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**Rural America: Next Generation of Farmers;
“The Changing Face of Agriculture”**

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Professor of Anthropology

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PhD Student - MSU

*Agricultural Outlook Forum, Washington DC
February 17 2006*

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Introduction

Introduction

- The Hispanic population is the fastest growing and largest minority group in the United States.
- Historically, Hispanic farms were concentrated in a few states. However in the 1990s, the number of Hispanic farms outside this border region increased and the geographic distribution of Hispanic farms transformed from a regional to a national phenomenon

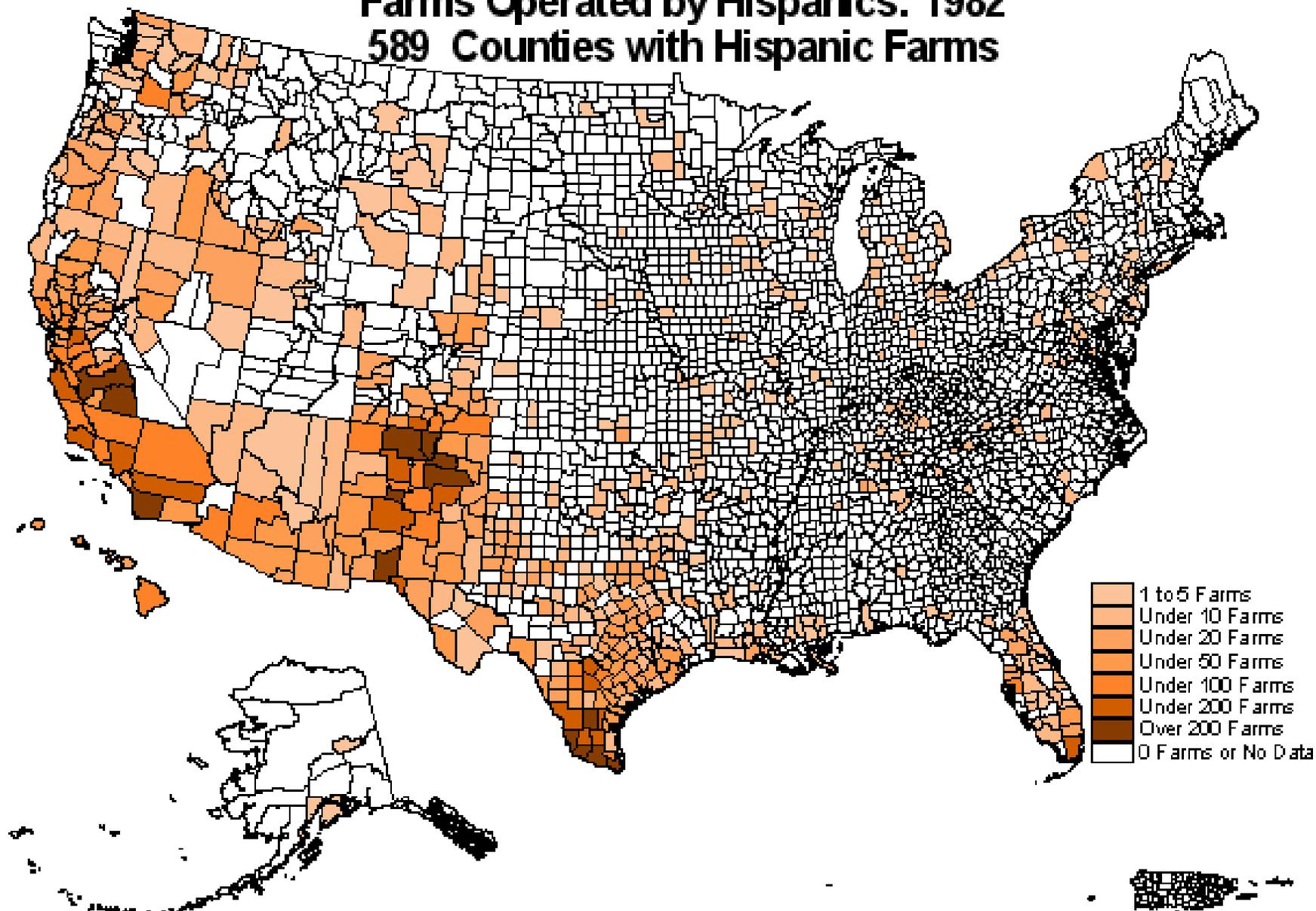


Changes in Agriculture

- In 2000, there was a **25% growth** of Hispanics in rural America.
- There has been a **51.2% increase** in the number of principal operators of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin between 1997 and 2002
