



NIFI's purpose is to strengthen the capacity of immigrants to farm successfully by providing support and advocacy for disadvantaged farmers and farmworkers; to advance sustainable farming and food systems.

NIFI News

by *Mapy Alvarez, Executive Director*

The creation of the New Immigrant Farming Initiative (NIFI) marked the path for bringing individuals passionate about farming together. Over the past 6 years, NIFI has evolved from an initiative that focused on supporting immigrant and refugee farming projects across the country, organizing national trainings, hosting a national conference and developing on-line resources to an organization that in its transition has accomplished one of its major purposes: to include immigrant and refugee farmers and farmworkers in its governing body.

Last February in an historic meeting in Homestead, FL, NIFI expanded its partnerships with other organizations to bridge to their advocacy work and elected a diverse board of directors. In its first assignment, the Board selected Rural Coalition as their next fiscal agent, appointed an executive director, and established a clear set of objectives for the transition period.

Don Bustos and Luciano Alvarado, were elected Co-Chairs of NIFI's Board of Directors. Both are farmers with strong ties to the immigrant communities in their respective regions. Don, who has been farming on his family farm, has demonstrated his dedication by working devotedly towards rural stability and the improvement of a viable economy for small farms in New Mexico; his work has been lauded on various occasions. Don is a member of various organizations in New Mexico and in other parts of the United States, a Board Member of Santa Cruz de la Canada Land Grant, an Advisor on the Rio Arriba County Extension Service Committee, and a

Board Member of the New Mexico Acequia Association. He is also a former Commissioner for El Llano Acequia and is currently a part of the New Mexico Acequia Association of the Executive Committee of New Mexico and represents the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) as director of the New Mexico chapter.

Luciano has worked on his farm with his family for more than a decade and is a leader in his farmworker community and his church. In his personal vision, Luciano declares, "I have a vision, and my vision is not short term, it is a long-term vision where I see diverse groups of people working together as one." With this vision and his motivation, Luciano is fulfilling his responsibilities in his role as a Co-Chair with the Executive Board of Directors while continuing his efforts to develop the project Small Farmers and Minority Farmers of America (SFMFA). In this project, he seeks to assist and support diverse groups of farmers including, but not limited to, minority farmers, beginning farmers, small farmers, and refugee farmers.

In their broad experience working with issues related to the population that NIFI seeks to help, Don and Luciano have a clear and realistic vision for NIFI and as Co-Chairs of the Board of Directors they hope to offer the best of their capacities and experiences to the new generation of farmers of this nation. It is also very important for NIFI to acknowledge the role that the other Board Members are playing and thank them for their dedication and time during these unprecedented moments in NIFI's existence.

Please refer to the back page of this publication for a who's-who of the NIFI board.

1 NIFI News
What's new with NIFI.
Mapy Alvarez

2 Project Profile
Update on the Somali Bantu refugees of Boise, Idaho
Katie Painter



Policy Update
The latest on the 2008 U.S. Farm Bill
Amy Saltzman

3 MAFO Conference
'Preparing Today for a Greater Harvest Tomorrow'
Heladio (Lalo) Zavala



World Crops
The Maxixe Cucumber
Maria Moreira



Innovation in Farming: Tradition & Technology
Amy Carrington



Upcoming Events Calendar

4 Meet the Board
Who's Who on the NIFI board

Find out more about NIFI's transition and immigrant farmers and farm programs online at www.immigrantfarming.org.



Project Profile

Somali Bantu refugees, Boise, Idaho

by Katie Painter

The Somali Bantu Zigua Community of Boise, ID is already hard at work at our community farm. We farm 5 acres of land outside of Boise in Eagle, ID, generously lent to us by a local landowner. One of this year's first tasks was to update the irrigation system. Using funds from Heifer International's NIFI project, we purchased 675 feet of irrigation pipeline and 17 risers and sprinkler heads. The irrigation line had to be buried 12 inches below the ground! We rented a trencher and dug much of the irrigation trench by hand, and our sprinkler system is now up and running. We ordered seeds for many of our favorite vegetable crops, including watermelon, squash, sweet corn, beans, cabbage, onions, and carrots, and several African specialty crops like white flour maize, black eyed peas, okra, amaranth and yams. Several local growers have donated tomato plants and some other seedlings, which we've already begun planting. Members of the

community have been coming out to the farm every day in shifts, as their work schedules permit. It has been great to see so many hard workers and families with children of different ages participating in the farming project and learning to produce delicious, fresh food, just as our families have done for years and years in Africa. We plan to distribute free shares of produce to Somali Bantu families living in Boise and market our crop at the Capitol City Public Market to raise funds for community activities and future farm expenses. We are looking forward to the rest of our growing season and a bountiful harvest in 2008.



