

Remembering Compañero Cleo Askew

by Lorette Picciano, Executive Director

As this newsletter was going to press, we learned of the untimely passing of our colleague and friend, Cleo Askew, housing specialist for the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund.

Cleo, a close colleague of our chairperson, John Zippert, was also the co-chair of our National Advisory Board for our Health and Environment Project. In honor of Cleo's memory, the Rural Coalition postponed its November 11-12 Board meeting and sent a delegation to his funeral on November 11 in Alabama.

As we passed on the news of Cleo's death to our network, messages and memories were shared. "Cleo first awakened me to the environmental justice issue with a tour of the Chem Waste Management dumpsite in Emelle, Alabama, ten years ago," one colleague shared. Another, one of our scientist partners in our project with the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, remembered how Cleo helped scientists to understand that community responsive research must be "community based" and not just "commu-



Cleo Askew, September 1992

nity placed." A third recalled how Cleo answered his concern about collecting water samples at the Chem Waste site — one of the largest toxic waste dumps in the world. Cleo told him not to worry; they probably wouldn't be seen, but if they were, they could probably outrun any company officials to the car.

In retrospect, these sentiments made that very challenging project — our first collaboration with the scientific community — seem more a success. These shared memories are evidence that relationships were formed, and that understanding and respect had developed among diverse disciplines, in large part because of Cleo's intelligence and patience.

Other shared messages add more dimensions to our memories. One writer recalled that Cleo was the one who waited up until 2 a.m. to greet two of our SuperMarket partners from Washington State as they successfully located the Federation's Training Center in rural Epes, Alabama in the dark. That same writer also expressed sadness that Cleo, who helped over 300 families get or build new houses in the very poor counties where he worked, had died in his

continued on page 3

The "Grassiest of Grassroots" Work for Equity in Agriculture

The Rural Coalition and its 80 plus Member groups are ready to **Raise the Rural Voice** and, with our colleagues in the progressive farm movement, work to pass the most equitable farm bill ever.

Rural Update, the on-line newsletter of the Aspen Institute, recently described Rural Coalition Members as "organizations working in the grassiest of grassroots." We intend to mobilize these grassroots to develop a fair farm bill which supports farmers of color, other small-scale farmers, and farmworkers, rather than large factory farms!

The current Freedom to Farm Act, which passed in 1996 and expires in September 2002, contained very little for farmers who produce crops not covered by commodity programs. Even the modest direct lending programs that did help the small producers whom we serve were scaled back. Yet agriculture

spending for insurance subsidies, bailouts, and disaster assistance is at an all time high! And over 75% of these payments will go to the richest 10% of farms.

Although Rural Coalition has worked actively for minorities and on other farm and food legislation throughout its two decades of existence, by 1996, we were forced to focus our scarce resources more on fixing injustices in USDA program delivery than on farm policy as a whole. For the coming food and farm policy debates, our Members, starting at our Assembly last year in Creel, have made our Food 'n Justice campaign our top priority. As a Coalition, we intend to be a vigorous and active voice as the new Congress and Administration consider the first farm bill of the new millennium.

continued on page 3



Senate Agriculture Committee Holds First Hearing on Civil Rights in Agriculture: RC Chair Zippert Testifies

On September 12, John Zippert, Chair of the Rural Coalition and Program Director of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, testified on behalf of both organizations at a landmark Senate hearing on Civil Rights in Agriculture, convened and led by Agriculture Committee Chairman Senator Richard Lugar (R-IN). The results of research done by Rural Coalition Member groups in 1996 and 1997 were included in Zippert's statement and provided the most specific evidence the committee received to support farmers' contentions of long-standing problems of disparate treatment by the county committees that oversee most Farm Services Agency (FSA) programs.

The USDA Inspector General (IG) Roger Viadero gave impassioned testimony on the state of the complaints processing system at the Department, with supporting statements from the U.S. General Accounting Office. Viadero has posted on the IG Web page a complete county-by-county breakdown of complaints filed. He singled out the USDA Office of Civil Rights as the key barrier to USDA's civil rights record, but noted that he had studied FSA county committees and found no problems. He asked what could be wrong with the committees, because they are elected by farmers.


A diverse array of Senators then asked incisive and pointed questions of U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) witnesses. Senators Thad Cochran (R-MS), Kent Conrad (D-ND), and Blanche Lincoln (D-AR) joined Senator Lugar in seeking answers from USDA officials about Viadero's testimony: why USDA remained so slow to act on complaints and why civil rights office operations had not yet improved.

In response, USDA Assistant Secretary for Administration Paul Fiddick outlined his plan to professionalize the management of the civil rights operation with techniques he developed in his work in

private sector businesses. He pointed in particular to his creation of a new career post in the Civil Rights office, that of Deputy Director, and he introduced David Widdingham, who is responsible for Operations. When the Senators asked Mr. Widdingham to recount his expertise for the job, he responded that he had been the long-time Director of Civil Rights for the FSA. The USDA employees who testified later had to explain to the Senators why the audience reacted incredulously upon hearing the appointment of a former FSA employee cited as a solution to USDA's longstanding civil rights problems. The real answer: FSA is widely seen as the agency with the worst record of treatment of minority producers, and the very one whose failure to address civil rights complaints for many years led to the *Pigford v. Glickman* lawsuit.

