

Increasing Knowledge and Networking Opportunities for Small Scale Mexican Growers in Southwest Michigan



Maria Josefa Santos

**Instituto de Investigaciones
Sociales, UNAM**

Antonio Castro-Escobar

Michigan Department of Agriculture



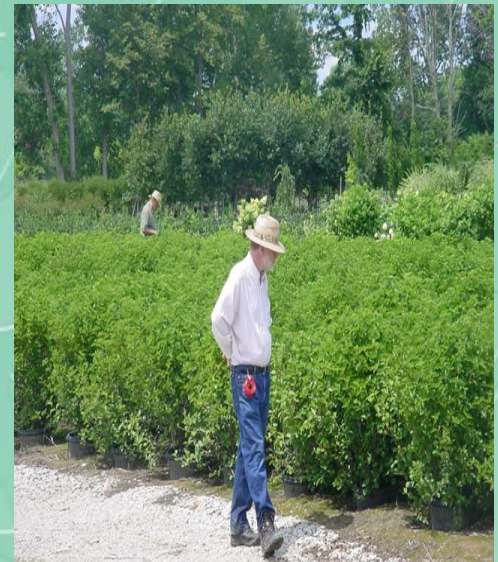
Introduction

Michigan's Agriculture is the second most important industry in the State.



The State's agribusiness sector generates nearly 64 billion in economic activity and employs one million people.

The grower population in Michigan and throughout the U.S. is aging.



Introduction (continued)

Southwest Michigan has experienced an increase in Mexican entrepreneurs

- Acquiring farm land
- Starting a Mexican store/restaurant or both



Moved to the area from Chicago

- Some held a job in the steel mill industry
- Some came with a business background in Mexico

Objectives

- **To show the needs encountered by Mexican growers.**
- **To show the strategies followed by growers to meet these needs.**
- **To show how educational, State, Federal, and Non-profit agencies try to meet these needs.**

Methodology

- **The Study was conducted in 2007-2008 using the classical anthropological method.**
- **Made an ethnographic assessment of training courses**
- **Open interviews with Mexican entrepreneurs, MSU Extension, and other individuals involved in providing training to Mexican Growers.**

Methodology (continued)

- Genealogy of the two most important families in the community.
- Farm visits



Findings

- **NEEDS**

- **OPPORTUNITIES**



Findings (continued)

Needs:

- **Disconnect between the programs offered and the particular needs of Latino growers in Michigan.**
- **Lack or limited access to credit and educational/technical knowledge.**
- **Lack of grower organization.**



Findings (continued)

Needs:

- **Lack or limited knowledge of the commercialization process.**
- **Lack or limited knowledge of pest management practices.**
- **Reliance on aerial commercial pesticide applicator firms.**
- **Lack or limited knowledge of pesticide and labor laws.**

Findings (continued)

Opportunities:

- Opportunity to seek long term funding.
- Propose changes to the way credit is provided.
- Organize growers in co-op and or association.



Findings (continued)

Opportunities:

- Opportunity for pest management services.
- Opportunity for agricultural inputs.
- Opportunity for packaging/storage/distribution service.



Conclusion

- **Mexican growers are forming an important group of entrepreneurs in Southwest Michigan.**
- **Rely mainly on “paisano” family networks to obtain information.**
- **Census data indicates that Latinos will become increasingly important to Michigan's agricultural industry in the years to come.**

Conclusion (continued)

- **It is essential that educational institutions and agencies pay attention to the needs of Mexican growers.**
- **Helping growers to integrate successfully into the industry will be beneficial for the growers, the agricultural industry, and the State's economy.**

Michigan



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QUESTIONS?

Protect • Promote • Preserve