Somali Bantu Refugees in Boise, Idaho

Farm Bill 2008 update

Preparing More Wins for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers than Ever Before

by Amy Saltzman

Good news: The farm bill is (finally) finished! President Bush vetoed the bill (again) on Wednesday, June 18, and the veto was overridden by votes of the House and the Senate shortly thereafter. Due to clerical error, the bill that President Bush vetoed in May was missing 34 pages pertaining to trade and foreign aid programs. To avoid questions of Constitutionality, the House, Senate, and President Bush went through the motions again with the full bill in June.

Reform is often a slow process, but the Diversity Initiative, of which NIFI is a member, is pleased to announce that this bill contains many wins for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and farmworkers. The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, HR 6124, includes many provisions that open new opportunities for American Indian, African-American, Latino, Asian-Pacific and other small farmers. The bill also supports nutrition and community food programs and establishes a farmworker coordinator.

The process is not over and it is important for communities to remain engaged. Keep in touch with your members of Congress during the implementation process. Thank them for their work on the farm bill and ask for their assistance in assuring the below list of gains are fully implemented. Tell them how these provisions are important to your community. USDA is also actively engaged in implementing the farm bill, and will be listening to those who provide the most input to the Department. The report includes many measures that would significantly help expand and accelerate the growth, resources and viability of socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers and farmworkers, and hold USDA accountable for equitable service.

Below is a sampling of some key measures:

- **Conservation Programs** - Sec. 2704 provides set-asides in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and beginning farmers and ranchers (5% each). Sec. 2111 provides \$25 million over 10 years to encourage owners of CRP land to sell or rent to beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

- **Credit Programs** - Sec. 14002 places a moratorium on loan acceleration and foreclosure proceedings if a claim of discrimination is involved. Sec. 5002 and 5004 gives priority to socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers and ranchers in credit programs (Sec. 5002), as well as lower interest rates, better lending terms, and higher maximum purchase price on first time land purchases (Sec 5004).
- **Specialty Crop Programs** - The new law includes numerous provisions related to improving technical assistance (Sec. 3203), research (Sec. 7311), transportation and distribution (Sec. 10403), market news (Sec. 10107) and census data (Sec. 10103) for specialty crops. These programs have the potential to benefit the socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers who comprise at least 12 percent of specialty crop producers if they are able to access these benefits.
- **Outreach and Accountability** - Sec. 14004 provides \$15-20 million annually in mandatory funds for the 2501 Outreach and Technical Assistance program and strengthens its ability to assist socially disadvantaged producers to participate in agriculture programs. Other sections establish a Minority Farmer and Rancher Advisory Committee (Sec. 14008), a Farmworker Coordinators (Sec. 14013), and mandate that USDA provide a receipt for service upon producer request (Sec. 14003).
- **Support for Socially Disadvantaged and Beginning Farmers** - The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (Sec. 7410) provides \$75 million mandatory over 4 years to fund the grant program for beginning farmers and ranchers, with an additional \$30 million in annual discretionary authority, and a 25% set-aside for socially disadvantaged producers.
- **Access to Food and Nutrition** - The Farmers Market Promotion provides \$33 million in mandatory funding over five years, with a 10% set-aside for EBT implementation projects, to promote farmers markets. The Community Food Projects provides \$5 million mandatory funding over four years to community-based projects that meet the food needs of low-income individuals, increase the food self-reliance of communities, and promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and agricultural needs.
- **Equity for Minority Serving Educational Institutions** - The conference report supports equity for minority-serving institutions including funding increases to the 1890 and 1994 Land Grant Colleges and Universities, as well as new capacity building grants to Hispanic-Serving Institutions to promote and strengthen their ability to carry out education, applied research, and related community development.

MAFO 2008 National Farmworker Conference:
'Preparing Today for a Greater Harvest Tomorrow'
by Heladio (Lalo) F. Zavala

The 2008 MAFO National Farmworker Conference, 'Preparing Today for a Greater Harvest Tomorrow', was held in Sacramento, CA, on April 6 – 9, 2008, in collaboration and partnership with the California Employment Development Department, La Cooperativa Campesina de California, The California Endowment, USDA RMA regional office, U.S. Department of Labor, HOLA and other partners.

Notable speakers of the conference included Arturo Rodriguez, President of the United Farm Workers of America, Fabien Nunez, Speaker of the California Assembly and Mario Gutierrez, Director of the Agricultural Farmworker Initiative with the California Endowment. All speakers addressed the importance of civic engagement and involvement. Also, Dr. Gladys Vaughn, from the Office of Outreach in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, emphasized joining and becoming a USDA Partner.

