

Farm Union Signs a Contract With Lettuce Grower on Coast

SALINAS, Calif., Aug. 30 (UPI)—The United Farm Workers Organizing Committee announced tonight the signing of a contract with one of the largest vegetable growers in the Salinas Valley, the first victory in the union's struggle to organize the "salad bowl," which produces 70 per cent of the nation's lettuce.

Cesar Chavez, president of the farm workers union, told more than 1,000 cheering members of the union who attended a rally that Interharvest, a subsidiary of the United Fruit Company, had agreed to terms.

The pact will cover 800 to 1,000 field workers at Interharvest's ranches in the Salinas Valley and other sections of California and Arizona.

Mr. Chavez said the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, which previously signed contracts with 35 major growers in the Salinas Valley, had agreed to rescind its agreement with Interharvest.

Pay Increases

Dolores Huerta, the union's vice president, said the pact provided for immediate raises for Interharvest employes. Field hands operating machine lettuce pickers will receive \$2.10 an hour, compared with \$1.75 an hour that cutters have been receiving and \$1.85 an hour

provided in the teamsters pact. Workers picking lettuce by hand will receive 40.5 cents a carton, compared with the current rate of 31.5 cents and the teamster contract's 36 cents.

The contract faces a possible court challenge.

Pic 'n' Pac, a subsidiary of the S. S. Pierce Company, asked the San Francisco Superior Court last week to prohibit Interharvest from signing with the Farm Workers Union on the ground that it was breaking an agreement with other growers in the Salinas Valley. A court hearing has been ordered for Tuesday.

Mr. Chavez's supporters went on strike last Monday in the valley, drastically reducing the shipment of lettuce and other vegetables. About 75 carloads were processed last Friday, compared to the normal peak season shipment of 200 carloads.

The strike raised wholesale price of lettuce in San Francisco from \$3 for a carton of 24 to \$6.50 a carton.

The farm workers union has contended that the teamster pacts with Salinas Valley growers were "sweetheart contracts." But the growers had vowed to honor them and refused to negotiate with farm workers.

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