

# Rigoberto Bucio @ Bucio Organics (Salinas)

August 3rd

Years of practice

~10 years

## Crops



## Distributors / Buyers



alfalfa, dacharo - dont sell because it doesn't grow at the way. I need to make money and can't waste land letting them grow to full size.

Tomatoes (recently)

I have been asking the buyers what they need but price, plagues, climate and what is a worldwide influence what grow and plan to sell.

"If I could know what they want, it would help but I need to consider if the workers would want to grow and pick that crop."

What would the market want?..

## Farming

"I started [farming] because of need"

When I got to this country I started working in agriculture. I found about ALBA in 2009 and started my own farm. ALBA helped me start and see that it's impossible business.

"Need to know the cost for me and on the market."

"[The issue is that] so many farmers can't compete with the big companies."

... and will my workers be willing to grow it?

"I started [farming] because of need"

## Tools, techniques, and infrastructure

"Not using hoop houses because I would love to... but have no money."

"I occasionally do tests but don't have time or money to do often as I want to."

"From growing just seeds I now produce but I don't know how to sell because of prices. It's a struggle because I was a small event but now it's hard to sell."

So when we start with, we need to get the water right. Then we need to get the soil right. Then we need to get the fertilizer right. Then we need to get the pest control right. Then we need to get the harvest right.

"I have to irrigate well here. Sprinklers help grow but the drip is more water and money."

"I do everything here. Compost. I use 3 tons of compost and 2 tons of gypsum."

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## Workers and staff

"They may not need training but they need to know it'll be worth it."

"This past pandemic was hard on me personally. I was really short handed."

"My brother is my accountant and helps me with all the paperwork"

"I don't trust my employees and expect I can be exposed to harmful conditions. During that we didn't work."

## Immigration

"My status prevents me from trying to obtain any (insurance) or reach out."

## COVID

"The pandemic scared me because neither I nor my family can afford to get sick, it's scary."

## Family

"I wouldn't use the kids to benefit me. If it might damage them then I might as well not use them. It's a struggle because I was a small event but now it's hard to sell."

"I love a lot, my wife, my kids and my family. I can't see and I can't see my family to support my family."

## Character, beliefs

"Faith is the only insurance I have."

"When I lose crops it's super frustrating but I just pray to keep doing what I do."

## Knowledge

"ALBA helped me to start and to realize that it's complicated but not impossible"

"I want to know what the things I should do but I don't know how to keep focusing on everything. I have to go to the store to buy things."

"CCOF doesn't understand how hard it is to be organic."

"[CCOF] aren't empathetic to people's situations."

"I have to keep myself motivated but often contemplate just not continuing."

"To not have a heart attack, a stroke, to not let stress get to me. Luckily, it didn't fall on me."

Conversation brings comfort

"I don't have the capacity to learn and ask questions because we aren't comfortable."

"I don't have the capacity to learn and ask questions because we aren't comfortable."

"I don't have the capacity to learn and ask questions because we aren't comfortable."

Organic certification complexities

No, I don't really talk to others

"I need something that's different and I need to be able to support people who are in the same situation as I am."

Nothing get support from others

"I want to grow myself and to bring that energy to the farm."

## Story

## 3 wishes:

1. [Own] all the tools I need
2. Have ownership of 5 acres
3. Own my home for my children

If we got to speak to Rigo again on these matters, we need to find out more about how he does bookkeeping...

... and what plans he has for his farm if any.

I've almost lost my CCOF certification 3 years ago in a... operation that weekend and then my brother called me... at the... away. The following days, in pain, I went to grab samples of my crops from the... I had noted just in case. I took them to get a rapid test and drove to Santa Cruz to speak to them. They didn't want to hear or help me and said they couldn't trust the test. I told them that how was it fair that I had to trust their test but they couldn't trust mine? I knew I was going to have to pay for another inspection and told them that because of that I wanted them to test as soon as possible. The total process took 4 months and suffered some losses in crops and obviously money but they did not take responsibility for their mistake. The second year I knew what to do and gathered all the list of the surrounding farms' use of chemicals and showed it to them. The second time I was not nice because they are affecting our livelihoods. It's hard to trust companies like that.

