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## Graduation marks start of new phase for health promoters

"I AM WORTH A LOT, BUT I BELIEVED I WAS WORTH VERY LITTLE. SINCE I STARTED this program, I feel important. I would like to thank all the people who make this program possible, because they are providing a great opportunity to our Latino people, to our community." This heartfelt testimony, expressed by *promotora* Maria Serratos, seemed to sum up the prevailing sentiment at the Promotores de Salud's first graduation ceremony.

On Saturday, September 17, twenty-two *promotores* (health promoters), their families, and supporters gathered at the Woodland Public Library to celebrate the *promotores*' completion of the first training period of the project, which focused on building the volunteers' communication skills, identifying community resources, and teaching outreach and documentation methods.

The Promotores de Salud program was conceived in 1992 after the first Festival de la Salud, a health fair serving the Latino farm worker community. The Festival's advisory committee realized the need for follow-up, and developed the idea of recruiting and training lay health advisors who shared a language, culture, and health problems with the fairgoers, and who could act as liaisons between their communities and health care providers.

The graduates included Irma M. Rocha, Maria Serratos, Edith Rodriguez, Elvira R. Raya, Patricia Raya, Leticia Eaton, Teresa Bustamante, Ernest C. Rodriguez, Maria Ines Badillo, Celina Badillo, Yolanda Tapia, Martina Canez, Dora E. Varela, Esther G. Villalobos, Jorge Villalobos, Maria de Jesus Gonzalez, Cristina Quintana, Amparo Guerra, Maria Guadalupe Orozco, Martha Elena Salazar, Ana Alicia Jauregui-Perez, and Teresa V. Cervantes; they represent the communities of Woodland, Knights Landing, Winters, Esparto, Madison, Dixon, Arbuckle, and Robbins.

Carolina Bernal de Rios, director of public relations for KCSO Channel 19 in Modesto, served as the event's master of ceremonies, and Dr. Rigoberto Barba delivered the keynote address on how access to health care—especially the lack of it—affects the health status of farm worker communities. The evening culminated with a Mexican dinner provided by Tacos El Verduco, and a spirited performance by The Children's Ballet Folklorico of Esparto. Eslabon Associates of Davis graciously supplied a graduation cake.



PHOTO/DON VILLARDO

The Promotores de Salud, with Training Coordinator Celia Prado (fourth from left, first row), and CIRIS Associate Director Jill Shannon (far right, back row).

Please see GRADUATION, page 3



# Rural California Report

Newsletter of the California Institute for Rural Studies

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*Rural California Report* is a quarterly publication of the California Institute for Rural Studies. CIRS is an independent nonprofit research and advocacy group which has studied rural issues and policies since 1977. The institute's goal is to build a society that is ecologically balanced, socially just, and economically sustainable. Toward those objectives, CIRS conducts research and public education projects, and works with individual activists in rural communities.

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## Elections signal revived UFW

By Don Villarejo

**T**HE SPRING AND SUMMER OF 1994 saw a wave of new union representation elections at the state's agricultural work sites. The United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO, (UFW) won elections at seven farms, the result of UFW President Arturo Rodriguez's recent pledge to devote significant new resources to field organizing (see chart below). Supervised by the state's Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB), these elections saw the UFW earn more than two-thirds of the 1,104 votes cast.

The most significant victory, according to Philip Martin, an agricultural economics professor at the University of California, Davis, was the close contest at Oceanview Produce, a subsidiary of Dole Fresh Vegetables. When the votes were tallied, the UFW had won representation rights by a razor-thin margin of 298 to 278. Dole Food Company is the largest farm employer in California, with approximately 28,000 people working for the firm over the course of any single year.

Perhaps the most stunning UFW victory occurred at the E & J Gallo Winery vineyards in Sonoma County. After nearly a year of quiet house meetings, the Gallo employees voted overwhelmingly to have the UFW represent them

in contract negotiations. Given the two parties' history, it was an especially impressive win: Veteran UFW activists can still recall the bitter strike and subsequent lockout at the main Gallo facility near the small San Joaquin Valley town of Livingston during the 1970s.