- 2002, from 33,450 to 50,592. Of those farms, 10 percent were operated by Hispanic women, the largest group of minority women principal operators
- There are at least twice as many Hispanic farmers and ranchers as any other group of minority operators
- Hispanic farmers, statistically, are **less likely** to obtain USDA operating and farm ownership loans and **conservation assistance** (*Hispanic Business*)
- Hispanic-operated farms comprised more than 20.8 million acres of farmland throughout the United States in 2002, up 23.8 percent from 16.8 million acres five years earlier.
- In 2002, Hispanic principal operators sold a total of \$4.67 billion in agricultural products, including \$3.07 billion in crops and \$1.6 billion in livestock, poultry and other products.

Farms Operated by Hispanics: 1982

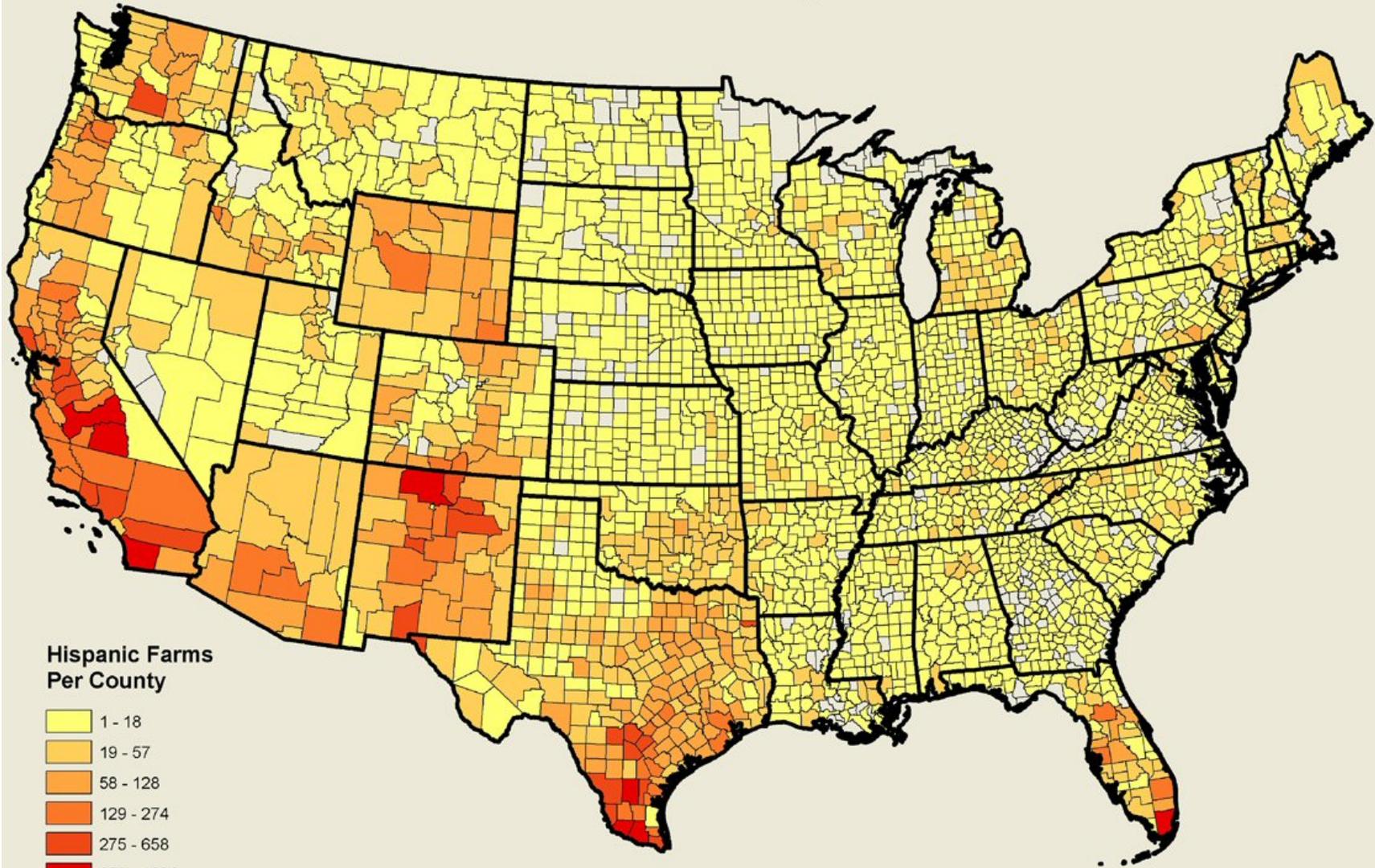
589 Counties with Hispanic Farms



Source: Ag. Census, County data table 38.
Map prepared by David Buland,
USDA/NRCS/NRI/AI, June, 2000

