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# Agricultural Hierarchy and the Legal Condition of Chicanas/os in the Rural Economy

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines alternative interpretations of agricultural law that encompasses the realm of Lat-Crit and Critical Race Theory scholarship and its application to workers within the agricultural hierarchy. Representing new forms of legal jurisprudence allows examining legislation written primarily by the dominant population that continues to exclude the agricultural worker. In facilitating food production in the United States, federal legislation and policy have extended a wide array of benefits to the agricultural sector that has long promoted the sector's wealth. Despite broad public support, workers, a key input critical to the production of food, remains excluded from economically driven legislation. Benefitting the sector through seasonal and migrant labor that plants, cultivates, and harvests fruit, nuts, and trees, federal legislation is perpetuating the longstanding poverty status of workers, comprised largely of persons of Mexican descent. This federal posture promotes erratic terms and deplorable conditions of employment for workers under federal law, and thus racializes the treatment of workers with a Mexican background. Largely excluded from beneficial federal legislation, agricultural workers consequently remain marginalized within the framework of agricultural law. In the enactment of agricultural legislation, the drafters and promoters of agricultural legislation fail to access alternative interpretations of the law. This failure disallows choices representative of a democratic ideal and promotes the omission of agricultural laborers from economically driven measures. As an alternative, this essay seeks inclusion of agricultural laborers within the culture of agricultural legislation benefitting the economic standing of the sector.