

2018 Michigan Good Food Summit

Breakout Session #13: Empowering Latino Farmers

1:45 pm

Speakers: Ruben Martinez and Filiberto Villa-Gomez, Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University

Ruben: Welcome audience. Objectives. Latinos, regardless if they are native born and foreign born, they are the less integrated group to federal and state agencies services and institutions.

Close to 1,000 operators from 80,000, 1/3 are women and they have over 115,000 acres. 135 acres average size farm.

Project sponsored by NIFA. Examining livelihood of Latinos farmers. Access the Entrepreneurial readiness (technological, financial capacity) of the farmers in MI, MN, We still need to identify the indicators to measure this.

Basic needs and Issues:

1. Unconnected:
 - a. Cultural clashes (individualistic and collective culture approaches)
 - b. Lack of outreach
 - c. Lack of Multicultural capacity (lack of extension)
 - d. Institutional Discrimination

Americans have cognitive barriers to adapt to working with other cultures due to ethnocentrism

2. Lack of business knowledge
 - a. Low educational achievement
 - b. Lack of access to information (language barrier)
 - c. Low literacy
3. Low use of technology and adaptation issues

Filiberto takes over:

Thanks to site visits to farms we can better understand the needs and challenges.

4. Limited Access to capital (including social capital)
 - a. Don't understand credit reporting and scores
 - b. Poor record keeping
 - c. Unfamiliar with bureaucratic process (impatience, desperate)
5. Unfamiliar with market and marketing
 - a. Unprepared for marketing process, sales facts, details
6. Limited understanding of farm management
 - a. Farm diversification does not match market driven or demand
 - b. Is hard to communicate and feature the uniqueness of their products

- c. Lack of vision and planning (needs cognitive/mentality change)
- d. Quality control/metrics/timing (lack of knowledge on land history, farming practices nearby, do not know how to manage the different classifications to sell fruits)
- e. Regulations (GAPS/ Food Safety/ lack of timing and understanding to get certified, lack of understanding for the food safety needs for each outlet, FIMSA has helped them understanding the applications of food safety in small farms)

Question: What are some of the market challenges? The *tomatillo* and the *chiles* are not being targeted to the ones that will buy it, such as Hispanic enclaves' markets.

What can be done to integrate Latino farmers into the agricultural industry?

- Close the gaps with Latino producers and service providers
- Cultural change
- Capacity building in both sides
- Encourage the Latino farmers to approach services with patience
- Increase business knowledge
 - Improved record keeping, planning and marketing by more holistic recording of farm practices
- Increase production knowledge
 - Proper tools, machinery, technology that is cost effective and a sound investment.
- Increase understanding of regulations
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What are we doing?

This groups is already experiencing research fatigue.

- Introduction to Farm Management I and II
 - Lake Michigan College (non-credit course, 14 session courses, free)
 - Planning, Marketing, Finances, Recordkeeping, Labor Regulations, Business Planning
 - Business is Business, partnership with Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and SCORE
 - IFM I have 16 students and its first session is going on now
 - The challenge is to find experts and resources in Spanish language
 - They are engaged and excited to learn more

Research is sponsored by National Immigrant Farming Initiative and MIFFS

Questions:

- Are most of the farm family farms and workers cooperatives?
 - Yes, family farms.
- Do you think this model can be applied to other cultures?
 - Yes, because business is business.
- How can my organization, farmers market organizers, can do?
 - Connect with us to introduce you to them and talk to them about the process of getting into a farmers market.
- Have you thought of recording it and disseminating across the state?
 - Yes, we didn't get the funding but will keep looking for opportunities that fund so.
- Does the class is building the social capacity and social network of the participants?
 - Yes, most of them didn't know each other but knew of each other before starting.
- Is their market for their products only in Michigan, what about Chicago?
 - Mostly Detroit and Chicago.
- Why do you think they are not growing their traditional products for sale and not just their own consumption?
 - Intimidate by navigating and understanding the new market opportunities
- Is there support for them to grow organic, IPM and/or natural farming practices?
 - Yes, and they want to do it this way, but first we want to focus on farm management them into farming practices.
- Are the resources to translate pesticides and more growing practices information?
 - Yes, the pool of resources is growing.

Ruben:

After this pilot and we evaluate and receive feedback we will disseminate it the curriculum.

We want to dismantle some of the assumptions we make. We thought the farmers were purchasing land from white growers but instead the succession is black farms to Latino farmers.