Farms Operated By Hispanics: 2002

2745 Counties With Hispanic Farms



Hispanic Farms Per County

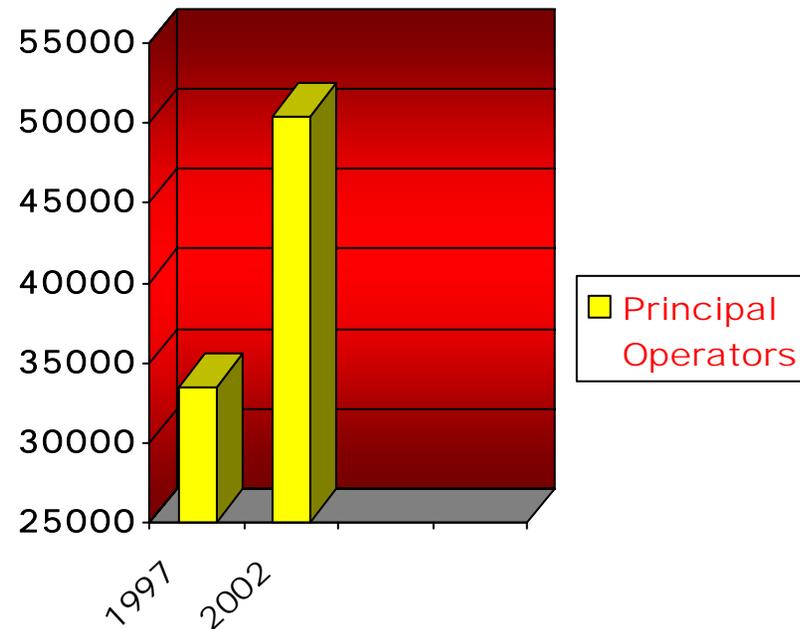
- 1 - 18
- 19 - 57
- 58 - 128
- 129 - 274
- 275 - 658
- 659 - 1200
- 0 Farms or no data

Source: US Ag Census 2002
Map prepared by Kelly Klenke USDA NRCS
Map Date June 2004

Spanish, Hispanic or Latino Origin Operators

NASS 2002 Census of Agriculture*

- Nationally, principal operators of Spanish, Hispanic or Latino origin increased by **51.2%** from 33,450 to 50,592 between 1997 and 2002.



* Preliminary Data.. Data were collected for a maximum of three operators per farm



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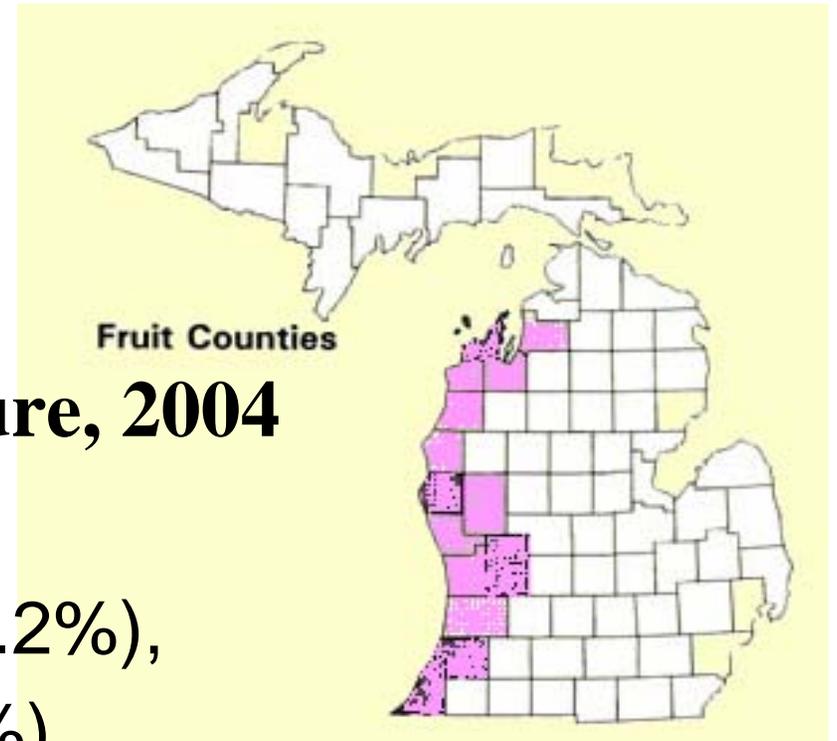
- In Michigan, U.S. Department of Agriculture reported that there are over 1,020 farm operators of Hispanic background. There has been a 163 percent increase in Hispanic farmers from 1997 to 2002.
- In fact, Michigan is ranked 6th in the increase of the number of Hispanic farmers in this period and Michigan is the 10th in the number of Hispanic farm operators (2002) in the US.

