

Earth Log: Food lines have begun in Mendota

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Signs of the drought were obvious at Friant Dam at Millerton Lake in February.

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Mendota Mayor Robert Silva Friday said food lines already have begun in his west Fresno County city -- where he predicts the jobless rate will hit 50% among the largely Latino farmworker residents.

"The line was a block long today," Silva said. "This is going to be tragic this summer. This is going to be ugly. We need water released from the dams for farming now."

Silva has been appearing at media events with the California Latino Water Coalition, which has been publicizing the impact of the drought on the San Joaquin Valley.

Farmers across 3 million acres of land are expecting to get zero water allocations from the federal water project this year. Farm leaders say they expect 800,000 acres to be taken out of production, including citrus orchards and vineyards.

The latest media event was Friday at Thrive Gym on Blackstone Avenue where the coalition and many speakers discussed the drought, federal fish regulations and Valley farm losses.

The gym was the setting because U.S. Olympic Boxer Jose Ramirez was taking part in the call to help farmers in his native Valley. The Latino Water Coalition is co-sponsoring his next bout on May 17 at Selland Arena.