Of potential long-term significance, the UFW signed new contracts with two additional farms, and renegotiated existing contracts at eleven others. The UFW says it is involved in active negotiations with dozens of farm employers.

Several large-scale farm worker marches held in key agricultural areas throughout the state this summer signaled the UFW's renewed commitment to organizing workers. Two events in April, one in Salinas, and the other in Greenfield, attracted 800 and 600 marchers respectively. A May march and *tardeada* (union celebration) in the Coachella Valley was attended by 1,500 grape workers, followed in June and July by a march and *tardeada* in Delano involving more than 1,000 table grape pickers.

The ALRB has responded to renewed UFW activity by issuing fourteen complaints against various employers for improper anti-union actions; most involve charges that workers were fired for their union activities. ♦

### ALRB-CONDUCTED UNION REPRESENTATION ELECTIONS

COMPANY	LOCATION	CROPS	DATE	UFW VOTES	"NO" VOTES	PEAK # OF JOBS
Cal Redi Date Co.	Coachella	dates	6-10-94	25	9	45
Theodore Jay Fish Co.	Coachella	dates	6-30-94	6	0	7
Oceanview Produce Co.	Oxnard	strawberries	5-18-94	298	278	650
Lewis Farms	Traver	fruit	7-19-94	80	9	128
Warmerdam	Hanford	tree fruit, nuts	6-23-94	220	43	340
Gallo	Santa Rosa	wine grapes	7-26-94	81	21	120
Ariel	Watsonville	mushrooms	9-02-94	30	4	50

Source: The UFW, courtesy of Philip Martin.



## ***Migrant Farmworkers: Pursuing Security in an Unstable Labor Market***

*Susan Gabbard, Richard Mines, and Beatrice Boccalandro  
Office of Program Economics, Office of the Assistant Secretary  
for Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, Research Report No. 5,  
Washington, DC, May 1994, 50 pp.*

*Migrant Farmworkers: Pursuing Security in an Unstable Labor Market* is the latest research report based on the on-going National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor. Now in its sixth year, the NAWS is the largest—and certainly the most representative—national survey of farm workers ever undertaken in the United States. Each year since its inception in 1988, the NAWS has interviewed approximately 2,500 randomly selected agricultural employees. The latest report analyzes the data gathered from subjects interviewed between January 1989 and June 1991.

According to the NAWS, about 42 percent of those employed in seasonal agricultural services are “migrant” workers; that is, they travel at least 75 miles for work. Nationwide, this percentage translates to roughly 670,000 migrant farm workers, though the total population migrating is much larger, since many family members accompany these laborers as they travel from crop to crop.

In some crop categories and in certain geographic regions, migrant workers make up the bulk of the labor force. For example, the survey found the majority of vegetable, fruit, and nut farm workers migrate, as do the majority of seasonal farm employees in the Northeast, Southeast, and Northwest.

In California, slightly fewer than half (47 percent) of all agricultural workers migrate to secure seasonal jobs. The finding is a surprising one, since a 1983 survey found that, at the time, only 39 percent of the agricultural labor force was migrating to piece together year-round employment. This data provides clear evidence that migrancy

among California farm workers increased during the 1980s.

The NAWS also found that the vast majority of migrant farm workers travel from their hometowns to a particular work site, and then return when the job is done. In fact, these “shuttle” migrants outnumber circular migrants—those who follow the crops from place to place on a seasonal route—by almost three to one. Four out of five shuttle migrants travel between a foreign country (mostly Mexico) and the United States; only a relative few migrate from a permanent U.S. home to another location for work.

The report presents a wealth of new data on the composition of the nation’s hired farm labor force. While approximately two-thirds of the current seasonal agricultural labor force is foreign-born, the figure is 88 percent for those now entering this type of work. As the foreign-born proportion grows, immigrant laborers will increasingly replace and displace U.S.-born workers. This trend coincides with the current upsurge in anti-immigrant sentiment, and the surrounding debate on the role of immigrants in our society.