Michigan F&V

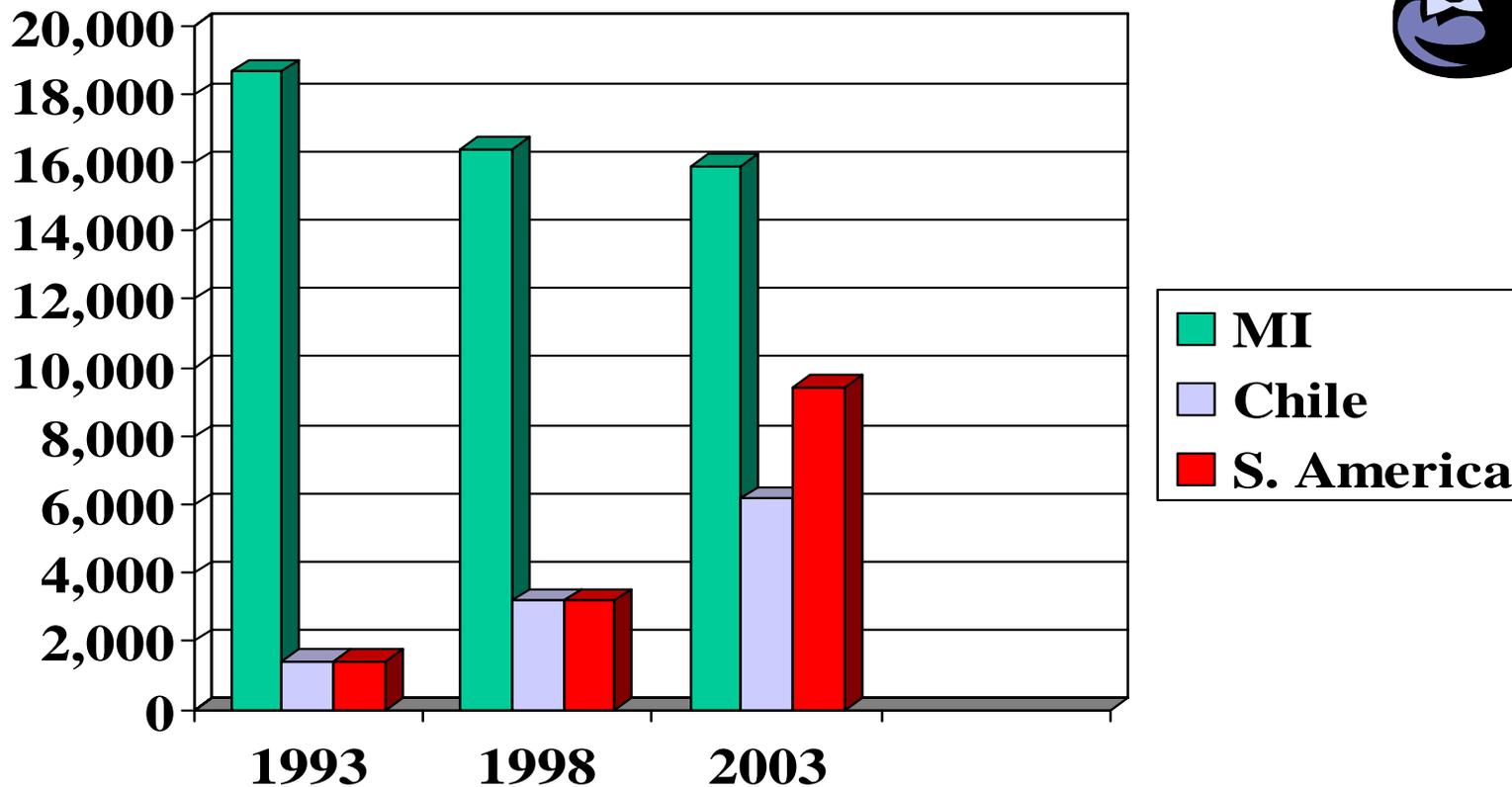
Rank in the U.S. agriculture, 2004

- 1st tart cherry, blueberry (35.2%), cucumbers for pickles (29.4%)
- 2nd fresh carrots, celery
- 3rd apple (7.3%), asparagus, fresh cucumber, Niagara grapes
