



Latino Farmers Attend President Fox Visit



Sergio Marquez speaks with President Fox about Apple Exporting
***The above picture was taken by Yakima Herald Republic Photographer Gordon King

Driven by Mexican Consul Jorge Madrazo with the planning efforts of a Yakima Hispanic Planning Committee which included RCDR's Luz Bazan Gutierrez and the efforts of Rene and Carmen Garcia to accommodate the unprecedented visit, President Fox of Mexico made a stop to the Yakima Valley on May 24th to visit G & G Orchards and speak with a select group of community members about immigration and international business issues. Members of coops Manzaneros Mexicanos de Washington in Yakima and United Growers Inc. in Tonasket were special invitees.

Fox's visit, coming at a time of country turmoil over immigration and apple exporting issues, was anything, but anti-climatic. Many Latino Farmers and farm workers had the chance to shake hands and speak briefly with the President and his staff. Sergio Marquez, President of Manzaneros Mexicanos, was one of a few farmers who was allowed to walk and talk with President Fox as he strolled around the orchard and warehouse. In the midst of their conversation, Mr. Marquez was able to voice a growing concern among Latino Farmers, "When

is the Mexican government going to lift the tariff's set as a result of anti-dumping suites brought against Washington apple warehouses in 1996?" "When are Mexican American growers going to be allowed to ship to Mexican consumers?"

Eric Alegria, Center Manager said "it was time for the Mexican government to acknowledge that the tariffs negatively effect Mexican farm workers and farm owners in the United States, not just the apple industries' power brokers." Alegria indicated that he was very happy that Mr. Marquez had the opportunity to speak for all Latino farmers and farm workers living in the United States and expressed his hope that President Fox was speaking with Marquez as a farmer and not the President.

RCDR President Luz Gutierrez and Center Manager Eric Alegria also attended a dinner held in Seattle at the Westin Hotel in honor of President Fox.

President Fox' visit went as quickly as it came and now Center Farmers are waiting to see if their voices were heard and if the President's influence, as he prepares to step down from his post, will be enough to alter the splintered international relationship between Mexican

Apple Farmers and United States Apple Exporters.

In response to the visit, the Secretaria de Economia of Mexico has been working with area coops to guide them through international exporting processes and procedures. See page 2 for more information about the guidance being provided to the coops.

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**Center for Latino Farmers
Yakima, WA**



A Division of Rural Community
Development Resources

24 South 3rd. Avenue
Yakima, WA 98902

Phone: 509-453-3157
Fax: 509-453-5165

Email: latinofarmers@charter.net

FSA Committee Elections

A County Committee seat that covers the upper Yakima Valley (north of the Rattlesnake Ridge minus the land south of Ahtanum Creek) in the FSA Committee is up for election this coming fall. Farm owners, operators and tenants over the age of 18 are eligible to run. The FSA is looking to fill the vacated position with a minority farmer. A petition form signed by those interested in running is required. The petition indicates that the individual if elected agrees to serve the three-year term. Committee members get hourly pay for their attendance at County Committee meetings. The Center is encouraging its farmers to sign-up for the position. For more information contact the FSA at 509-454-5746.

Spanish Workshops in 2006

Workshop/Training	Date (s)	Time	Location
FSA-Process	(PENDING)	6:00 - 8:00 pm	USDA - FSA Office - 1606 Perry St. Yakima
RD-Process	(PENDING)	6:00-8:30pm	USDA - RD Office - 1606 Perry St. Yakima
Borrower Financial Management Training	August 4-5	Friday 9am-5pm Sat. 9am-4pm	Whistler's Restaurant in Tonasket
*Monthly Radio Show	July 20 August 17 September 21	4:00 - 5:00 pm	Radio KDNA - FM 91.9

Space is limited, to register call (509) 453-3157 or (509) 453-5133

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2007 Farm Bill Debate Reaches Yakima

In preparation for the 2007 Farm Bill, a hearing was held in Yakima on June 10th to review the 2002 Farm Bill and its applicability to modern agricultural issues and USDA services. The Center organized the presence of 5 farmers at the hearing and met before the hearing with Congressman Salazar of Colorado, Congressman Costa of California and Congressman Goodlatte of Virginia (Chairman of the Committee) who all listened intently to the concerns of small minority farmers. The hearing had a select number of speakers per commodity (one), leaving the voice of smaller farmers to written testimony. The testimony submitted by the Center focused on cooperative development, the monitoring of contracts between warehouses and growers and the allocation resources for educational trainings.

