

Francisco Serrano

"If you plant something it's because you're going to harvest it."

Francisco believes in good planning and, maybe above all else, hard work. He used to manage around 500 employees on a conventional farm. By 2015, he had begun managing an extensive network of direct clients of various sizes, individuals and companies. "I'll sell to whoever wants to buy. No markets, though. I don't like to be stuck behind the stall. I prefer to have personal relationships with people." And it's obvious. During our interview he was on the phone three times with clients. "I don't do texts—just talk on the phone and meet people in person. My business is all word-of-mouth—that's how I like to do things. My wife calls me *chismoso*," a gossip, a Chatty Cathy.

Francisco's business model seems closely linked with his personal philosophy and approach to life. On farming as a career, Francisco says: "If you like it, it's great. But it's not easy and you can't expect to get rich." On competition: "You've got to help your neighbors, pay attention to them, lend them a tractor when they need it." On pesticides: "It's just a bunch of rich people who want to make money without considering the effects on the environment at all." On youth: "Most young people these days don't want to work to support themselves." On television and popular media: "Doesn't teach you anything."

And he's made it his mission to pass on these values to the next generation. "From the very beginning, my kids were my goal... My vision for them is not that they be rich, but that they know how to work. And they do. They learned lots of skills and basic principles by working on the farm: they learned to fix things, plant, harvest, weed, and just work hard. And nothing is difficult for them now."

As for Francisco's vision for the future: "At my age, I don't have any goals as far as houses, cars, money... I just want my kids to support themselves. A father's greatest pleasure is to see his kids living well." All of Francisco's children and grandchildren live nearby, as does much of his extended family. "It's great because they're over at my place all the time for dinner or birthdays or just to visit." Francisco has planned and worked hard his whole life for a family like that, and he plans to continue reaping what he's sewn as long for as he can.