No trust community

"I need money. I need a lot of support because there's a lot of... whether it's industrial and operations or with certain crops."

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How did you start farming and how did you learn to farm?

1. Started because of need. When I got to this country I started working in agriculture. I heard about ALBA in 2009 and started my own farm. ALBA helped me start and realize that it's complicated but not impossible.

What do you grow and how do you choose those crops?

1. Strawberries, lettuce, kale, celery and recently tomatoes.
2. I have tried asking the buyers what they need but price, plagues, climate and available workforce influence what I grow and plan to sell. This past pandemic was hard on me personally, I was really short handed. The fires were also a big issue. I don't want my employees and myself to be exposed to harmful conditions so we didn't work. I lost a lot, my self-esteem and everything felt low because I couldn't sell and couldn't make money to support my family. I have to keep myself motivated but often contemplate just not continuing. When I lose crops it's super frustrating but I just pray to keep doing what I do. To not have a heart attack, a stroke, to not let stress get to me. Luckily, it didn't fall on me.

Do you have insurance?

1. Faith is the only insurance I have. My status prevents me from trying to obtain any or reach out. The pandemic scared me because neither I nor my family can afford to get sick, it's scary. Having some a little bit of hope with the responsibility to grow the crops is also scary because I have to make sure I can feed and provide work for people. It's the sad reality, it's heavy and it's going to continue to happen. I may fix my status but still worry about my employees and if they would suffer. If my kids asked me if they should join, I'd say no. When they come to help me I teach them how hard it is to work in the fields. I want them to have the support I didn't have. I wouldn't use them to benefit me if it might damage them later (in regards to using them as dependents to access government benefits or insurance itself).

Who are your buyers?

1. Coke, lakeside, sun valley, superman. Sometimes it works but others they can screw you over.
2. If i could know what they want, it would help but i need to consider if the workers would want to grow and pick that crop. I would have to know how to grow and teach employees how to cultivate them. Need to know the cost for me and on the market. I need to make sure I can pay them well. They may not need training but they need to know it'll be worth it.
3. I would like to do what I'm doing and learn more but keep focusing on everything I have. I want to focus on doing this well. I want to grow myself and to bring that energy to the farm. What i need is to just work. We often don't have choices, it's not his (coke, etc)'s fault.

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What is the issue?

1. That so many farmers can't compete with the big companies. I can change maybe by direct sell. When i first started i sold a box of kale for 27 but never again. The complaints will always be there but there's no one single problem.

How do you store harvested produce today? Transportation to buyers?

1. I do everything here. Carry them to the shade and get them out or else they don't last and it will be a waste. No refrigeration.

What prevents you from being more effective and from having bigger profits.

1. Sometimes money prevents me from buying better products. I wish i could use better products but have to focus on minimums or else i won't grow as much.

Growing own seeds vs purchasing transplanting

1. I've tried growing my own seeds. I had asparagus but plague will take them. I lost them in a week because of aphids. Its too risky for me. Seeds were a waste and i don't know what to do and how to fix it. We are fish swimming with sharks.

Hoop houses

1. Not using hoop houses because of lack of money

Tests

1. I occasionally do tests but don't have time or money to do as often as i want to.

Water situation

1. I use both types of irrigation. I have my own well here on the farm. Sprinklers help grow but the drop lines save water and money.

Use of pollinators

1. One time i tried but i didn't see a difference because it wasn't enough. It was a huge army of aphids against a few ladybugs.

Composting & cover crops

1. I use coverage and compost. I use 3 tons of compost and 2 tons of gypsum. I do this every year but this year i'm missing half. I still have to do that. I had to make the best economic decision for me. I had to choose between plantain or adding coverage so i chose to grow.