In one of the most valuable sections of the report, the authors present some possible implications of their findings. Roughly summarized, they find that though migrant farm workers seek to attain a lifestyle of stable long-term agricultural employment, they rarely succeed. In the authors’ opinion, the structure of farm labor demand itself undermines the workers’ efforts to achieve even limited success because it emphasizes temporary jobs, encourages sub-contracting for labor management, and recruits workers in a manner that results in a chronic oversupply of labor.

For anyone interested in migrant farm workers, this new report is required reading.

*For more information, please contact Ruth Samardick, USDOL, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Room S-2015, 200 Constitution Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20010. Telephone (202) 219-6461. ♦*

## RESOURCES

*By Don Villarejo*

## **GRADUATION, cont. from page 1**

In addition to attending weekly training sessions, the promotores were actively involved in this year’s Festival de la Salud by promoting it within their communities, providing referrals and conducting surveys at the event, and drafting a letter of recommendation to the advisory committee with suggestions for improving next year’s festival. By listening to and communicating health care problems, the promotores function as the

ears and voices of their communities.

At group meetings, the promotores pool information on community resources and brainstorm to resolve problems identified by individual members. The next phase of the training will encompass building organizational and leadership skills, analyzing community dynamics, and targeting specific health issues such as individuals’ medical rights, women’s health, and domestic violence.

In the future, the promotores will focus on taking direct action in their communities to resolve the health obstacles farm workers so frequently face. Possible directions include developing child care networks, and improving clinic confidentiality and hours of operation.

The Promotores de Salud project has been funded by the Sierra Health Foundation. ♦

—Lynn Kusnierz  
(Jill Shannon contributed to this story.)



# Water sales hurt California's rural economy

**T**HE PROPOSED SALE OF FEDERAL Central Valley Project (CVP) water has become the focus of widespread public protest and heated hearings in the San Joaquin Valley.

Passed by Congress two years ago, the misleadingly named Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) permits private agricultural users of CVP water to sell their contracted irrigation supply to the highest bidder. The state Water Bank, motivated by the prolonged drought, has embraced these water transfers.

The first of the proposed sales is now up for review by federal and state agencies. Over the next fifteen years, the agreement would divert 32,000 acre-feet of water scheduled for delivery to the west side of the San Joaquin Valley to the Metropolitan Water District (MWD), Southern California's biggest urban water distributor. That's enough water to supply the needs of 10,000 people—a small city—for the same fifteen-year period.

And who is the first seller to take advantage of this new act? It's Rusty Areias, a state legislator who vocally opposed such sales when the CVPIA was being deliberated by Congress. The selling price is said to be in excess of \$175 per acre-foot, twice the full-cost value of the water.

So why the protest? Isn't California going to grow with or without the CVPIA? Don't urban areas need more water?

## Rural areas lose more than water

The problem is that the proposed sale will harm the communities that were originally scheduled to receive the water. When water that farmers and rural towns have relied upon for decades is

sold to another part of the state, the area loses jobs and income, as a recent University of California study clearly shows.

The proposed sales will not create new water supplies. As the term implies, a water sale simply transfers water from one area to another; the sending region's loss is the receiving region's gain.

## COMMENTARY

By Don Villarejo

Some would argue that agriculture *should* give up water, that urban growth demands additional supplies. Supporters are also quick to point out that the CVPIA boosts water allocations to the environment, since a portion of the revenue the CVP earns from water transfers will go into a special fund for environmental restoration.

## Agriculture is part of the environment, too

But this school of reasoning is at the heart of the problem. Those who support water sales believe that agriculture and the environment are separate, and that cities and the environment are "good" water users while agriculture is a "bad" user.

The truth, of course, is more complex. First, because California still has more land in irrigated agriculture than it has in subdivisions, agriculture requires more *total* water than the urban areas of the state. But acre for acre, the typical California residential development actually uses more water than irrigated farming does.

