

Latino Farmers to Argue Discrimination Case

Published: Oct. 13, 2009 at 3:21 PM

Latino farmers had planned to press a discrimination case in Washington Tuesday, arguing they were denied Agriculture Department loans based on their heritage.

Known as the Garcia case, the Latino farmers wanted to have their case granted class-action status when they first filed the lawsuit in 2000. The same status in a similar case concluded with a \$1 billion settlement for 15,000 African-American farmers in 1997, CNN reported Tuesday.

A federal judge denied class-action status for the Garcia case. A hearing Tuesday before U.S. District Judge James Robertson to hear arguments for reaching a settlement was postponed until next month.

Justice Department attorney Lisa Ann Olson said, "it is not in the interest of the United States," to settle the case, although the farmers' attorney Stephen Hill said, "the discrimination we're talking about has been well-documented."

In 1997, former U.S. Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman testified at a congressional hearing that the USDA had a history of discrimination.

"Good people lost their farmland not because of bad weather, bad crops, but because the color of their skin," Glickman said.