- 4th sweet cherry, Concord grapes, squash, sugarbeet, tomato (processing)

•Source: MASS, 2004



Global Competition-Blueberry Acreage



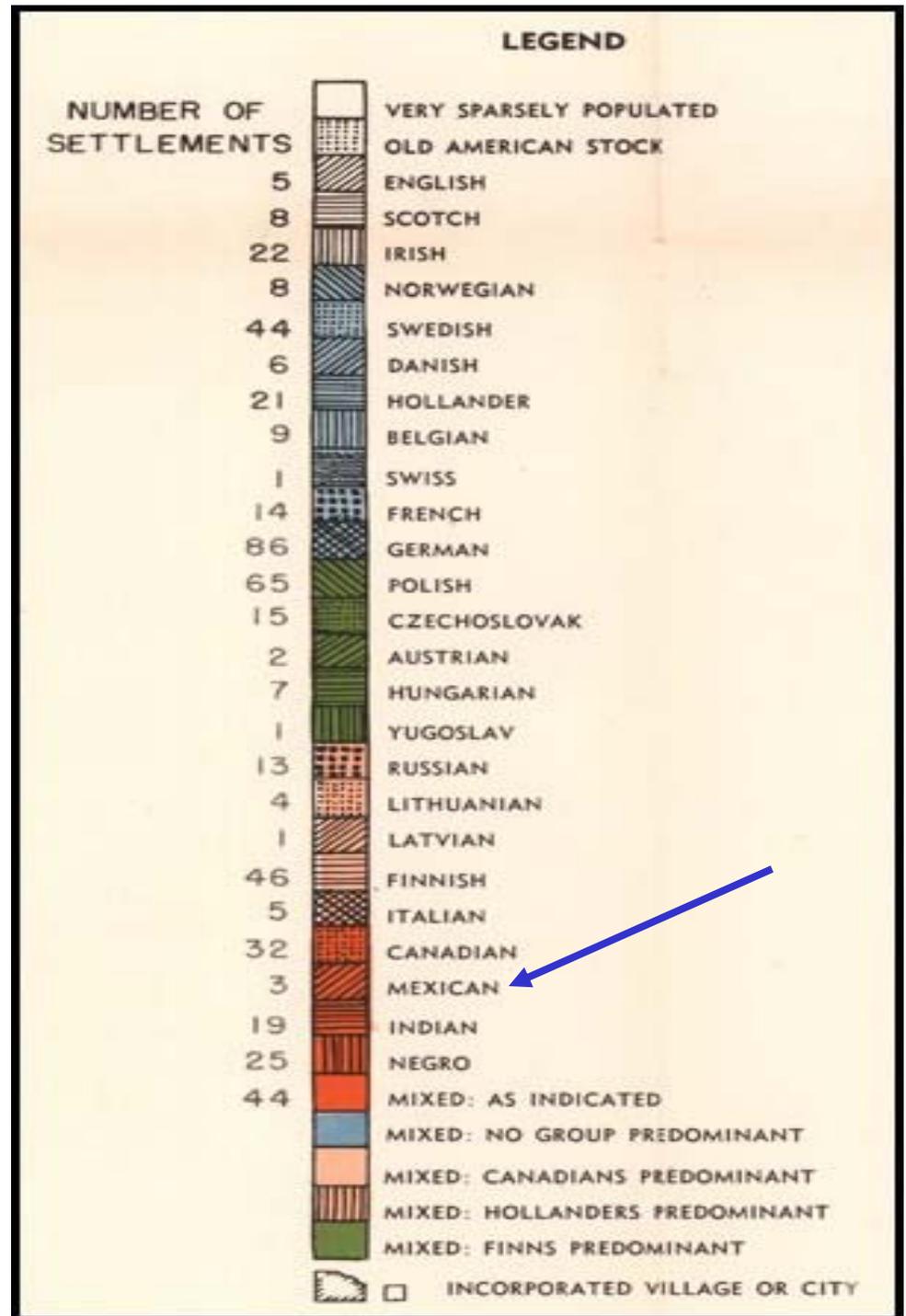
Source: MASS and Strik, 2004

The farm people of Michigan according to ethnic stock: 1945

Source: J.A Harden

Michigan State College.