Second, the great majority of water used for irrigation returns directly to the environment, through evaporation,

return flow to streams, and percolation through the soil to ground water tables. In contrast, nearly all urban water becomes hazardous waste through human and industrial consumption practices. When urban residents use water it must be chemically treated before it can be returned to the environment, as the repeated pollution of our ocean coast—whether at Santa Monica or San Diego—demonstrates. Farming is certainly more environmentally friendly than urban sprawl.

Third, the water proposed for sale originates in Northern California, and is transferred to agricultural users by the federal CVP. The federal CVP was built by taxpayers, which makes that water *our* water. Who gave private businesses the right to profit from selling publicly developed water at drought-inflated prices? It was urban development interests and their newfound friends, urban environmentalists, who wrote and lobbied for this new law.

## Why the middle man?

This begs an interesting question, Why not have the federal CVP sell the water directly to the MWD at its actual cost? Why should our water be sold to an intermediary who pockets the extra cash?

Urban environmentalists, who have allied themselves with developers against the farmers, insist that these sales would be good for the environment because of the revenue the act would generate. Of course, they don't want anyone to talk about how farm workers and farmers, seed dealers and tractor salespeople, and family-based stores in farming communities throughout the San Joaquin Valley will lose. Or how irrigation water that once re-

Please see WATER, page 5



**WATER, cont. from page 4**

charged the local ground water tables will go directly to urban users.

**Drought dried up water supply**

Research at CIRS shows that one of the primary effects of the 1987-92 drought was the reduction of federal water deliveries to agriculture (see chart, top). For the first three years of the drought, CVP water deliveries fell only slightly from pre-drought levels. But by 1990 (year four of the drought), CVP deliveries had plummeted by 50 percent—more in some locations.

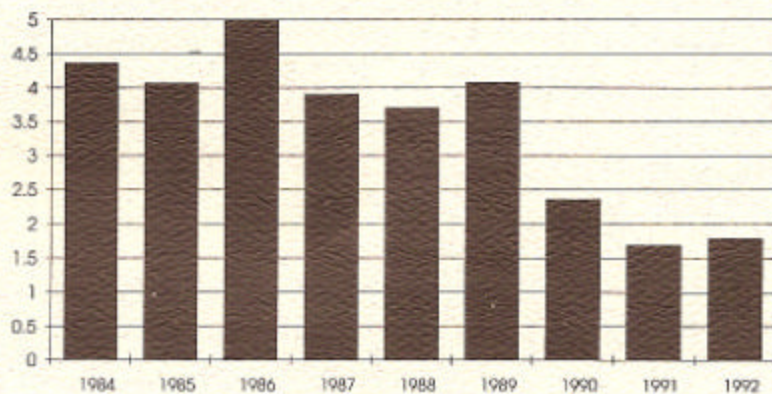
As a result of these cutbacks, the total amount of land irrigated by federal water also dropped (see chart, middle). Not surprisingly, by the last three years of the drought, harvested crop land in California's Central Valley had declined by several hundred thousand acres. Correspondingly, the amount of land fallowed or dry farmed rose sharply, and jobs and income were lost.

Most of this harvested land loss occurred in field and seed crops. Limited water supplies were expended on the water-dependent fruit and nut trees so that orchards would not be totally lost. Vegetable crop acreage grew slightly since these commodities require less land—and therefore less water—than field and seed crops (see chart, bottom). Overall, the reductions in crop land were substantial.

Given this background, it hardly comes as a surprise that farmers and farm workers flooded the public hearings in August to testify that water transfers seriously threaten the already precarious rural economy in California. Both the public good and the environment are under threat from this proposal to sell what is, after all, our water. ♦

