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## Government Extends Deadline for Enrollment in Agricultural Support Program

by LADB Staff

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At the request of several campesino groups, the Agriculture Secretariat (Secretaria de Agricultura y Recursos Hidraulicos, SARH) extended until Feb. 15 the deadline for participation in the first phase of the government's new agricultural support program (Programas de Apoyos Directos al Campo, Procampo).

According to leaders from several agricultural organizations, there have been various problems with the program, including widespread confusion among eligible beneficiaries over the application process. Jose Ignacio Portillo, director of the government agency in charge of agricultural marketing support (Apoyos y Servicios a Comercializacion Agropecuaria, Aserca), told La Jornada the deadline was extended in order to ensure maximum participation for producers of eligible crops during the autumn-winter agricultural cycle.

Among the groups requesting the extension were the National Campesino Confederation (Confederacion Nacional Campesina, CNC), the Permanent Agrarian Congress (Congreso Agrario Permanente, CAP), the Independent Federation of Agricultural Workers and Campesinos (Central Independiente de Obreros Agricolas y Campesinos, CIOAC), and the Mexican Agrarian Confederation (Confederacion Agrarista Mexicana, CAM).

CAM leaders had actually requested a four-week extension, through Feb. 28, claiming that 50% of the eligible applicants have still not enrolled. But SARH officials said a only a two-week extension was needed, since according to their calculations, 90% of the nearly 500,000 producers eligible for the first phase had signed up as of early February. The purpose of Procampo, which was announced by President Carlos Salinas de Gortari in October of 1993, is to eventually eliminate the government's price subsidies, provided through guaranteed prices, replacing them with direct payments to farmers for production and marketing ([SourceMex, Oct. 27, 1993](#)).

Overall, the program is expected to benefit 3.3 million producers throughout Mexico. Direct economic assistance provided under Procampo is due to begin on March 1 of this year, when each producer will receive subsidies of 300 nuevo pesos (US\$90) per hectare. The current autumn-winter cycle is defined as part of the program's transition phase, in which the government will reduce guaranteed purchase prices for corn and dry beans by 13.4% and 14.7%, respectively. For the spring-summer cycle, which is also part of the transition phase, guaranteed prices for corn and dry beans will be reduced by another 6.6% and 9.1%, respectively. The per-hectare subsidy during this cycle is expected to be 350 nuevo pesos (US\$104).

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