MAFO's Conference utilizes the assets and talents of individuals from throughout the country to address the diverse issues facing rural communities. It provides the format for rural community asset and capacity building through engaged dialogue, training and a national campaign for civic engagement. MAFO provides training through collaborative planning, roundtables, and workshops focused in six areas: Workforce Solutions, Community Asset Building, Healthy Communities, Immigration, Welcoming Community, Lifelong Learning, and Latino and Immigrant Farmers & Ranchers. The workshops and plenary sessions featured leading experts in their respective fields who presented and spoke of relevant issues affecting our Latino and rural communities.

MAFO is already deep into the planning phase of our next annual conference to be held in San Antonio, TX at the Omni San Antonio Hotel. The 2009 National Farmworker Conference,

'Building Stronger Rural Community,' will be March 29 – April 1, 2009. Folks are encouraged to send MAFO workshops suggestions and attend the conference!

For more information contact Lalo Zavala at 320.251.1711 or via e-mail at Heladio.zavala@umos.org.

World Crops
by Maria Moreira

During the 2007 season, immigrant farmers at the Flats Mentor Farm (FMF) produced and marketed Maxixe cucumbers to sell at farmers markets and at their wholesales accounts. Due to the support received from Heifer International and UMass Extension, farmers were trained on a demonstration plot in the production of Maxixe and other new crops popular in ethnic communities in Massachusetts.

Maxixe was introduced at various farmers markets in and around Boston with great success. Each farmer promoted this new crop by giving out recipes developed by UMass Extension Nutrition. Farmers were trained on how to sell at farmers markets in general and specific crops in particular. The market plan for wholesale was different but just as successful. FMF promoted Maxixe by holding cooking demonstrations and giving out recipes at different stores.

Farmers were extremely pleased with the hands-on training on production and marketing of this new ethnic crop. As a result, this season farmers are growing Maxixe and are making it available at more farmers markets and at four Whole Foods stores. A very important part of FMF's program is marketing; farmers are trained on the sustainable methods of ethnic crop production as well as best marketing practices.



Maxixe cucumber

Innovation in Farming
Preserving Tradition & Embracing Technology
by Amy Carrington



Learning the traditional method

John Yanga runs a small farm business near Portland, Maine. His daughter and two young nieces insist on learning how to hoe the field the way that their parents did back in Sudan because they feel it's an essential part of their culture as well as their future.

They visit the farm and learn from their grandmother who is farming a small plot in Lisbon and selling to a CSA and the Senior Farm Share Programs. The farm's new BCS tractor waits patiently behind them. Read more about NIFI Board member John Yanga's small farm business and others at : www.immigrantfarming.org



Tilling with the new BCS tractor

Upcoming Events

- 24-25 July** • Flats Mentor Farm training
Lancaster , MA
- 6-8 August** • CBO/USDA meeting
Washington, DC
- 19-21 September** • GFJI
Growing Food and Justice for All Initiative
Milwaukee, WI

Meet NIFI's New Board Members

In February 2008 the National Immigrant Farming Initiative established a new board of directors. Under the board's skillful guidance, NIFI will transition to independent non-profit status, with Rural Coalition providing fiscal support and mentorship. Please visit www.immigrantfarming.org for further information.

Luciano Alvarado, Jr. is the co-owner of Palomo Farms located in Ivanhoe, NC. He is a dedicated member of several local churches and organizations and is the Director of the Migrant ESOL program in NC. Luciano is the Director of Small Farmers and Minority Farmers of America.

Luciano Alvarado, Sr. was raised on a farm in Mexico. In 1985, he emigrated to the USA to work as a farmworker. Now, he co-owns Palomo Farms located in Ivanhoe, NC. He has been heavily involved in public relations, public speaking, and farmworkers' political issues. Sr. is a member of the Small Farmers And Minority Farmers Of America and the Blueberry Association of NC.

Mapy Alvarez is originally from Colombia. She co-founded the New Farmer Development Project to help immigrants with agricultural backgrounds become farmers in the NYC area. She has a B.S. from the City University of New York and is a certified simultaneous and consecutive interpreter.

Don Bustos farms on his several-generations-old organic family farm, located in Santa Cruz, NM. Don has won many awards for his efforts to improve rural stability and economic viability of small farms in NM. He is a board member of several local, regional, and national agricultural organizations.