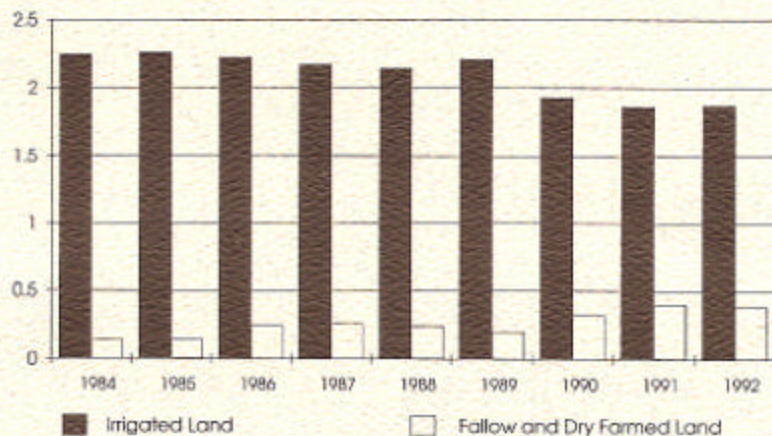
**WATER DELIVERIES TO FARMS**

CENTRAL VALLEY PROJECT SERVICE AREA  
(IN MILLIONS OF ACRE-FEET)



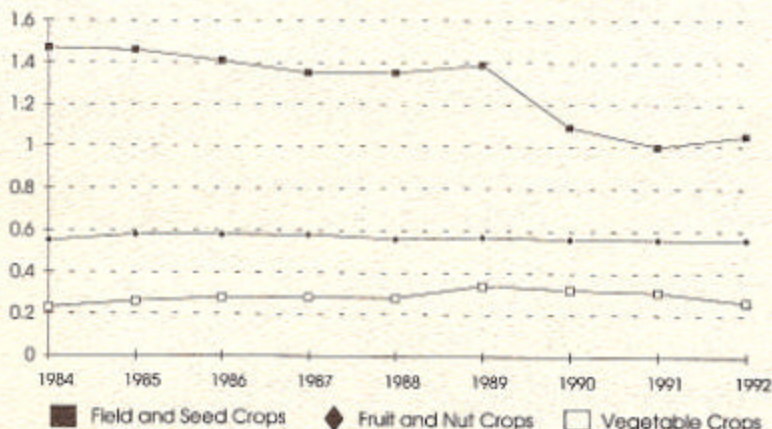
**AGRICULTURAL LAND USE**

CENTRAL VALLEY PROJECT SERVICE AREA  
(IN MILLIONS OF ACRES)



**HARVESTED CROP ACRES**

CENTRAL VALLEY PROJECT SERVICE AREA  
(IN MILLIONS OF ACRES)





# Organic crop production blooms in California

By Don Villarejo

**R**ELIABLE MEASURES OF THE SIZE of California's rapidly growing organic farm industry are hard to find. In fact, prior to the enactment of the Organic Foods Act of 1990 there was no objective measure available. Under this act, organic farm operators are required to register their farm's operations with their county's agricultural commissioner. In 1993, thirty-two counties provided organic crop acreage or, in a few cases, organic crop values in their annual crop reports (see table below).<sup>1</sup>

CIRS used these reports to compute

the fraction of each county's harvested crop acreage (or farm gate value) represented by reported organic crop production. Since Monterey and Yolo were the only counties to report both organic crop value and organic crop acreage, an average of the organic acreage-to-value ratios for the two counties was calculated and applied to the available information for each of the remaining thirty counties.

Based on these estimates, CIRS places the aggregate farm gate value of organic crop production in these thirty-two counties between \$83 million and \$317.5 million, with the actual value most like-

ly exceeding \$250 million. Because more than two dozen counties reported neither organic crop value nor organic crop acres, they were not considered in the calculations. As a result, it is likely that the total figure is somewhat larger.

Our approximation seems to be a reasonable one. According to Brian Baker of California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF), his organization estimates that its members, who represent one-third of California's organic farms, account for approximately \$80 million in commodity sales, leading to CCOF's estimate of \$240 million for total organic farm receipts. ♦

