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S.E. Asian Farmers in Fresno County – Status Report
1992 & 2007

Richard Molinar, Michael Yang, and Chiengseng Cha

1992 - A very comprehensive survey was conducted and reported for SE Asian vegetable farmers in Fresno County by my predecessor, Pedro Ilic, Farm Advisor. The latest survey of Southeast Asians refugees farming in Fresno County was conducted in the spring of 1992. Sites were visited to ascertain whether these farmers were still farming; identify new farmers and whether there was any indication that progress, however small, had been made regarding the use of pesticides, water and fertilizers. Also, farmers were asked to provide information on a variety of other topics such as marketing practices, sources of funding, farm income, years of farming, etc.

2007 – The survey was repeated again in 2006-7 again to ascertain how many refugee farmers were still farming, ethnicities, acreage, crops, cold storage availability, marketing practices, and status of grower registration with the Ag commissioner. This was done street by street, section by section, over a 1-year period. When growers were not in the field a note was made of probable ethnicity, crops growing at the time, and information gathered by neighboring farms. Most were vegetable farmers.

The information is summarized below:

- In 2007, the number of S.E. Asian families engaged in farming increased by 57% to an all time high of 1316 (830 in 1992). These were primarily SE Asians of Hmong, Lowland Lao, and Mien descent.

Ethnicity	1992 (% of total)		2007 (% of total)	
Hmong	516	(62.2%)	844	(64.1%)
Lowland Lao	252	(30.3%)	439	(33.4%)
Mien	13	(1.6%)	17	(1.3%)
Chinese	29	(3.5%)	9	(.7%)
Cambodian	8	(1%)	3	(.2%)
Vietnamese	11	(1.3%)	3	(.2%)
Thailanese	1	(.1%)	1	(.1%)
TOTALS	830		1316	

Other statistics

- The total number of refugee farmers found on the ag commissioner database for 2006 was 109, including 61 Hmong, 32 Lao, 6 Vietnamese, 5 Cambodian, 2 Mien, and 3 Chinese.
- The USDA-NASS (Ag Census) also reports different statistics for the SE Asian farm population in Fresno, however, their numbers are based on grower responses to surveys mailed out every 5 years (<http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/>, <http://cefresno.ucdavis.edu/files/4900.pdf>)

Farm Size:

The 2007 survey also indicates that the average farm size increased for Hmong and Lao refugee groups.

<u>Ethnicity:</u>	1992 survey	2007 survey
Hmong	3.25 acres	5.8 acres
Lao	5.00 acres	7.8 acres
Mien	10.00 acres	6.3 acres
Vietnamese	10.3 acres	9 acres

Following were farm sizes for the different ethnic groups: 3.25 for a Hmong farm; 3.8 for the Cambodian farm; 5 acres for the Lao farm; 10 acres for the Mien farm; 10.3 acres for the Vietnamese farm; and, 12.6 acres for the Chinese farm. The average size in 2007 increased slightly for Hmong and Lao farmers and decreased slightly for Mien and Vietnamese farms.

Farm Rent/Lease: The 2007 survey showed that the majority of the farmers pay an average of \$300-400 per acre for rent. Usually there is a well or ditch water available, however the farmer is responsible for electrical charges for the well pumping and/or costs to obtain ditch water from a canal.

Marketing: Most farmers sell through established wholesalers, buyers who go directly to the farm (referred to as “cash-buyers” from Oakland, L.A. and S.F.), farmers markets, and roadside stands (see “Small Farm Marketing” publication available from the Cooperative Extension office in Fresno).

Contribution of SE Asian Farmers: This is a difficult area to ascertain exactly because of the diversity of crops being grown by SE Asians – mainstream and specialty (squash/tomatoes and lemongrass/moqua). However, the crop report for Fresno County identifies “Oriental vegetables” (including amaranth, bittermelon, bok choy, daikon, gailon opo, sugarcane etc) and the majority of these crops are grown by SE Asian farmers. There are other social, cultural, and culinary contributions as well.

1992		
Oriental vegetables	2,300 acres	value=\$5,914,000
2006		
Oriental vegetables	2,260 acres	value= \$8,793,000
2006 Totals	2,470 acres	\$ 10, 769,250

The entire 1992 three-page report is available upon request.
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Revised – Richard Molinar 1/21/08