Bee Cha is the Hmong Small Farms Coordinator at WSU, where he has developed and coordinated Hmong Agricultural Education Programs. He works to identify Hmong farmer needs and provides workshops for over 1000 community members. He created a hotline to help meet their needs.

Rigoberto Delgado was born and raised in a farm in Lordsburg, NM. He is the Southwest Program Manager with Heifer International. He has a Ph.D. and M.S. in Extension and Adult Education from Cornell University and a B.S. in Agronomy from Hnos Escobar College of Agriculture. Dr. Delgado worked for over 15 years with FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture in Mexico and Central America. He is NIFI's founding member.

Maximiliano (Max) Fernandez was born in Punta Arenas, Chile and was raised on his family ranch. He has worked in the USA as a Petroleum Engineer since 1960. Max herds open range sheep with his family in Centerville, WA. He is a Board Member of the WA Farm Bureau and of the Sheep Advisory Committee of WA State. He was a WA State Department of Fish and Wildlife Farmer of the Year in 1996.

Malaquías Flores is originally from northern Mexico. He has Ph.D. in Agricultural and Extension Education from Michigan State University. Dr. Flores is the Hispanic Program Coordinator for the Small Farms Program at WSU. He has also served as director of the Center for Latino Farmers in Yakima, WA and director of all agriculture projects in Latin America for the Ezra Taft Benson Agriculture and Food Institute based at BYU.

Brett Melone is the ED of the Agriculture and Land Based Training Association (ALBA). He has extensive experience in management and administration of non-profit organizations in Chile and USA. He is member of CA FarmLink Board of Directors and Sustainable Agriculture Coalition Steering Committee.

Maria Moreira is originally from Portugal. Maria and her husband own Manny's Dairy Farm in Lancaster, MA (1982). She is the Agriculture Marketing Specialist for the University of MA Extension Services. She has assisted over 50 Hmong family farmers. Her initiatives have been a model for other immigrant farming projects regionally and nationally.

Tirso Moreno was born in Mexico and migrated to the USA in 1971 with his family as a farm worker. He is the lead organizer and director of the Farmworker Association of FL. He advocated for farm worker and immigrant rights at the UN World Conference Against Racism (2001) and the World Social Forum (2005). Tirso serves on the board of the Bert and Mary Meyer Foundation.

Lorette Picciano is the Rural Coalition/Coalicón Rural ED. She has worked toward eradicating discrimination and assuring equal access to USDA programs and promoting just and sustainable US agriculture and trade policies. She is currently working on the Farm and Food Policy Diversity Initiative and the Supermarket Project, an on-line electronic network.

Hector Tejada is a farmer from the Dominican Republic. He sells at several markets in New York, runs a CSA and has been a mentor to the other immigrant farmers. He founded the farming project Farmers of the World, an immigrant farmer project which focuses on hands-on experience and farmer-to-farmer mentoring to build skills and knowledge.

Stephan L. Tubene is an Associate Professor of Agricultural Economics at the UM Eastern Shore and the Small Farm Program Coordinator at the UMES Cooperative Extension. He has a B.S. from College of Engineering in the Congo (DRC) and a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from KSU. He is also President of the Federation of Congolese Abroad.

Ly Vang is the Director of the Association for the Advancement of Hmong Women in MN. She has over 24 years experience working and serving the Hmong farmers in MN. She serves as board member of local and national organizations, as an advisory for an international NGO, and as a professional interpreter.

John Yanga was born in Sudan and started farming with his family at the age of 12. He studied in Egypt and resettled in the USA as a refugee in 2000. John farms and has attended NIFI, Heifer, RMA and MOFGA trainings. He is the Outreach and Training Coordinator for the New American Sustainable Agriculture Project in Portland, ME.

Heladio (Lalo) F. Zavala is the CEO of MAFO, a national partnership. He is an experienced management consultant and technical assistance provider to non-profits. Lalo counsels people in workforce skills, skills development, and organizing communities. Lalo studied Social Work at the University of Minnesota.

SPECIAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Amy Carrington is the New American Sustainable Agriculture Project Director. She has worked on a diverse array of independently owned New England farms, served as market manager and a grower/vendor at the Lowell Farmers' Market, and acted as Coordinator of an immigrant farmer project at Tufts University.

Glen Hill is the Minnesota Food Association E.D. He holds a B.S. in Wildlife Biology and a M.S. in Applied Conservation. He has volunteered with the Peace Corps in Thailand and as a Country Program Director for SWISSAID's Burma Program.



NIFI Ad Hoc Committee:
Don Bustos, Luciano Alvarado Jr, Lalo Zavala, Mapy Alvarez, Maria Moreira, and Tirso Moreno