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2. alfalfa , chicharo - don't sell it because it doesn't grow all the way. I need to make money and can't waste land letting them grow to full size.

Do you access any sources of information about farming practices today?

1. CCOF doesn't understand how hard it is to be organic. I understand they want everything perfect, which is great but they aren't empathetic to people's situations. No hedgeroes, minimum cover crops. They attract other problems. They don't care about individuals.
2. We don't have the capacity to learn and ask questions because we aren't comfortable.
3. Only trust me. I don't want to ask for help because i don't know how it'll benefit them over me. I would only be able to trust if people had no gains from me.

How do you learn best?

1. I would have liked to learn more, be less afraid, know english, i was shy and didn't want to try. Having a conversation helps me be more comfortable. I feel comfortable in any setting if i can have a conversation.

Are you in contact with other farmers?

1. No, i don't really talk to others

Who do you rely on for work and support?

1. When i need something, that's when i contact people. From bad experiences, people don't help unless it's convenient. It depends on the situation but people are selfish.

What do you need help with?

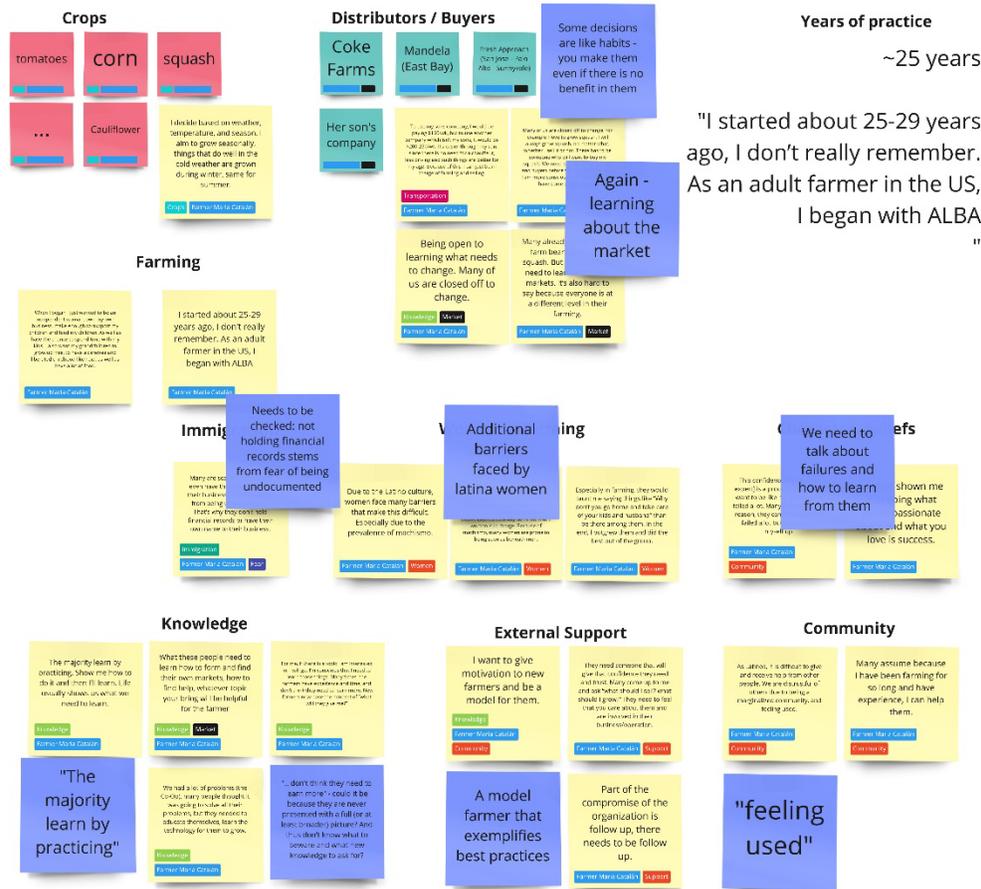
1. I need money. I need a lot of support because theres a lot of competition, whether that's industrial sized operations or with certain crops.