The tone of the hearing then changed, with more scrutiny placed on employment practices and program delivery within USDA. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) noted that he was less interested in how the Civil Rights Office was processing complaints than he was in learning why complaints were still being generated. The answer came from the third panel, which included farm and employee organizations such as John Boyd of the National Black Farmers; Lawrence Lucas of the Coalition of Minority Employees; Alexander Piries, the lead attorney on the *Pigford v. Glickman* lawsuit; and others told him why. There was marked similarity in the issues they raised. USDA programs, particularly within FSA, still do not operate fairly, and USDA employees in several agencies still work in an atmosphere of discrimination and hostility.

John Zippert provided the committee not only with evidence of problems, but with recommended solutions. He called for the complete removal of FSA employees from any action responding to complaints in the *Pigford v. Glickman* lawsuit and asked that USDA and the Justice Department be told to stop appealing cases where African American farmers had their claims accepted. He urged the Senators to assure that full funding was made for the Section 2501 minority farms outreach program. He advocated that bureaucratic barriers to the Minority Farm Registry be addressed and the Registry be implemented immediately.

Zippert also countered Viadero's assertion that he found no systemic problems with the county committee system. Zippert noted that if the IG knew so little about the problems with the county committees, perhaps his other findings were also inaccurate. Senator Lugar thanked the Rural Coalition specifically for the new details on county committee elections. Both he and Senator Harkin outlined the need for more action on county committees. After many years of work by the RC and others, attention is finally being paid to the real problems with the committees and the continuing injustices within USDA. The final RC statement will soon be available on our Web site: www.ruralco.org. 

Update is published several times a year for Member organizations and Friends of the Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural, 1411 K St., NW Suite 901, Washington, DC 20005. Phone: 202-628-7160, fax: 202-628-7165, email: ruralco@ruralco.org; Web: www.ruralco.org. Subscriptions are \$25 per year. Questions about and submissions for *Update* can be directed to our Membership Coordinator, Beth Kanter.

Rural Coalition is an alliance of regionally and culturally diverse organizations, throughout the U.S. and Mexico, working to build a more just and sustainable food system. We envision a food system which:

- brings fair returns to minority and other small farmers, as well as rural communities;
- supports just and fair working conditions for farmworkers;
- protects the environment; and
- brings safe and healthy food to consumers.

Cleo Askew

continued from p. 1

apartment, before realizing his own dream of a house near the Federation Training Center.

In his tribute in the Greene County Democrat, John Zippert noted that “Cleo never gave up on anybody” and overcame huge barriers to help poor people become homeowners. A USDA colleague wondered who will help the 75 additional families who were on Cleo’s list when he died. Ironically, the Federation had recently secured funds to hire someone to work with Cleo on housing, and the work will continue in Cleo’s honor.


The Rural Coalition will miss Cleo especially at our Assemblies, which he never missed. Cleo always organized a delegation from Alabama with his former colleague, Aaron Hodge. Another of our members recalled how Cleo welcomed her at her first Rural Coalition Assembly in South Carolina in 1994 and also remembered his sense of humor. At the Vermont Assembly in 1997, he observed at the community composting facility in Burlington how it might be fun to try a composting project on the weekends since he dealt with toxic waste all week.

In Cleo’s short 48 years, his work covered many topics and touched many lives. As we embark on our our new Food ‘n

Justice Campaign, the dimensions of which we explore in this newsletter, his passing reminds us that, in our struggle against unjust systems, everyone matters.

So we share with you a special memory of Cleo pictured with Caravan the Pig in front of the U.S. Department of Agriculture way back in September 1992, on the Federation’s Minority Farmers Caravan to Washington. While it took many more years to begin to settle the black farmers lawsuit and will require more still to restore justice to our food system, these things would not have happened without Cleo and all those like him who never gave up.

At Cleo’s funeral, his family and community were heartened to learn how many lives Cleo touched and how his compassion and dedication planted many seeds of change. John Zippert shared the view of our Board member, Chilo Villarreal, that Cleo once more had gone on ahead to pave the way to a better place for all the rest of us.

As we prepare for our upcoming Assembly without Cleo, we will keep you informed as the Federation decides how we can best help them honor his memory. On behalf of the Rural Coalition Board, staff, and Members, we send our deepest condolences to Cleo’s parents, wife, children, family, and all his longtime coworkers and friends in the Federation on their loss, with our pledge to keep on doing the work he inspired us to do. 

“Grassiest of Grassroots”

continued from p. 1

Focus Groups Will Help Our Members Design Policies that Benefit Them

Focus Groups are widely used for market research and during election campaigns to test new products, candidates and ideas. In late 2000 and early 2001, the Rural Coalition will conduct focus groups with our Members to design the elements of the most equitable farm bill ever. In collaboration with our Members and allies in the progressive farm movement, and with support from Oxfam America, Farm Aid, Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation, and the Presbyterian Hunger Program, we will build an active campaign to include these provisions in the 2002 Farm Bill.


E-Democracy Creates Connected Communities

Low-income and minority communities have remained largely disenfranchised and disconnected from farm and rural policy debates as well-funded national associations keep winning policies that benefit corporate agribusiness. In the coming farm bill debate, our new electronic network can be expanded to serve our Members in new ways. Not only can we provide up-to-the-minute

information to our Member groups, we also will work with them to build rapid response networks linking their members — in the poorest communities on the continent — to raise their voices in policy debates. With the support of the Progressive Technology Project and other funders, we will help our Members link more of their members together electronically forming virtual precincts ready to act at key points during the farm bill debate.

