

Juan Vergara - J & F Farms

Attending classes at Hartnell College wasn't enough for Juan Vergara. So, he googled a way to get more practical experience, and found Alba Organics. Both Juan and his father had worked in agriculture, specifically in growing herbs and spices, for years, but Juan wanted more. Together, he and his father enrolled in the Farmer Education Program (PEPA) and they graduated in 2013. After a lifetime of working with herbs, they still had a lot to learn.



“We already knew a lot, but we wanted the advice of others and to learn more about the paperwork. We learned more than just what it means to physically work. We learned about inspections and certifications, hygienic practices and water use. We learned about sales and different strategies, like wholesale, online and direct sales, to help us get our products out to market.” The classes through PEPA helped them get their footing, and continue into the Farmer Incubator program. Now, in their last year as part of the program, Juan has taken time to reflect on what has gone well.

Together, they have created a successful farm with chives, rosemary, thyme and sage. “The first year was pure work. But little, but little, we continue forward.” Their plot at the Triple M farm shines in the setting sun as Juan talks about his goals for the future. “I don't want to be rich. I want to be independent. The goal is not to depend on others and one reason for that is so that I can be available for my family. I don't know if my son will like agriculture. But he will have an advantage. English will be his strong suite and I will teach him the value of hard work.”

“My goal is to keep making this work. There are many challenges. But we are always learning more each and every day.”