Who handles administrative operations?

1. My brother is my accountant and helps me with all the paperwork

Maria Catalán @ Maria Catalán Farm (Hollister)

August 12th



- 3 wishes:**
1. Immigration reform for the US
  2. I know part of my mission of mom/farmer/grandma my kids/grandkids will be in Ag. I want to give motivation to new farmers and be a model for them.
  3. That all the programs that opened up due to COVID weren't just for the limited time, like WIC showed that we are educating the community to eat locally, health wise and needing to make this change to support local businesses. It also helps climate change

Story



farmersfootprint.us

**Maria Catalán (English) | Farmer's Footprint**

This land was originally inhabited by the Popeloutchom Tribe To read this feature in Spanish, click here. Here in the United States they call it organic agriculture, but for us Latinos, it is the only way we know how to farm, it is the agriculture of ou...

I participated in Kitchen Table and ALBA, if there's a topic I'm interested in I will attend. In Kitchen Table, they saw I was working with CAFF and they didn't invite me back. We had the best markets, I had given them the idea to include markets like we had before, where it rotates vendor/farmer where they sell their products and other farmers products. They took this idea and didn't invite me back. They used me and they didn't invite me back. It's not my fault that I have the experience and time. Si saben como me pongo pa'que me invitan. (if you know how I behave, why do you invite me in the first place)

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**How did you start farming? What has your journey been like?**

I started about 25-29 years ago, I don't really remember. As an adult farmer in the US, I began with ALBA

**When you farm how do you decide what to plant/grow?**

I decide based on weather, temperature, and season. I aim to grow seasonally, things that do well in the cold weather are grown during winter, same for summer.

**What techniques do you use for the soil?**

For the soil, we use whatever is left over from the previous harvest. We began a program w/ \_\_\_\_\_ to compost, and cover with liquid fertilizer. All organic.

**Who are you selling to?**

I sell it to my son. (who is a distributor). Some to COKE, to Mandala, to Fresh Approach.

**What about transportation?**

To use my sons company, I would be paying \$150/wk, but to use another company which isn't my sons, it would be \$200-250/wk. It's easier through my son, since there is no need for a chauffeur, less driving and such things are better for my age. Because of this, I can just be in charge of farming and selling.

This country gave me the opportunities I did not have in my own country. This came and comes with a lot of both good and bad experiences, such as growing into myself as a woman and leader. Due to the Latino culture, women face many barriers that make this difficult. Especially due to the prevalence of machismo.

**Do you find yourself with many friends and a support system?**

I have many friends, but just not many from my past, you know as time passes you lose connection. Many assume because I have been farming for so long and have experience, I can help them.

**Do you think you have the same support from other farmers?**

Not really, not many will tell you what you should do. As Latinos, it is difficult to give and receive help from other people. We are distrustful of others due to being a marginalized community, and feeling used. In Mexico, I feel that this problem is worse, it's very hard, especially being a single woman with children.

**You haven't been able to return to MX right?**

I haven't been able to return to MX.

**What's your vision or objective?**

When I began I just wanted to be an independent woman, own my own business, make enough to support my children and feed my children. As well as have the chance to spend time with my kids. I also want my grandchildren to grow up free, to have a carefree and liberated childhood like I did, as well as have a lot of food.

Story: every year I grow watermelons, my grandchildren used to pick out their own and mark it with their name. They have plenty of food here. That was my second goal.

Story: they (grandchildren) grew up among the farm, crawling through the rows and perching their heads up at us, playing hide and seek.

I formed a Co-Op, it was hard for them to accept me as a woman. There were 4 men and me. Especially in farming, they would taunt me saying things like "Why don't you go home and take care of your kids and husband" than be there among them. In the end, I outgrew them and did the best out of the group. We had a lot of problems (the Co-Op), many people thought it was going

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to solve all their problems, but they needed to educate themselves, learn the technology for them to grow.