We will also seek to build new electronic alliances with consumers to work together for a farm policy which moves us closer to our longer term goal: a more equitable food system.

March Assembly to be held in Washington, DC

We intend to **Raise the Rural Voice** in the halls of Congress to enact Food ‘n Justice in the new farm bill. The RC Board has proposed that our next Assembly be held in Washington, DC in March 2001 to show the new Congress and the new administration that minority and other family farmers, farmworkers and poor communities will not be left out this time! Mark your calendars and begin forming your delegations now. 

Join the Rural Coalition in its campaign to Raise the Rural Voice for the most equitable farm bill ever!

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Community Supported Agriculture, which directly links farmers and consumers, is growing. In the articles below our Members tell you how CSA is working for them. Here's why:

FARMERS WIN: *In an increasingly globalized food system, small farms are at a competitive disadvantage and are struggling to survive. Through CSA, farmers receive up-front cash during the winter months when it's most needed (and generally least forthcoming), and the support of a community guarantees farmers a market for their produce and relieves much of the risk of small-scale farming.*

MEMBERS WIN: *Approximately 75 cents of every \$1.00 you spend on food in a supermarket actually covers the costs of advertising, processing, packaging, storage, and long-distance transportation. With CSA, on the other hand, there are no middle people, so members' money is spent on actual food and supports local farmers. In addition, members have the peace of mind that comes from knowing and trusting the people who grow their food. Plus, the food is terrifically fresh and affordable.*



How it Works: Shana Berger, CSA Program Coordinator for Just Food, talks about Community Supported Agriculture in New York City

Just Food, a New York City nonprofit, is one of a handful of organizations in the country coordinating a Community Supported Agriculture program. The program is designed to bridge the rural-urban gap in order to help farmers and CSA members of all income levels build lasting relationships based on trust and shared interests. CSA makes it easy for city residents to get affordable, fresh organic fruits and vegetables in a manner that supports struggling regional farms. A growing movement in the United States, CSA offers a win-win situation for everyone involved.



Chelsea CSA members pick up their food/Los miembros de AAC en Chelsea recogen su alimento.

Editor's Note

In this issue of *Update* we hear the voices of Members, volunteers, and staff. We share policy updates and explore a variety of issues through the eyes of grassroots activists.

We have invited RC Members Maria Inez Catalan and Shana Berger, and RC Board member Chilo Villarreal to offer personal insights about the work of our Members.

As the Membership Coordinator it is my mission to support your community and connect RC Members to one another. I hope *Update* can be used as another way to develop understanding amongst ourselves. And so, I invite you to enjoy this addition of *Update* and to contribute your story for an upcoming issue. Send your story to me at bkanter@ruralco.org, or on a disk to the RC office.

We'd like to thank Free Hand Press for their help with *Update's* new look. I hope you like it as much as we do.

-Beth Kanter



The CSA concept was developed 30 years ago in Japan and was introduced to the US in 1985. There are now over 1000 CSA farms across the country. Since its inception in 1995, Just Food has helped 11 upstate farms and 17 New York City community groups create solid partnerships, bringing fresh fruits and vegetables "just-off-the-farm" to over 3,000 New York City households.

How does CSA in NYC work?

During the winter and spring, the CSA farmer sells "shares" in her/his farm's upcoming harvest to individuals, families, and institutions. The share price underwrites the cost of growing and distributing a season's worth of produce and paying the farmer a living wage. During the harvest months, the farmer delivers field-ripened vegetables once a week to a central neighborhood distribution site in NYC — usually a community center or church — where the CSA members can pick up their share of the farm's produce. Typically seven to ten types of vegetables are delivered each week, and the fresh-picked produce, usually grown organically, changes with the seasons.

Just Food and CSA in NYC

- ▶ Just Food conducts outreach to community-based organizations (CBOs) and individuals interested in developing a CSA in their community, reviews applications and selects organizations for the program.
- ▶ The Farmer Advisory Committee (made up of farmers, an extension agent, and Just Food staff) reviews new CSA in

continued on page 6

Agricultura Apoyado por la Comunidad (AAC)

Agricultura Apoyado por la Comunidad (AACes), un sistema de mercadeo que conecta a agricultores y consumidores, es un concepto que está creciendo. En los siguientes artículos nuestros miembros les cuentan como la idea de AAC les está funcionando.

AGRICULTORES GANAN: En nuestro sistema alimentario que se globaliza mas y mas, pequeños agricultores están en una desventaja competitiva y están luchando para sobrevivir. Por medio de AAC, agricultores reciben ingresos de la comunidad de consumidores antes de la cosecha en el invierno cuando se necesita mas (y comunmente es cuando hay lo menos). Agricultores tienen un mercado garantizado para sus productos y se liberan mucho del riesgo de la agricultura familiar.

MIEMBROS GANAN: Aproximadamente \$0.75 de cada \$1.00 que se gasta en comida en un supermercado cubren unicamente los costos de propaganda, de procesamiento, del empaque, y del transporte. Al contrario, con AAC, no hay intermediarios, así que el dinero de los miembros se gasta en la comida solamente y sostiene a los agricultores locales. Miembros tambien tienen el agrado de conocer y confiar en la gente que ayuda a crecer su alimento. Además, la comida es mucho fresca y mas economica.



