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Nicaragua: Government Sets Minimum Wage

by Deborah Tyroler

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On Aug. 29, government officials, the Superior Council of Private Enterprise (COSEP) and the National Farmers and Ranchers Union (UNAG) agreed to a monthly minimum wage at 150 cordobas (\$30) for agricultural workers and 234 (\$46.80) for urban-based workers. In addition, low-income workers would continue receiving the subsistence supplement package (rice, sugar, beans) distributed by the government. Early in the week, the National Workers Front (FNT) and the Permanent Workers Congress (Congreso Permanente de Trabajadores-CPT) reached agreement on demanding a minimum of 650 cordobas (\$130). Leaders of the country's two largest labor confederations said their demand was more than justified by the fact that the 53-item subsistence food basket (canasta basica) is valued at over \$150 per month. In his traditional Sunday homily, Archbishop of Managua Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo criticized the government for approving a sub-standard minimum wage. He asked, "With this wage, can a poor person pay for housing, feed five children, pay for water, electricity and medicine?" [Basic data from 08/24-30/91 report by the Central American Historical Institute (Georgetown University, Washington, DC); ACAN-EFE, 09/01/91]

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