Pequeños Agricultores in CA → everything is written and legal, it's like my 2nd son.

Many farmers can't farm many acres without a loan. There's a lot of homework to do, you can't just farm and not be involved. Success isn't just money anymore. Life has shown me that doing what you're passionate about and what you love is success. Being open to learning what needs to change. Many of us are closed off to change, for example I love to grow squash, I will always grow squash, no matter what, whether I sell it or not. There has to be someone who will want to buy my squash. We need to identify the market and buyers before farming and planting. I am more conscious of change, but I still have some stubbornness.

Many are scared, many don't even have their own name to their business. This fear stems from being undocumented. That's why they don't hold financial records or have their own name to their business.

#### **What would make them feel more confident?**

They need someone that will give that confidence they need and trust. Many come up to me and ask "what should I sell? what should I grow?" They need to feel that you care about them and are involved in their business/operation. That takes a lot of time, up to years. If you came with me and talked to them, they would confide in you because they know me.

#### **Are you scared?**

No, not anymore. I've always been described as *atrabancada*. When I began, many people told me I couldn't do it or shouldn't because it's not for me, it's for rich, white people. The same need that made me fearless

I talk with a strong tone, due to need, I speak with confidence & strong will, many don't like it. I had to carry myself this way due to *machismo*, or else I wasn't listened to. Many don't like that a woman is in charge. Because of *machismo*, many women are prone to being seen as beneath men.

#### **When you need help, who do you turn to?**

My kids, if there's a need for help, my kids will understand. Or I call my mom, but when I tell her my problems, she will say that I should leave my work or how are you still working? But she doesn't understand. Workwise, I call you (CAFF),

I used to give a lot of talks,

#### **What do you think MX farmers need the most?**

Money? Money. Many already know how to farm beans, corn, and squash. But markets! They need to learn about local markets. It's also hard to say because everyone is at a different level in their farming. In my case, it would be more of where I get money to sell (contracts). There are many levels of need, so we need to work as a group. I can't receive funds as Maria Catalan, but as CAFF, yes. I want to be an example that the small farmer can trust in organizations like CAFF. Part of the compromise of the organization is follow up, there needs to be follow up. I want to be the person that helps farmers grow confidence in organizations like CAFF.

#### **How will we get them to trust? How do I get them to your events?**

I think that jealousy will always be there, sadly, I don't think there's anything we can do about that. Those who like me will come to my events, those who don't won't come. It's like politics,

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whether you're the best candidate, there will always be people who won't support you. Even through my own family, I find people who will and won't support me. This confidence is a process, many don't want to be like me because I've failed a lot. Many like me for that reason, they can see that I have failed a lot but have picked myself up.

I participated in Kitchen Table and ALBA, if there's a topic I'm interested in I will attend. In Kitchen Table, they saw I was working with CAFF and they didn't invite me back. We had the best markets, I had given them the idea to include markets like we had before, where it rotates vendor/farmer where they sell their products and other farmers products. They took this idea and didn't invite me back. They used me and they didn't invite me back. It's not my fault that I have the experience and time. Si saben como me pongo pa'que me invitan. (if you know how I behave, why do you invite me in the first place)

### **How do you think that farmers learn best?**

The majority learn by practicing. For example, I have a phone but I don't have all the knowledge I need to make it work for me most efficiently. Show me how to do it and then I'll learn. Life usually shows us what we need to learn.

What do you think we need to make farmers feel comfortable?

If there was no interest in getting something from the farmer. For me, if there is a topic I am interested in, I will go. I'm conscious that I need to learn those things. Many times, the farmers have experience and time, and don't think they need to learn more. New farmers now have the mindset of "what will they give me?" My success doesn't depend on you (CAFF), but my work and myself. For example, I need to learn what I need to do with my own tomatoes!

