



Marketing Strategies for New Organic Farms

Project Director: Christopher Brown – Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA)

Situation: A father and daughter operate a small farm business on 3.75 acres in ALBA's Organic Farm Incubator. The father immigrated from El Salvador to CA in 1999 and the daughter followed suit along with the rest of her family in 2009. Their cultural heritage has played a large role in their marketing and crop mix.



One of their main crops has been Salvadoran Red Beans, which they sell bunched—the entire plant, pods, and even roots—directly to other Salvadorans living in our area. It has been a big hit and generated thousands of dollars in sales for them each year. However, while steadily increasing their acreage at ALBA, they have slowly diversified into other crops with a goal of generating more income. This year they planted lots of onions, which initially they intended to sell to their fellow Salvadorans—after all, it is the world's most popular vegetable! Or so they thought. It turns out, demand was nowhere near their expectations and they had overplanted with

no alternative markets in mind.

Outcomes: ALBA's Production and Marketing Advisor (PMA) facilitated new wholesale relationships for succession plantings of celery, romaine lettuce, and green beans. ALBA's staff trained them in food safety and assisted in renewing their food safety certificate, without which selling to new clients would not have been possible. The PMA also helped the family adapt to new requirements of these clients, showing them how to write invoices and updating their certifications to reflect the new crop mix.

COVID-19 brought additional opportunities through USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program for direct sales to weekly vegetable boxes funded by a USDA farmer assistance program.

Impacts: The PMA helped the family – and many other ALBA farmers- to sell to recipients of these programs who distributed produce boxes to families. Here they found plenty of demand for their onions, selling them for as much as \$52 for a 50 lb box. With the increase in sales, the father has dedicated himself full-time to the farm business and the daughter fills in while also working in Human Resources for a large ag company in Salinas. Occasionally, other members of the family pitch in, too. The farm has begun generating enough income to hire an additional farm worker for the weekly harvests. The marketing technical assistance provided has truly advanced this family's Organic Farm business and many others like them.

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"The consultations on crop mix and marketing strategy were very useful. I also have a much better understanding of how to choose crops based on production costs, marketability and revenue." -California Producer

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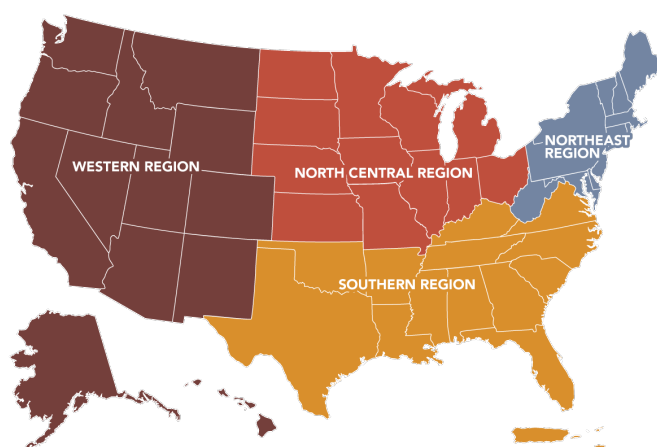
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