COUNTY	ALL CROPS		ORGANIC CROPS		
	VALUE <sup>2</sup>	CROP ACRES <sup>3</sup>	FARMS	VALUE	CROP ACRES
Tulare	\$2,568.9	776,015	N.A.	N.A.	3,500
Monterey	1,809.0	313,764	27	10.9	1,000
Kern	1,782.9	809,725	28	N.A.	4,876
San Diego	898.5	80,221	400+	4.3	N.A.
Ventura	823.0	121,886	24	N.A.	1,143
San Joaquin	805.4	544,800	6	N.A.	269
Merced	670.1	555,455	21	N.A.	753
Kings	530.6	512,949	1	N.A.	38
Madera	519.5	309,073	16	N.A.	1,931
Santa Barbara	453.4	54,770	N.A.	N.A.	4,500
Butte	267.1	206,308	51	N.A.	1,559
San Luis Obispo	258.0	206,353	68	N.A.	2,437
Santa Cruz	237.1	21,365	50	2.0	N.A.
Yolo	225.8	355,152	N.A.	2.7	1,242
Glenn	202.7	241,301	26	N.A.	1,095
San Mateo	202.4	9,795	9	N.A.	111
Los Angeles	198.6	16,353	20	N.A.	143
Sonoma	184.7	82,539	472	N.A.	3,541
14 small counties	758.7	596,981	332	N.A.	5,490

<sup>1</sup> Six other counties reported a total of 82 organic farms, but provided neither organic crop acreage nor value of production.

<sup>2</sup> Crop values are expressed in millions.

<sup>3</sup> Only crop acreage figures have been included; livestock production has been excluded.



# Cuts spark strike at tomato processing firm

By Don Villarejo

**E**MPLOYEES OF GANGI BROS. Packing Co. were stunned when news of take-it-or-leave wage cuts were announced this past August at the San Joaquin Valley tomato processing plant.

According to the company's proposal, those employed 100 days or more during the tomato harvest season would see their pay drop by almost a third, to \$6.42 per hour, \$3 less than what they had been receiving. Those employed less than 100 days would be paid \$5.42 an hour, down \$2—or 27 percent—from the previous level. The strikers complain the cuts unfairly target the plant's lowest paid workers.

But there was more in the announced cutbacks that offended the employees: all four paid holidays, as well as medical benefits, would be eliminat-



PHOTO/LUIS MAGANA

After five years at Gangi Bros., Sr. Carlos Moreno joined his coworkers in a strike against the company. (his story, below).

ed. On August 23, in response to the company's final offer, the workers, all members of Teamsters Local 748, went on strike.

A company attorney said Gangi Bros. employs approximately 450 workers during the tomato harvest, but the union claims it represents 520 members at the plant.

Within days the company had recruited and hired hundreds of replacement workers, and tensions rose. When striking employees attempted to block access to the plant with their bodies, local law enforcement officers appeared in riot gear, a move seen by the union as overreaction; no arrests were made. In the end, the strikers watched as their jobs were taken by others.

Gangi Bros. Packing Co. is a small firm located near Riverbank, which handles product from 32 growers in San Joaquin and Stanislaus counties. Gangi packs about 3 percent of the state's tomato production.

To explain the proposed cutbacks, the company claims that it has lost money for the past three years and that something needed to be done. For its former employees that "something" turned out to be everything. ♦

## Testimonio de un huelguista

*Sr. Carlos Moreno, de 56 años de edad, originario de Penjamillo, Michoacán, México. Radica en Oakdale, California. Se encuentra en huelga contra la planta enlatadora Gangi Bros. de Riverbank, California, desde el 23 de agosto de 1994.*

"Tengo trabajando en esta planta 5 años. Estaba ganando a \$9.52 por hora. Con las propuestas de la compañía de recortarnos los salarios, entonces me pagarían a \$5.25 por hora, además nos descontarían los días de fiesta más los beneficios y por eso estamos en huelga. En vez de darnos aumento, nos han quitado lo que teníamos. No estamos peleando aumento de sueldos ni otra cosa, solo queremos que no nos quiten lo que ya teníamos. Nos quieren quitar casi la mitad, es mucho. Si así no la hacemos como es una temporada de tres meses, haciendonos estos recortes de sueldos y beneficios, pues menos.

