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**The Impact of the Great Depression and the New Deal on Ethnic Mexicans,  
American Farms, and Agricultural Workers**

During the era of the Great Depression and the New Deal, ethnic Mexicans, American farms, and agricultural laborers encountered distinct sets of challenges. Spanning from 1929 to 1939, the Great Depression was marked by a significant economic decline across industrial nations. To counteract this downturn and revive economic prosperity in the United States, President Franklin D. Roosevelt launched the New Deal.

The New Deal comprised an array of initiatives and programs aimed at generating employment, offering support to those in dire straits, and stabilizing the nation's economy. Besides grappling with unemployment, food scarcities, and a widespread employment crisis, ethnic Latinos faced extra hurdles. Nevertheless, the advent of the New Deal brought changes to their situations, as well as to the conditions of U.S. farms and farm laborers, both domestically and regionally. The economic slump led to heightened unemployment and an increase in animosity towards immigrants, prompting the government to initiate repatriation programs for immigrants, including ethnic Mexicans, back to Mexico. While some chose to return voluntarily, others, especially Mexican agricultural workers, were deported involuntarily.

A significant portion of the ethnic Mexicans who stayed in the United States were engaged in agricultural work. The banking crisis forced small-scale farmers to relinquish their lands, and large-scale farmers to cut back on their permanent workforce (Acuna 11), pushing Mexican farm laborers to roam the country in search of work. They found temporary solace in migrant labor camps established by the government.

Upon Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidency, more than a third of American farmers had forfeited their lands and income, with Mexican agricultural workers fighting for their survival. With dwindling job prospects in agriculture, many Americans migrated to urban centers, despite the nation's continued reliance on farming. The New Deal initiatives sought to adapt to the shifting dynamics of American agriculture and labor by addressing the issues of inflated prices and surplus production (Acuna 20). The government's strategies included subsidizing farmers to cut production and introducing more efficient farming techniques.

The New Deal also aimed to improve the lives of those in agricultural and rural communities by providing new lines of credit to farmers at risk of losing their lands and harvests. Tenant farmers gained access to loans that allowed them to buy land (Acuna 60), while infrastructure improvements like bridges and roads facilitated the transportation of goods to markets and improved access to essential services. The construction of dams served multiple purposes: flood control, crop irrigation, and providing electricity to farms, transitioning households from oil lamps to electric lighting and heating.

In other areas, efforts to alleviate the conditions of farms and farm workers varied. Labor rights movements gained momentum, securing better wages and conditions for workers. The solidarity among farmers and unskilled workers led to collective action for their rights. Meanwhile, some farm workers abandoned agriculture in favor of urban employment opportunities, reflecting the diverse responses to the agricultural and economic challenges of the time.