Farmer Debby Kavakos (l) welcomes CSA members to Stoneledge Farm, NY/Debby Kavakos (r) da la bienvenida a miembros de AAC al campo Stoneledge, NY



Como Funciona: Shana Berger, Coordinador de AAC para Just Food, habla de AAC en la ciudad de Nueva York

Just Food es una de las pocas organizaciones sin fines de lucro que coordina un sistema de Agricultura Apoyado por la Comunidad. El programa es diseñado para hacer puentes entre las comunidades rurales y urbanas para apoyar a agricultores y miembros de AAC de todos los niveles de ingresos. AAC facilita a personas en ciudades conseguir frutas y verduras organicas frescas y de esta manera apoya agricultores en la región. AAC es un movimiento/concepto que esta creciendo en los Estados Unidos en el cual todos ganan.

El concepto de AAC se desarrolló hace 30 años en el Japón y se introdujo a los Estados Unidos en 1985. Hoy día hay mas de 1000 fincas organizadas como AAC en todo el país. Desde que empezó en 1995, Just Food ha ayudado a 11 fincas en el norte del estado de Nueva York y 17 comunidades organizadas para crear relaciones solidas que traen verduras y frutas frescas directamente de las fincas a mas de 3,000 familias.

¿Como funciona AAC en la ciudad de Nueva York?

En el invierno y primavera, el agricultor AACE vende “acciones” para la cosecha a individuos, familias, e instituciones. El precio de la acción cubre el costo de producir y distribuir la cosecha de un año y pagar al agricultor un sueldo digno. Durante los meses de cosecha, el agricultor

lleva las verduras a un lugar para distribuirlo, regularmente un centro comunitario como una iglesia o escuela dónde los miembros pueden ir a recoger su caja de verduras. Hay entre 7 y 10 variedades de verduras cada semana, por la mayoría organica, y las variedades cambian con las temporadas.

Just Food y AAC en la ciudad de Nueva York

- ▶ Just Food da ayuda a organizaciones basadas en la comunidad (OBC) y tambien a personas individuales interesadas en desarrollar un proyecto AAC en su comunidad.
- ▶ El comité de Agricultores Consejeros (formado por agricultores, un promotor, y personal de Just Food) estudia solicitudes de agricultores interesados, visita a fincas, revisa referencias, entrevista y selecciona agricultores para el programa.
- ▶ Tomando en cuenta la necesidad de proveer a los agricultores ingresos adecuados, se lleva a cabo un proceso que conecta cada grupo comunitario con un agricultor.
- ▶ Ya conectado, Just Food ayuda a desarrollar un proyecto AAC con:
 - Entrenamiento sobre desarrollo de AACs y apoyo para la organización comunitaria (OBC);
 - Estudia y coordina mecanismos para asegurar que personas de todas clases sociales puedan participar;

continua en página 7

(CSA) *continued from page 4*

NYC farmer applications, conducts farm visits, checks references, and interviews and selects farmers for the program.

- ▶ Through an intensive process that takes into account the need to provide farmers with a fair income and make CSA accessible to folks of all incomes, Just Food partners each city group with a regional farmer.
- ▶ Once partnered, Just food assists in the development of CSAs by:
 - Training and supporting CBO staff in CSA development;
 - Researching and coordinating financial mechanisms to enable folks of all incomes to participate in CSA;
 - Holding workshops and developing and distributing a CSA “toolkit” and;
 - Troubleshooting and facilitating ongoing evaluation of the CSA program.
- ▶ Just Food’s Community Food Educator works with city groups to develop community leaders who can draw on and enhance the food preparation/cooking skills already present within their own communities and to educate CSA members about farming and the food system.

This is just one of many examples of CSA. Just Food can provide you with materials and technical assistance if you are interested in CSA for your community.



Through the Eyes of a CSA Farmer: *Maria Inez Catalan Shares Her Story*

I was born in 1962 in Santa Teresa, Guerrero, Mexico.

When I was 11 my parents divorced and my mother started going north to the U.S. for seasonal agricultural work. I never wanted to go because the people who came back from the U.S. talked about how much they suffered at work and said that Americans humiliated them and treated them like working machines.


In 1987 all of my family became permanent residents of the US in California. I however, stayed behind in Mexico with my young children. But I felt very alone. I wanted to be closer to my family, and so I came to the US where I worked for several years at different packing companies harvesting peppers, lettuce, spinach, broccoli, onions, and more.

In 1993, after my mother had a work-related knee injury and had to go to court to get workers’ compensation, we heard about an agricultural training program called the Rural Development Center (RDC). My mother applied and was accepted. The staff invited her to bring her children. We all went to the classes, but one by one my brothers dropped out. I stayed and learned about a different way of practicing agriculture — without pesticides and fertilizers — which I liked very much, especially because I could take my children with me to my parcel and teach them what I was learning.

On a RDC field trip, I went to a community garden in Santa Cruz, CA that had Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) projects. I brought back the idea to RDC that I could have a CSA for my community. At first they didn’t think it was possible, but after many meetings I convinced them to give me a parcel to do it at my own risk. At first I was very excited because I was spending all my time planting, but I forgot about the most important part — the members. When I was ready to harvest, my Mexican-American community was not interested. So I ended up publicizing my CSA to the Anglo-American community, but I was met with a lot of skepticism because many Anglo-Americans did not think that a Latina woman could be a good farmer. The first years were very difficult, but little by little the families gained confidence in me, and my ability to farm.