"Tengo 21 años radicando en los Estados Unidos... El fil es duro y pagan barato y los rancheros ya tienen su gente, es difícil conseguir trabajo en el fil. Sé soldar. Tengo 25 años de experiencia. Me he apuntado en busca de empleo en las oficinas de empleo de los pueblos de los alrededores. Pero no me llaman, me discriminan por mi edad. Seguire en la huelga. Voy ir a la oficina del desempleo para solicitar beneficios y pagar mis biles. Los nuevos que están entrando a trabajar trabajan hasta doce horas."

— Carlos Moreno, a 6 de septiembre de 1994

## Testimony of a striker

*Sr. Carlos Moreno, 56 years old, hails from Penjamillo, State of Michoacán, Mexico. He lives in Oakdale, California. OTAC staff met Moreno when he went on strike against the Gangi Bros. canning plant of Riverbank, California, on August 23, 1994.*

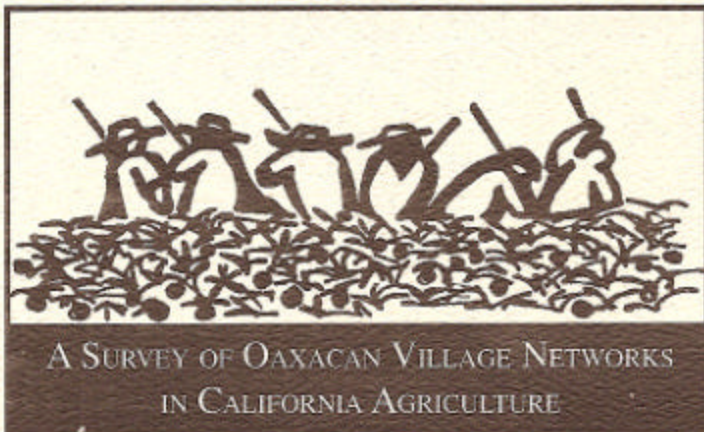
"I have worked in this plant for five years. I was being paid \$9.52 per hour. With the proposal from the company to cut our salaries, they would pay me \$5.25 per hour, and also would discontinue our paid holidays and other benefits; this is why we are on strike. Instead of giving us an increase, they are taking away what we have. We are not fighting to increase salaries nor for anything else; we only want that they not take away what we already have. They would like to take nearly half (our pay) from us—that's a lot. Our season lasts only three months, so the savings from these salary and benefit cuts would be small.

"I have lived in the U.S. for 21 years... (Living on) the margin is hard and the pay is low, and the farmers have their people; it is difficult to obtain work at the margin. I know how to weld. I have 25 years of experience. I have pointedly looked for work at the employment offices in surrounding towns, but they don't call me—they discriminate against me because of my age. So carry on the strike. I am going to go to the unemployment office to ask for unemployment benefits and pay my bills. The new ones (strikebreakers) that are starting work, they are working up to twelve hours (a day)."

— Carlos Moreno, September 6, 1994



**NEWREPORT!**



By **David Runsten and Michael Kearney**; 111 pages  
 Funded by grants from **The Ford Foundation, The Aspen Institute,**  
 and **The Rosenberg Foundation**

CIRS researchers originally set out to survey Mixtec farm workers because they kept appearing in news reports as suffering the worst living conditions and employment abuses of any group working in California agriculture. *A Survey of Oaxacan Village Networks in California Agriculture* is the latest report to grow out of this research.

In the summer of 1991, surveyors visited areas of known concentrations of Mixtecs throughout California, and interviewed as many indigenous Oaxacan migrants as resources allowed. The results are surprising: while these migrants hail from over 200 villages in their native land, they are heavily concentrated in a few sending districts, and migrate to roughly 100 California destinations, plus a number of locations in other states. An extensive appendix at the end of the report lists each village uncovered in the survey, along with U.S. destinations and the number of villagers reportedly there.

According to the authors' estimates, the peak-season population of Mixtecs in California agriculture now approaches 50,000. Since these indigenous migrants are more likely to be undocumented than the better established mestizo migrants—and therefore more vulnerable to abuses—their growing presence in California's fields presents a new challenge to those who are concerned with farm worker welfare.

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