

Bucio Organic Farm



When Rigoberto Bucio graduated from the Farmer Education Program at ALBA in 2008, he was looking at his future with optimism knowing that he had gotten his first half acre successfully leased. Three years later and he is managing almost 4.5 acres.

The story of Rigoberto (aka Rigo) is one of tremendous dedication and hard work. Years working as an organic farmer's field hand, Rigo had the resolve to take advantage of all the knowledge he could soak up and hold on to firmly - as maybe one day he would put it into

practice for himself. Today, when you visit Rigo's farm you can find his father and two of his brothers working alongside him. Rigo's small farm is providing almost three full-time jobs, plus occasional part-time jobs during the height of the growing season.

Unlike many other Latinos currently farming in California, Rigo didn't bring back agricultural skills from his native state of Michoacán, Mexico. However, his passion for farming is nurtured each time he witnesses his crops maturing. From one week to the next, seeing that change is unlike anything else. "My favorite crop to grow is strawberries, not just because it sells well but because it is one of the trickiest to grow. Tomatoes get second place and zucchinis third."

Like any small farmer, the greatest challenge for Rigo is securing sufficient markets. "Once you dedicate all your time cultivating, building up healthy soil, taking care of the crop from the seed to the plant, assuring it remains resistant to diseases and pests, comes the reality of needing to move it while it's fresh. What's even more difficult, is taking your product to the market you've secured, and not being able to sell it!" Rigoberto sells a large portion of his product to **ALBA Organics**, a wholesale distributor that delivers to schools, universities and retailers. In 2010, he experienced direct marketing for the first time at **St. Mary's by the Sea Episcopal Church in Pacific Grove** – where he was warmly invited to set up his farm stand each Sunday. The new relationship opened many doors - as St. Mary's families began to visit Rigo's farm - investing in his endeavors both emotionally and financially. Recently Rigo began attending the North Oakland Children's Hospital Farmers' Market, where his organic produce is enjoyed by staff and patients alike.

Thanks to Rigo's recent achievements and the support of his customers, he has been able to acquire some essential tools for his farm. He now has his own small tractor – the pride of many farmers. But his "greatest compensation" was that of fatherhood with his new baby girl, Aytza Ziadany Bucio, who "fills him with joy each day" and inspires him to keep doing his very best.