Now I try to cover the needs of the Anglo-American community but without forgetting my own people. The climate in the Salinas Valley favors the kinds of things we like to eat. My CSA produces many varieties of peppers, tomatillos, tomatoes, squashes, cilantro, radishes, corn, onions, and garlic. We also grow kale, chard, lettuces, cherry tomatoes, celery, cucumbers, parsley, strawberries, beets, collards, and green beans.

Today I have a few members. They are families that are very conscious of the work that I am doing, and there is a lot of trust between us. They trust that I will have their food healthy, fresh, and economically, and I trust that they will support me when I need them. In 2001, one of my sons will be managing the CSA. He knows everything I know since he learned alongside me, and I will be near to guide him. I hope that all of my children will follow his example.

My goals for the future are to educate my community about nutrition and the dangers of pesticides, and for them to become conscious about organic food. My CSA and participation in the RDC and as a new Member of the Rural Coalition will provide me many opportunities to pursue this work. 

Welcome to RC’s Newest Member!

Amo Organics of Chualar, CA is represented by Maria Inez Catalan and Luis Sierra. AMO Organics (Organic Marketing Association, in Spanish) is an agricultural marketing cooperative incorporated this past summer in California’s Salinas Valley. AMO Organics is made up of 12 Mexican-American family farmers, most of whom have been farmworkers and got their start in farming at the Rural Development Center. AMO Organics markets organic vegetables throughout northern California and has a Community Supported Agriculture project that involves over 100 families in the Monterey and San Francisco Bay areas.



(CSA) *continúa de página 5*

- Hacer talleres y desarrollar y distribuir un paquete de información sobre AACs;
- Evaluar el programa de AAC.

Esta es solo una entre muchas diferentes maneras de hacer un AAC.



Visto por los ojos de una agricultora de AAC: Maria Inez Catalan comparte su historia

Nací en el año 1962 en Guerrero, Mexico.

Cuando tenía 11 mis padres se divorciaron y mi madre empezó a ir al norte a los EEUU para trabajar en los campos. Yo nunca quise ir porque la gente que regresaba contaba como sufrían en el trabajo, que los Americanos los humillaba y los trataban como maquinas de trabajo.

En el 1987 todo mi familia se hicieron residentes permanentes de los EEUU en California. Yo me quedé con mis pequeños hijos, pero me sentí muy sola. Quería estar con mi familia y entonces me vine a los EEUU donde trabajaba con diferentes compañías cosechando chiles, lechugas, espinaca, broccoli, cebolla, y otras verduras.

En 1993, después de que mi madre se lastimó de la rodilla y tuvo que ir a corte para recibir su compensación, sabíamos de un programa de entrenamiento llamado el Centro de Desarrollo Rural (RDC). Mi madre hizo su solicitud y fue aceptada. El personal del centro la invitó a traer sus hijos también. Todos íbamos a las clases, pero mis hermanos dejaron de asistir. Yo me quedé y aprendí otra manera de hacer la agricultura sin pesticidas y fertilizantes químicos que me gustaba mucho, especialmente porque podía traer mis hijos y enseñarles lo que yo aprendía.

En una visita a ranchos, fui a un huerto comunitario en Santa Cruz, CA que tenía un proyecto de AAC. Yo traje la idea al RDC de que yo lo podía hacer por mi comunidad. Al inicio no pensaron que era posible, pero después de muchas reuniones les convencí que me dieran una parcela para hacerlo bajo mi propio riesgo. Cuando empecé estaba muy emocionada y pasé casi todo el tiempo sembrando, pero se me olvidó la parte más importante – los miembros. Cuando estaba lista para cosechar, mi comunidad mexicana no estaba interesada. Entonces hice publicidad a la comunidad anglo, pero muchos no pensaban que una mujer latina podía ser buena agricultora. Los primeros años fueron difíciles pero poco a poco las familias confiaron en mi y mi habilidad para sembrar.


Ahora trato de cubrir las necesidades de la comunidad anglo-americana pero sin olvidarme de mi pueblo. El clima en el valle de Salinas favorece mucho las cosas que nos gusta comer. Para mi AAC siembro muchas variedades de chile, tomatillos, tomates,

calabazas, cilantro, rabanos, cebollas, y ajo. También siembro kelite, acelga, lechugas, tomate cherry, apio, parsley, fresas, betabeles, collards, y ejotes.

Somos algunas socios. Son las familias que son concientes del trabajo que yo hago, y existe mucha confianza entre nosotros.

Hay entre 7 y 10 variedades de verduras cada semana, por lo mas organica, y las variedades cambian con las temporadas.

Ellos confían que yo voy a darles comida fresca, sana, y económica, y yo confío en que ellos me van a apoyar cuando los necesito. En el año 2001 uno de mis hijos va a manejar el AAC. El sabe todo lo que yo sé porque el aprendió conmigo, y yo voy a estar cerca para guiarlo. Espero que todos mis hijos sigan su ejemplo.

Mis metas para el futuro son educar a mi comunidad acerca de la nutrición, los peligros de los pesticidas, y que se concientizan acerca de la comida orgánica. Mi AAC, mi participación en el RDC y la integración a la Coalición Rural me va a dar muchas oportunidades para hacer este trabajo. 