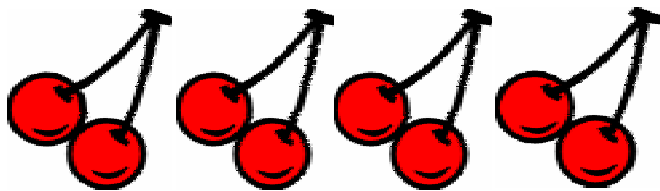
The Center is encouraging all farmers to call Congressman Rick Larsen's Office at 202-226-9712 to express their concerns.



Lauriano Barajas, Mario Mosso, Higinio Coronel and Eric Alegria stand with Congressman Costa of CA, Con. Goodlatte of VA and Con. Salazar of CO at the Farm Bill Hearing held in Yakima

Black Farmers Protest

On April 26th, black farmers rallied outside the Department of Agriculture in Washington DC to protest a recent discrimination lawsuit settlement that, according to protesters, left out thousands of black farmers. The National Black Farmers Association (NBFA), which led the protest, is trying to eliminate and reverse the causes of primarily limited access to credit and capital while creating opportunities for small farmers to compete in the mainstream economy.



Center Staff to Tonasket



Tonasket Farmers & Center Staff pose after the meeting

On May 11, Luz Gutierrez, Center Manager Eric Alegria and Outreach Financial Specialist Blanca Alvitres visited the Center's Tonasket farmers. The meeting, which was attended by seventeen area farmers, covered issues such as trainings, loan information and issues effecting the Tonasket based United Growers cooperative. The Center plans to offer a two-day intensive Borrower Financial Management Training Course on August 4th & 5th in Tonasket. The class will go from 9am-5pm on Friday and 9am-4pm on Saturday. Call the Center for cost details. Discounts are available for family members. Participants must pre-register. For more information about the Coops or upcoming trainings contact Eric Alegria at 509-453-3157.



Center Continues Collaborative Efforts with RD

In continuation of the strong collaborative relationship between the Center and USDA agencies, Center officials recently sat down with new Rural Development Director John DeVaney and Area Director Randy Baird.

The group discussed the new direction of the Agency and assessed the future of their partnership. Specifically, Mr. DeVaney spoke about the new emphasis on value added packaging in the Agency's grant opportunities. Value-added is the incremental value that is realized by the producer from an agricultural commodity or product as a result of a change in its physical state, differentiated production or marketing, as demonstrated in a business plan, product segregation or the economic benefit realized from the production of farm or ranch-based renewable energy. Center Farmers are encouraged to apply for the grants. The Center plans to host a Rural Development information pres-



State Director of Rural Development John DeVaney meets with Luz Bazan Gutierrez and Eric Alegria

entation in the fall. For more information about value added grants or other Rural Development grants contact Rural Development at 509-454-5743.

Secretaria de Economia Staff at Center

Sent by Mexico's Secretary of Economy, Pedro De Leon, Director of Procedures for the Secretary of Economy of Mexico visited the Center recently to speak with the Coops about the application process that is required to export apples to Mexico. Thirteen farmers attended the meeting to increase their understanding of the process and explore the possibility of combining their products to ship across Mexican-US borders.



New Outreach Financial Specialist



Blanca Alvitres was hired as the Center's Outreach Financial Specialist in late April to fill the spot vacated by Olivia Galindo's departure. She has previously been employed as an Assistant Manager/Bookkeeper for Safeway in Grandview, Manager/Bookkeeper for Denny's Restaurant in Issaquah and Accounts Receivable Assistant at Teikyo Post University. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in

International Business from Teikyo Post University in Waterbury, Connecticut. She immigrated to the United States from Cajamarca, Peru in 1998.

The Center is elated to have someone as qualified as Blanca to assist Farmers in their financial endeavors. Eric Alegria, Center Manager recently said that, "Blanca is a tremendous asset and wonderful addition to Center staff." Alegria went on to say that, "Her strong book-keeping background and friendly demeanor made her the logical choice for the position." If you want Blanca's help with the FSA loan process call the Center at 509-453-3157.