What these people need to learn how to form and find their own markets, how to find help, whatever topic your bring will be helpful for the farmer

### **Magic wand/3 wishes Q:**

1. Immigration reform for the US
2. I know part of my mission of mom/farmer/grandma my kids/grandkids will be in Ag. I want to give motivation to new farmers and be a model for them.
3. That all the programs that opened up due to COVID weren't just for the limited time, like WIC showed that we are educating the community to eat locally, health wise and needing to make this change to support local businesses. It also helps climate change
4. Its a domino effect, our whole system is changing

Yadira Mendiola @ ALBA (Salinas)

August 22nd

**Crops**

- brocolini
- dino kale
- cover crops: fava beans, ejotes

**Distributors / Buyers**

The quality expected is...  
If you think that you cannot sell...  
We need to ask her about markets and planning...

**Years of Practice**

ALBA alumni  
2 years on the plots

**Farming**

I know many who won't be back next year because they've given up.  
In agriculture, you can wake up with a lot of motivation and eagerness to get out there, but other days you don't.

**Tools, techniques, and infrastructure**

The offices don't pay too much...  
I don't rent the other tools...  
I get Farm System (seed and fava beans)...  
In ALBA they just give you...  
It seems that they don't have deep enough knowledge on which cover crops to use.  
There are restrictions at ALBA in regards to what can be done mechanically in the field.

**Family**

My family depends on my crops...  
[During the work day] I have to think about my kids - are they back from school? Did they have their lunch?

**Insects**

I have experienced the most plagues this year...  
Lack of knowledge of what is normal and what is not (insects outbreaks).

**External Support**

She understands that farmers must know how to reach out and speak for themselves...  
We know there's help & organizations that can help but we need the word language.  
Things paid in cash are harder to track.

**Workers and staff**

She needs help periodically, but workers require more stable schedule to commit.

**Knowledge**

[Learning] is easier when it's through Zoom because I can just listen to them while I am here.  
I want to learn about irrigation, pesticides and dealing with plagues.  
When I learn and gain the knowledge, I can make a confident step in my decisions.  
Request for knowledge comes after a problem is encountered - links to advisors who speak Spanish ought to get established.

**Bookkeeping**

We need agencies to help with technical...  
I want to expand because the more production you have, the more income you get to keep and have.  
Having more variety of crops means that if one crop fails more it can help cover the costs of the rest.

**Community**

When you begin farming, you don't think you can work alone...  
3 wishes:  
1. [Own] all the tools I need  
2. Have ownership of 5 acres  
3. Own my home for my children

**Evolving farming practice**

My goal is to be an owner of my own farm...  
I've been canning and that would also be a part of my dream.  
The goal is to reach financial stability while also being big enough to cover family costs.



The screenshot shows a Miro board titled "Farmers Needs Assessment" with the following sections and content:

- How did you start farming and what do you grow?** (Sticky notes)
- What do you do to protect soil and farm organically?** (Sticky notes)
- What is your experience farming in California?** (Sticky notes)
- How did you learn to farm?** (Sticky notes)
- How do you decide what to grow?** (Sticky notes)
- Who do you rely on for workers and support?** (Sticky notes)
- How do you pay for farming?** (Sticky notes)
- How do you keep records of your cash flow?** (Sticky notes)
- What farm activities could you use help with?** (Sticky notes)
- What plans do you have for your farm?** (Sticky notes)
- What do farmers need (as described by them)?** (Sticky notes)
- How should we help these farmers?** (Sticky notes)
- What should we be teaching them about regenerative agriculture?** (Sticky notes)
- What else ought to be covered?** (Sticky notes)
- How should we teach them?** (Sticky notes)
- What is left to be discovered**
  - Agromony:** (Sticky notes)
  - Markets:** (Sticky notes)
  - Financial and bookkeeping:** (Sticky notes)
  - Other:** (Sticky notes)

The board also features a sidebar with navigation tools, a top navigation bar with the Miro logo and search bar, and a bottom status bar showing "10:20 AM 1/26/2023".