Bienvenidos a los miembros nuevos de la Coalición Rural

AMO Organics de Chualar, CA es representada por Maria Inez Catalan y Luis Sierra. AMO Organics, La Asociación Mercadeo Organica, es una cooperativa agricultura incorporada el verano pasado en el valle de Salinas, California. AMO Organics es compuesto de 12 agricultores americanos mexicanos de nivel familiar, la mayoría de quien ha sido trabajadores agrícolas y obtuvo su comienzo en la agricultura en el Centro Rural del Desarrollo, RDC. AMO Organics vende sus orgánicas a través de California norte y tiene un programa de Agricultura Apoyado por Comunidad que incluye más que 100 familias en las comunidades de Monterey y la bahía de San Francisco.



"Joy and Hope... Working Together to Make Our Utopia a Reality – A More Humane World, in More Solidarity"

New Government. New Economy?

It is with joy and hope that we share the news from Mexico. On July 2, the people of Mexico took to the streets and voted for a new President and, in some states, new Representatives in both Camaras (Chambers). We made a difference! After 71 years of rule by a single party, the PRI lost power. We elected a President from one party and representatives from five different parties. We know that we do not yet have a complete victory, but this is the beginning of the process of building democracy. The time has come for all Mexicans to be able to participate in the political process, not just the wealthy.

Already some changes are taking place. President-elect Vicente Fox's transition team is made up of people from different parties working together. Of course, they are having some problems. They have not been clear and honest in disclosing their budget and their salaries (which they had said they were not going to accept). But we see hope for a new era in Mexican politics.

We know for sure that globalization and economic exclusion is going to continue to increase. *So we will have to stay in the struggle if we want to change the world in which we are living.*

SuperMarket: from Dream to Reality

We are very happy with our progress these last months in the pilot phase of the **SuperMarket** project. The SuperMarket helps us to create an *Economy of Solidarity* that provides a wider participation and inclusion in the economy not possible in traditional systems. We hope that soon coops in Mexico will also be ready to post products on the new retail Web site, **www.SuperMarketcoop.com**. Currently we are researching our products: when we harvest them, our expected yield, exportation rules, the best locations to export, shipping methods, product presentation, and so forth. The first five organizations to participate will offer organic sesame seeds, peanuts, and hibiscus from Oaxaca; preserves and marmalades from the desert of San Luis Potosi; and crafts from the Red de Artesanas of Tarahumara and Trueque of Oaxaca. Step by step we are making our dream of a bi-national project that benefits our people a reality. Other exciting news from RC Members in Mexico includes:

- ▶ **Alborada de San Luis Potosi** is now marketing in the capital city of their state and has added a delicious cheese to their list of products.

- ▶ **Flor Viva of Oaxaca** has a contract to sell organic hibiscus to Germany through GEPA, an organization with shops all over Germany that sell products from developing countries.
- ▶ **La Red de Artesanas of Tarahumara** has been going to festivals in different cities throughout the state of Chihuahua as well as in the capital, Mexico City.
- ▶ **Trueque of Oaxaca** opened a shop near downtown Oaxaca City to sell their products.

We know for sure that globalization and economic exclusion is going to continue to increase. So we will have to stay in the struggle if we want to change the world in which we are living.

Harmony in Community and Environment: Rarámuri Alternatives to Prison

Our Member group, **COSYDDHAC**, has begun workshops with the **Traditional Authorities of the Rarámuri**. The goal of the workshops is to assist the Rarámuri to recapture their traditional way of ensuring justice in their communities. Together participants from Rarámuri and COSYDDHAC have analyzed different systems of imparting justice. It was very interesting to learn about the differences. For instance, the Rarámuri place primary importance on the individual person. In some other systems the main issues are money and the power that it gives a person. Another difference is that the Rarámuri do not send people to jail. Rather, they decide by consensus a penalty that fits the offense. To arrive at this agreement they bring together the Traditional Authority, the community, the person who was offended, and the person who committed the offense. The goal is to regain the harmony that was lost in the community and with the environment. In other systems, offenders are separated from the community in jail. Prison frequently results in offenders who, when released, are more anti-social and have learned more ways of evading the law and damaging their communities. The Rarámuri believe that their traditional system has enabled them to remain a close people. They believe that

continued on page 11

“Alegria y Esperanza...Trabajando Juntos para Hacer Nuestra Utopia una Realidad — un Mundo Mas Humano en Solidaridad”

Con alegría y mucha esperanza queremos comunicarles que esta pasando en México y en algunas de nuestras organizaciones de la Coalición Rural. Pues aunque Uds no lo crean el 2 de Julio la gente salió a votar, un voto razonado al votar por Presidente por un partido y por diferentes Diputados y Senadores de otros partidos diciendo no al PRI partido que tenia nada menos que 71 años en el poder. No la hemos ganado del todo pero son los principios de un proceso de democratización, estamos consientes que solo es el principio pero queremos seguir participando para poder construir una democracia real que responda a las necesidades de todos los Mexicanos no solo de un sector. En algunos aspectos se vislumbran cambios como el equipo de transición antes de la toma del poder del nuevo presidente que será el 1 de Diciembre del 2000 es la primera vez que se nombra un equipo similar integrado por varias corrientes partidistas y que están tratando de que la transición sea más fácil y reditúe beneficios, claro que en relación a este equipo de transición ya aparecieron algunos tropiezos, pues no están actuando con mucha transparencia en la rendición de cuentas del sector público, en otros aspectos sobre todo el económico las cosas van a empeorar pues se vislumbra la mayor implementación del sistema neoliberal de globalización y exclusión por lo tanto la lucha tiene que seguir si queremos que haya cambios en la realidad que estamos viviendo.

