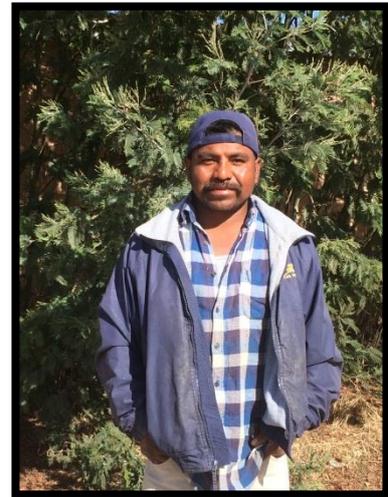


Rufino Ventura – Ventura Organic Farms

“We came to this country to work, to triumph, to excel, to give a better life to our children than our parents could give to us.”

He never thought that starting a garden with children would be a career move, but Rufino Ventura’s life took a turn after working with a friend to create a sustainable place for families from Oaxaca to learn and grow together. “In 2010, a group from Alba visited us at the garden and invited us to participate in the farmers program. Not everyone went, but I decide to try it and I stayed.” For the last 5 years, Rufino has worked on the plots at Alba, increasing his acreage, his production and his confidence over time.



“I grew up farming on a ranch with my family. Mostly corn and beans, but my father also worked on a ranch with sugar cane. My brother and I used to help mill the sugar cane to make *aguardiente* and the boss would give us pocket money to spend on our breaks from school.” His native language is Mixteco, and he parents sent him to school to learn Spanish. Rufino remembers his childhood in Oaxaca fondly, but also the difficulty of finding work to support a family. In 1996, he came to the United States, and in 2004 he had finally saved enough money to bring his wife and children from Mexico to live with him here. He always worked for Organic Farming companies, but it wasn’t until he decided to join the PEPA program with Alba, that he began to understand why it is so important. “In Mexico, the people in the mountains always ate better than people in the cities because they were farming their own food without pesticides. Here it’s much healthier to eat organically.”

Today, working on his plot with Alba, Rufino has gone through some hardships, but has seen the positive result. “Two years ago things were really tough. But my wife and I decided to give it one more year and it worked. You just have to plan things right, and learn from your mistakes.” He is more interested in making a small plot run well, than trying to constantly increase in size. It may not always be easy, but his family is dedicated.

2017 will be his last year at Alba and Rufino is already looking at renting land in Hollister, closer to home. He is excited to have his own spot at Farmers Markets and continue to build partnerships with communities around the Central Coast. “I do this every day for my children. Working for myself I have been able to have more flexibility. I work hard and invest lots of time, but I can also be with them more, spend more time together as a family. I like what I do and I will continue to learn more every day.”

