ethnic crops.
- Integrate the family and develop their skills according to their interest (young)
- Need to start a new program under FSA for "New Immigrant" farm loans. Much like the "Beginning" farmer loan program!
- Farmers need marketing skills: 1. Show salesman/womanship 2. Follow-up diligence with buyers 3. Dedicated focus on relationship creation/maintenance. Who teaches this, provides networking? Need marketing employees with such skills to match up with existing farmers.
- Institutional sales are possible: hospitals, elderly care facilities, universities, school districts (access could prove very lucrative), local markets, farm stands, CSA's, small locally owned supermarkets. Marketing is essential to creating consumer demand and education about local buying importance and support of local farmers.

Contributors & Attendees

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Malaquías Q. Flores, Director, RCDR/Center for Latino Farmers, Washington
Javier Franco, Farmer, Michigan
Jose Garcia, Coordinator, Community Food Systems & Sustainable Agriculture Program, University of Missouri, Missouri
Leo Garcia, Horticulture Professor, Hispanic Orchard Employee Education Program & Integrated Pest Management Technician Program Coordinator and Instructor, WVC Orchard Manager, Washington
Pete Grijalva, President, Hispanic Farmers Association of El Paso County, Texas
Martin Guereña, Program Specialist, National Center for Appropriate Technology, California
Luz Bazan Gutierrez, President & CEO, Rural Community Development Resources, Washington
Ginger Harris, Agricultural Statistician, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Washington D. C.
Jan Henderson, Coordinator for Planning, Evaluation & Training, North America Program, Heifer International, Ohio
Juan Hernández, Farm Training and Research Center Farm Manager, ALBA, California
Neri Hernández, Farmer, C & N Farms, California
Dave Hiney, Field Coordinator, Southeast Program, Heifer International, Georgia
Hugh Joseph, Director, New Entry Sustainable Farming Project, Tufts University, Massachusetts
Juan Marinez, Assistant to the Director of Extension, Michigan State University, Michigan
Amparo Martinez, Farmer, Santa Rosa Farms, California
Andy Martinez, Winrock International, Arkansas
Domitila Martinez, Farmer, Del Martinez Farms, California
Brett Melone, Executive Director, ALBA, California
Tirso Moreno, General Coordinator, Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc., Florida
Ana Rojas, Director, Hispanic Programs, Opening Doors, Inc., California
Francisco Sarmiento, Coordinator & Instructor, Institute for Rural Innovation and Stewardship (IRIS) Latino Agricultural Education Program, California
Steve Schwartz, Executive Director, California FarmLink, California
Alesia Swan, Western Region Outreach Specialist, RMA/Community Outreach & Assistance Partnership Program, California
Rebecca Thistlethwaite, Natural Resources Manager, ALBA, California
Patrick Troy, Agronomist and PEPA Coordinator, ALBA, California
David M. Villarino, Executive Director, Farmworkers Institute for Education and Leadership Development (FIELD), California

Forum Agenda

Latino Farmworker to Farmer Forum: *Exploring the Opportunities and Challenges for Emerging/Transitioning Latino Farmers*

**ALBA, Salinas, CA
July 28-30, 2004**

Wednesday, July 28th

- 6:00 Evening meal at *Hullabaloo* in Salinas
- 7:30 Welcome, Forum Objectives and Expected Outcomes
Introductions

Thursday, July 29th

- 8:30 a.m. Welcome
- 9:00 Small Group Sharing
 - Farming Goals
 - Farming Expertise and Experience
 - Resources for Farming
 - Land for Farming
 - Farm Site Operations
- 10:45 Break
- 11:00 Whole Group Sharing
- 12 noon Lunch and tour of ALBA
- 1:30 p.m. Small Group Sharing
 - Farm Management
 - Marketing
 - Agricultural Programs and Services
 - Farming Relationships and Connections
- 3:15 Break
- 3:30 Whole Group Sharing
- 4:30 Next Steps
- 5:45 Adjourn
- 6:30 Evening meal at *Whole Enchilada* in Moss Landing

Friday, July 30th

- 9:00 a.m. Site Visits to Mario López Farms, ALBA's Triple M Ranch,
and farmer Neri Hernández' C&N Farms

About the National Immigrant Farming Initiative

A Brief History

The Census of Agriculture suggests that immigrants are the fastest growing sector of farmers in the country. According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, the number of Hispanic farmers increased by 50% over the past five years. As immigrant farmers' numbers have increased, projects have sprung up throughout the country to support these new farmers. Today more than twenty established and developing immigrant farming projects exist nationwide.

Observing this trend, people around the country conceived of a broad initiative to connect these diverse efforts and accomplish common goals to support immigrant farmers. Heifer International, an organization that works with small, economically disadvantaged farmers around the world, was a logical collaborator due to its strong track record of supporting immigrant farmers here in the United States. Believing that this initiative would enrich its work to support viable family farms, Heifer agreed to take the lead in making this concept a reality and serve as NIFI's organizational sponsor. In fall of 2002, the National Immigrant Farming Initiative (NIFI) was formally launched as a partnership of Heifer International, immigrant farming projects and representatives, farmers, and other stakeholders.

NIFI Today

NIFI's mission is to strengthen the capacity of immigrants to farm successfully and to advance sustainable farming and food systems. To achieve this mission, NIFI engages in a variety of activities, including:

- NIFI provides national and regional training opportunities, and is engaged in efforts to learn and share information about immigrant farming.
- NIFI provides guidance and networking opportunities to immigrant farming projects, and to potential projects and service providers seeking information on how to best work with immigrant and refugee farmers in their area.
- NIFI works to increase visibility and resources for immigrant farmers through influencing policy change.
- Through Heifer International's project development and funding process, NIFI has helped to fund immigrant farming projects throughout the country and will fund several more over the next four years.
- NIFI serves as a forum and catalyst for project and farmer exchange, encouraging information sharing and reducing the isolation of immigrant farmers and the projects that support them.

NIFI is guided by an 18-member Steering Committee of immigrant farmers, immigrant farming service providers, university-affiliated researchers, Heifer staff, and other resource partners. Funding for NIFI is generously provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, USDA's Risk Management Agency, and Heifer International.

To learn more, please contact:

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