

## Settlement proposal revised for Hispanic, female farmers

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The Obama administration Friday modified an offer aimed at resolving discrimination complaints against the [Agriculture Department](#) by setting up a process that could guarantee a \$50,000 settlement for some Hispanic and women farmers.

The new offer does not differ considerably from one made last May that established a \$1.3 billion fund to settle complaints in lawsuits involving Hispanic and women farmers who say they were denied agricultural loans or given different loan terms because of their race or gender.

That proposal capped damages for individual farmers at \$50,000, but some farmers may have been required to take something less if funding for the settlement pool expired.

Agriculture Secretary [Tom Vilsack](#) said the new proposal establishes a two-tiered compensation process that would guarantee a \$50,000 settlement for claimants with adequate documentation, including proof that a discrimination complaint was filed with the [USDA](#).

Claimants without adequate documentation or who do not meet other requirements would be eligible for up to \$50,000, but may receive less if funding for that category of farmers runs out.

"I believe it's a fair option," Vilsack said.

But the proposal did not win support from one Texas farmer who is among the plaintiffs or from a Washington attorney who represents more than 1,000 Hispanic farmers who have accused the department of discrimination.

Pearsall rancher [Modesta Rodriguez Salazar](#) said that for some, \$50,000 might be enough. But for the losses she and her family sustained, it was not close.

"It's not even enough for the toilet paper," she said.

“It's essentially the same bad deal that they offered last May,” said attorney Stephen Hill, the lead attorney for aggrieved Hispanic farmers.

Hill said plaintiffs he has told about the proposal “continue to view this as insulting and blatantly discriminatory on its face.”

He said settlements the department has reached with African American and Native American farmers allow for much higher recovery payments than Hispanic and women farmers have been offered. Native Americans were offered settlements of up to \$250,000 in their claims against the department.

Hill said Texas has the largest number of Hispanic farmers in the nation, and hundreds of those farmers have filed discrimination claims. The lawsuits have not won class-action certification, but claimants can go to court individually to pursue settlements if they reject the government's offer.