Agriculture Experiment Station.





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- The growth of the Hispanic population in rural America presents new opportunities as well as challenges for agricultural agencies and rural communities.

- However, a limited number of researches have attempted to explorer how this new social phenomenon is developing in Michigan and its impact in rural communities.



Methods

Methodology

- Since 1999 the researches have development a mix research approach (quantitative and qualitative methods) to collect information about Hispanic farmers in Michigan.

- Informal interviews
- Direct Observation
- Semi-structure interviews





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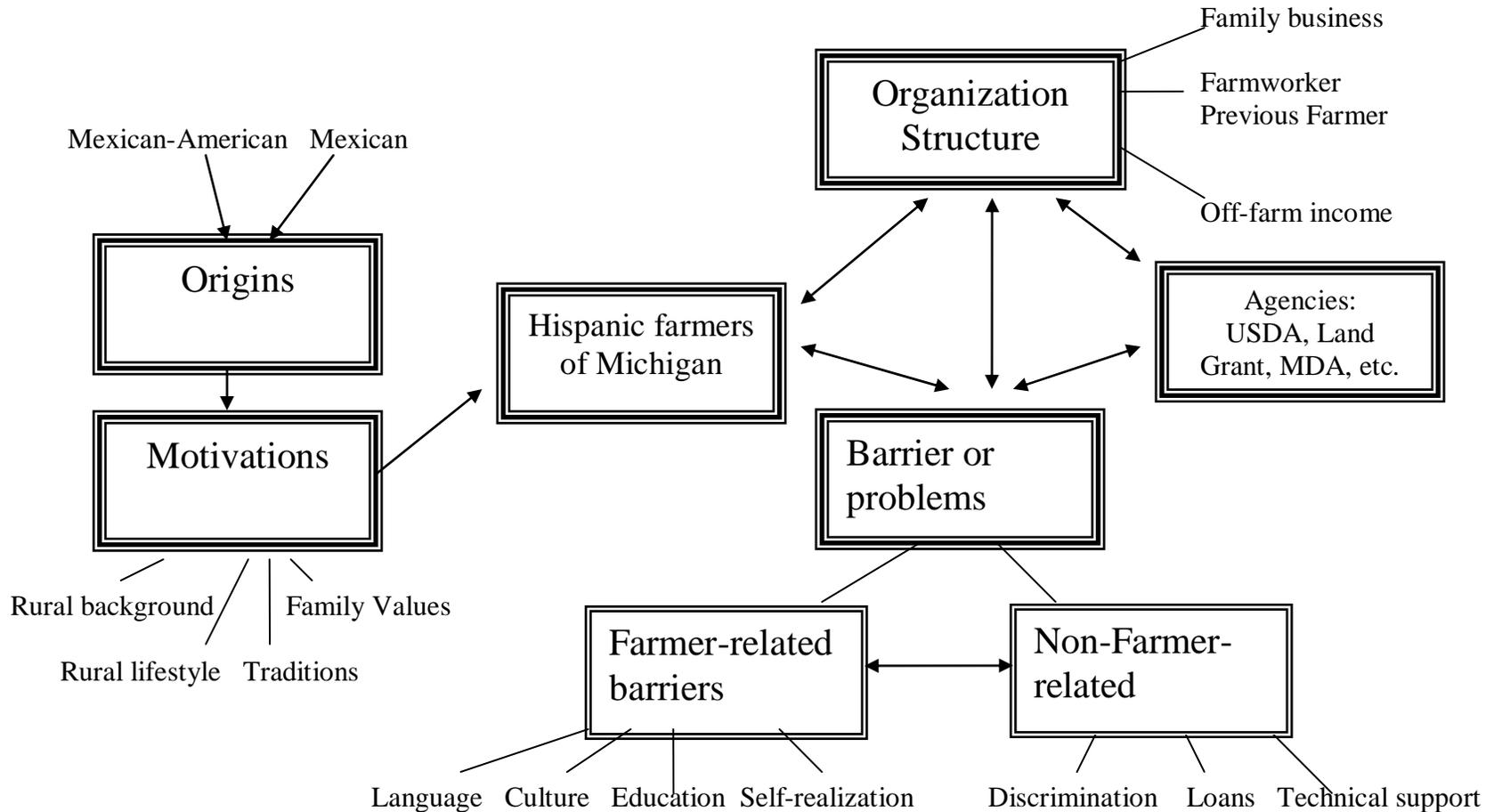
- USDA’s Office of Outreach funded the study, “Farm Worker Transition to Farm Ownership: Lessons from Mexican-Origin Farmers in Southwestern Michigan”
- Project Green – MAES funded the study, “Exploring Undercounts in the Agricultural Census: An Alternative Enumeration of Hispanic Farmers in Southwestern Michigan”