Supermarket Del Sueño a la Realidad

Por otra parte estamos muy contentas por los avances de **Supermarketing** y la comercialización piloto que se ha realizado durante estos 3 meses pues desde ahí estamos seguras lograremos un proyecto incluyente y alternativo. Esperamos muy pronto podamos desde México vender algunos de nuestros productos a través de la pagina Web de la CR **www.SuperMarketcoop.com**. Nos están realizando una investigación más profunda y completa para poder exportar los productos de 5 de nuestras organizaciones. El estudio abarca los productos, tiempos de cosecha, reglas para exportación, aduanas más adecuadas, fletes, empaques, presentación, etc, etc. Los productos serian ajonjolí, cacahuete y jamaica orgánicos del estado de Oaxaca, conservas y mermeladas de la región desértica de San Luis Potosí y artesanías de la Red de Artesanas de Tarahumara y Trueque de Oaxaca. Paso a paso estamos llegando a hacer una realidad nuestros sueños de tener un proyecto Binacional que beneficie directamente a nuestra gente organizada.

- ▶ **Flor Viva de Oaxaca** (jamaica orgánica) tiene un buen contrato para comercializar a Europa a través de GEPA que es una organización de Tiendas del Tercer Mundo.
- ▶ **Los Productos de la Tinaja San Luis Potosí** se están vendiendo en la capital del Estado y les está yendo muy bien, han introducido un nuevo producto quesos de diferentes clases y sabores.
- ▶ **La Red de Artesanos de Tarahumara** ha continuado participando en diversas ferias en el Estado y en el Distrito Federal.
- ▶ **Trueque de Oaxaca** tiene una tienda para la venta de sus artesanías en un lugar estratégico cerca del centro de la Ciudad de Oaxaca.

... en otros aspectos sobre todo el económico las cosas van a empeorar pues se vislumbra la mayor implementación del sistema neoliberal de globalización y exclusión por lo tanto la lucha tiene que seguir si queremos que haya cambios en la realidad que estamos viviendo.

Armonia en la Comunidad y el Medio Ambiente Sistema Normativo Indígena Rarámuri

Desde el área de capacitación de **COSYDDHAC** hemos empezado la recuperación del sistema normativo Rarámuri o sea la forma propia de administrar justicia en sus comunidades analizándolo junto con el Derecho positivo. En el primer taller realizado en el mes de Septiembre con los Gobernadores tradicionales descubrimos las diferencias existentes entre ambos derechos, pues mientras el sistema raramuri pone en el centro a la persona humana en el sistema de administrar justicia en la sociedad nacional el centro es el poder y el dinero la persona no es tomada en cuenta para nada y al implantarle castigos carcelarios en lugar de ayudarlo lo introducen a una escuela del crimen organizado que al salir y tratar de integrarse nuevamente a la sociedad esto es imposible. Las multas y castigos en el sistema Rarámuri se establecen después de un consenso en el que intervienen las

continúa en página 11

World March of Women

The RC Board at its June meeting reaffirmed its commitment to women's rights by endorsing the World March of Women.

The goals of the march, organized by the National Organization of Women (NOW), Washington, DC, and Des Femmes du Québec, Canada were to:

- (1) Eliminate poverty and ensure a fair distribution of the planet's wealth between rich and poor, and between men and women;
- (2) Eliminate violence against women; and
- (3) Ensure equality between women and men.

The World March — which has been staging rallies around the world since March 8 — culminated with huge demonstrations of solidarity in Washington, DC on October 15 and New York City on October 17 with supporters from 157 nations. RC Board Member Chilo Villarreal and Membership Coordinator Beth Kanter launched a Herculean effort to assure that a delegation of 200 women who traveled by bus from Chihuahua could participate. Graciella Ramos de Quintana, one of the foremost advocates of women's rights in the state of Chihuahua, spoke at the rally in Washington.

Beth and Chilo accompanied the Mexican delegation to NYC. Everyone agreed that the most moving part of an inspiring day was the half hour that the gathered women spent passing from the rear of the crowd



Women from around the world send hundreds of thousands of cards to the UN, NYC October 17, 2000.

to the stage the hundreds of thousands of cards women around the world had sent to be delivered to the United Nations. Boxes of many shapes and sizes, large plastic bags, and textile banners all conveyed the message that it is time to end poverty and violence against women. In a march spanning 20 city blocks, the women then shared their message with the people New York.

Enthusiastic participants are hoping the Global March will be a new milestone in the process of building a world based on equality, socioeconomic justice, peace, and freedom for all humankind. To learn more, go to www.ffq.qc.ca/marche2000/en/heure.html.

The Next Rural Coalition Assembly

Our Members, including those who made the long trek to be welcomed by our Mexico Members in Creel, Chihuahua, have begun asking, “when and where is the next Assembly?” As you who have attended an Assembly know, we favor isolated rural places where we can be with our Members in communities connected to the land. But in 2001, the U.S. will have elected a new Congress, and a new energy is brewing in our Coalition.

Our Board has concluded it is time to bring our “grassiest of the grassroots” Members to Washington, DC to claim our place in the debate over food and farm policy. Being involved in the formulation of the Farm Bill is important for RC, as these policies are certain to effect RC Members on both sides of the U.S./Mexico boarder.

Georgia Good, our Vice-chair, proposed we hold this “interim Assembly” in Washington, DC because so much of what we value is not being heard by policy makers. In 1993, we held a very successful reception to welcome new rural members of Congress. They were struck by the diversity of our Coalition; a diversity rarely seen in the Agriculture Committee meeting rooms in Congress.

