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FACTS ABOUT LATINOS IN THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

Latinos Benefit Disproportionately from the Food Stamp Program

- One in five food stamp households is headed by a Latino. A fifth of food stamp benefits — nearly \$6 billion per year — are issued to Latino households. (According to Census data, Latinos make up about 15 percent of the U.S. population.)
- More than 5 million Latinos receive food stamps each month. This represents more than 10 percent of the Latino population.
- A typical Latino family on the Food Stamp Program has income (not including food stamps) at 58 percent of the poverty line (compared to 64 percent for all food stamp households). For a family of three, 58 percent of the poverty line corresponds to a monthly income of \$800, or an annual income of \$9,600.
- Food stamps constitute 25 percent of total monthly income for a typical Latino family that participates in the Food Stamp Program.
- On average, Latino families on the Food Stamp Program received \$230 in food stamps each month in fiscal year 2005, or over \$2,700 per year.
- According to USDA *more than 4 million* Latinos who are *eligible* for food stamps are missing out on benefits. Only half of Latinos who are eligible for food stamps participate in the program, and among *eligible non-citizens* the share that participate is even smaller (42 percent).

Food Insecurity and Poverty Remain High Among Latinos

- Nearly one in five Latino households (18 percent) and more than one in five Latino families with children (22 percent) have difficulty affording adequate food (known as food insecurity in USDA research). This is twice the share for white, non-hispanic households.¹
- The current economic expansion has not reached low-income Latinos. Poverty among Latinos did not improve between 2001 (21.4 percent) and 2005 (21.8 percent), the most recent year for

¹ "Household Food Security in the United States, 2005," USDA, 2006.

which Census data on income and poverty are available. And the poor are poorer: 40 percent of poor Latinos lived below *half* the poverty line in 2005, up from 38 percent in 2001.

1996 Welfare Law Food Stamp Provisions Contained Deep Cuts for Latinos that Remain in Effect

- In 2008, a typical Latino working parent with two children will receive about \$37 less in food stamps each month than the parent would have without the 1996 welfare law's across-the-board food stamp benefit cuts. The cuts are deepening with each passing year. By 2017 the benefit cuts will cost a typical working parent of two almost \$650 a year, the equivalent of more than one and a half months' worth of food stamps each year.
- The 1996 welfare bill eliminated food stamp eligibility for most legal immigrant noncitizens (other than refugees). Since 1996, Congress has acted to restore eligibility to some groups of low-income noncitizens, including children and people with disabilities. But approximately 250,000 to 300,000 low-income legal immigrant adults who otherwise would qualify for food stamps remain ineligible, due to a provision that makes them ineligible until they have lived in the United States for five years and also due to other overly restrictive requirements aimed at legal immigrants.
- The severe eligibility restrictions imposed on legal immigrants in 1996, and the confusing patchwork of food stamp eligibility changes related to immigrants enacted since 1996, have led to confusion and stigma among many legal immigrants who are *eligible*, as well as among many low-income citizen children who are the children of immigrants. As a result, only a modest percentage of the low-income legal immigrants who are again eligible for food stamps are participating in the program.

Latino Farmers Are Less Likely to Receive Farm Subsidies

- According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, fewer than one in five Latino farmers (17 percent) receive a federal farm subsidy, only about half the percentage of white farmers (34 percent). Furthermore, the census found that there are fewer than 3 farms run by Latinos for every 100 farms run by a white farmer.