Research Area

Michigan Map



Conceptual Framework





Results

Results of Research's Phase 1

Latino Farmers in Van Buren County

- Thirty-one of the 34 Latino farmers in Van Buren County were included in the study.
- These farmers are Mexican immigrants and ex-Tejano migrants.
 - The immigrants are mainly ex-peasants from the state of Michoacán in central Mexico who, through a process of chain or step migration, from Chicago to Van Buren County.
 - The ex-Tejano migrants are from the “Valle” in southern Texas.





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Latino Farmers & Crop Production

- Twenty-two of the 31 Latino farmers grow blueberries; the others corn, grapes, and apples.
- Twenty of the 22 Latino blueberry farmers cultivate 835 acres (Two farmers not interviewed).
- Together, one family grows blueberries on 541 acres, nearly 65 percent of the known Latino blueberry acreage.
- Five other Latino families grow blueberries on significant holdings, respectively on 65, 40, 40, 35, and 30 acres. The remaining ten Latinos grow blueberries on 20 acres or less.



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Latino Farmers and Blueberry Growing

- Latinos purchase small blueberry farms knowing that the acreage will not yield enough to support their families. For them, the farm is more than a business enterprise; it is also a way of life.
- Nearly all of the Latino farmers are employed off the farm.
 - Both husbands and wives work for local food processors, light manufacturing, and service industries. Besides an income, employment off the farm also provides some of them with medical insurance and other benefits.



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Obstacles to Getting Started in Farming

- Latino farmers cited a number of difficulties in breaking into farming. The salient ones are as follows:
 - Purchasing a Farm
 - Infrastructure Development
 - Access to Technology
 - Familiarity with Crops in Van Buren County
 - Language and Culture
 - Participation in USDA Programs



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Latino Farmers & Social Capital Networks

- Latino farmers in Van Buren County are using social networks to obtain resources for purchasing farms and growing crops. These networks give them access to social capital found among influential members, such as ideas, knowledge/information, mutual assistance, and economic resources.
 - Based on trust and reciprocity, the social networks/relationships are organized around kinship, friendship, or other significant social ties in the community.
- The use of social networks for business startups is common among immigrants, ethnic minorities, and other groups with limited capital.



Social Capital Networks

- Four major Latino farmer social networks were located and mapped in Van Buren County.
- All of them were comprised of blueberry farmers.
- Only one of them centered around a Tejano family; the others around Mexican immigrants.
- The networks centered around one or two successful Latino farmers who served as mentors.
 - Each network had a core group and an outer group.
- Some farmers belonged to more than one network.
- Social Networks extend outside of Van Buren County.

Social Capital and Resources

- A number of resources are obtained through social capital networks:
 - Information. New farmers seek and receive advice regarding pesticide and herbicide applications, plant disease threats, caring for the blueberry bush and berries, and marketing.
 - Land. Some of the Mexican immigrant farmers have come up with creative ways, such as practicing *presta nombres* and collaborate production arrangements with kinsmen, for obtaining farmland.
 - Labor Sharing. Labor sharing is another resource within social networks. During the harvest, when labor is scarce, members of the same social circle, or group, share workers.



Social Capital and Resources (cont)

- Loans/Financial Assistance. Loans are also made through social networks, mainly to family members and close friends.
- Other Farming Resources. Other farming inputs, such as fertilizer and machinery, are also shared.
- Mutual Assistance. Mutual aid consists of lending a helping hand when needed, such as repairing machinery or plant blueberry bushes.















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Thank You

Questions?