Following the recent hearings in the Senate Agriculture Committee where RC Chair John Zippert testified,

a number of policy-makers responded enthusiastically to the idea of hosting a one-day briefing on the hill. Of course, we will also make time for gathering and sharing stories and experiences among our Members. We look forward to welcoming a delegation representing farm and indigenous communities from Mexico back to DC for the first time since our work on the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1993.

John Zippert, has decreed, with the support of our Board, that we will also begin thinking about the rural place where our next full Assembly should be. We await your input. But for 2001, we hope you will join us in Washington DC early next year to Raise the Rural Voice for Food ‘n Justice in the most equitable farm bill ever!

We want to hear from you if you have ideas for, or an interest in, the Washington DC **Raising the Rural Voice for Food ‘n Justice Assembly**. Let us know if you plan to attend, and how many voices you hope your delegation will include. What dates in March (or early April) will work best for you? We are always interested in your inspiration and ideas about when and where we should hold the Assembly after that. Please pick up the phone, email us at ruralvoice@ruralco.org or drop us a line the old fashion way.



News from Mexico

(continued from p. 8)



Rebecca Bond (l) and Chilo Villarreal admire Tarahumara baskets, available at www.SuperMarketcoop.com

of the RC, obtained lodging for the majority of the women in Washington and New York and we thank her very much for her solidarity. Again we want to say “thank you for your efforts” to each one of you who have been working together to make our Utopia a reality — *A More Humane World, in More Solidarity.* 🌿

-Chilo Villarreal

Las Noticias de Mexico

(continued from p. 8)

Autoridades Tradicionales, la Comunidad, El ofendido y el ofensor. En este sistema se trata de restablecer la armonía perdida en la comunidad y también con el medioambiente en el que se vive. Los Tarahumares nos dicen que Dios les ha dado la responsabilidad de pastorear a su pueblo y cuidarlo a través de tres palabras que les ha dado como herencia: Justicia, Libertad y Democracia.

Desde **COSYDDHAC** estuvimos participando en la campaña preparatoria para la Marcha Mundial de Mujeres a realizarse el 15 y 17 de Octubre en Washington y New York. Esta campaña se inicio el 8 de Marzo del 2000 con una consulta popular para conocer las demandas de las mujeres para lograr un mundo libre de pobreza y violencia. Se ha organizado desde aquí mismo una Marcha Caravana por Tierra de las Mexicanas que realizaran actividades en Dallas Texas, Memphis, Charlotte, Washington, Filadelfia y New York se piensa que las participantes de esta Caravana serán entre 200 y 250 mujeres. Beth Kanter, coordinadora de membresiadde de la CR, nos apoyo consiguiendo hospedaje para la mayoría de ellas en Washington y Nueva York se agradece muchisimo la solidaridad.

Nuevamente queremos decirles “*gracias a todas las organizaciones de la CR*” pues poco a poco hemos ido logrando juntos hacer una realidad nuestra Utopía de **un mundo más humano y solidario.** 🌿

-Chilo Villarreal

The Rural Update, the e-newsletter of Aspen Institute, reported this summer:


“This past year has seen the birth or rebirth of several national rural collaborations... Here are some of the new kids in the hall: ...THE RURAL COALITION - The Coalition’s membership is best typified as organizations that work in the **grassiest of grassroots**. Not new, the Coalition has a renewed vigor and funding, and is seeing a rise in its visibility. Many of the members work with disenfranchised residents on topics such as Internet marketing of farm products and local empowerment. In May, for instance, two of the Coalition’s members were arrested at the doors of USDA to protest the agency’s implementation of the black farmer discrimination settlement...”



RC WELCOMES INTERN

Jamil Shariff graduated from York University in Toronto, Canada with a degree in Political Science. While pursuing his studies, Jamil traveled often to Kenya and Uganda to visit family and explore. He spent time working in Nairobi, Kenya on the redevelopment of the Aga Khan Hospital and volunteered building schools in the outskirts of the city. Jamil comes to RC as an intern with Netcorps, a non-profit organization based out of Eugene, Oregon that strives to help socially progressive non-profit groups across the U.S. use technology to better achieve their goals for progressive social change, while providing young adults an opportunity to make a real difference in the world. Jamil will be working closely with Rebecca on the SuperMarket coop project as it finishes the test phase and brings more RC Members on line to sell their products. He is anxious to be out in the field helping our Members use technology. We are glad to have him join us!

RC is pleased to announce that in December, Heather Fenney will join our staff as Agriculture and Food Policy Coordinator. More about Heather in our next addition.

 Printed on recycled paper with soy-based ink



Thank You and Best Wishes to Sangeeta Sharma!

Sangeeta Sharma, RC Policy Analyst for the last year and a half, has moved to New York City to follow her life long dream — working with the United Nations.

We thank her for her many contributions to the Rural Coalition community. Sangeeta brought intelligence and dedication to her work, and we will miss her. We hope that this new endeavor proves to be an exciting one, and we wish her all the best.

Join us in Celebrating the Launch of the SuperMarket Project's Retail Web Site!



<http://www.SuperMarketcoop.com>

To join our supporters, send a blank email message to welcome@supermarketcoop.com and you will begin receiving weekly updates about project development. **Shop online now and receive free shipping!**

The Rural Coalition
1411 K Street, NW Suite 901
Washington, DC 20005
www.ruralco.org
www.SuperMarketcoop.com