

Research Foundation:  
Organic Farming Research Foundation:  
Adelante Mujeres Sustainable Organic Farming and Marketing Project - Final Report

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**Project Summary:**

The Sustainable Organic Farming and Marketing Project provides organic farming training and has developed a farming curriculum that can be implemented by other organizations. The principal motivation was to promote organic farming practices among low-income immigrant Spanish speaking farmers in Washington County; the overall goal of the project was to provide access to organic farming methods in order to further the economic viability of immigrant populations.

In order to achieve this overall goal, the project has accomplished the following:

- **We provided a comprehensive sustainable agriculture training program that included a component of marketing support.** This class was 22 weeks long and was followed up by practical on-the-ground support of farming techniques and marketing. In order to make these classes a success we have partnered with Oregon Sustainable Agricultural Land Trust and the Oregon State University Small Farms Program for training. Individual organic farms, Gales Creek Farm and Natural Harvest Farm, provided mentoring support and have made their farms available for site visits. In the summer of 2009, we established a partnership with the newly established Forest Grove Community Garden to offer an additional ½ acre of land to program participants. Most recently we have signed a lease with private landowners in Forest Grove for 12 acres of farmable land in order to offer more educational farming opportunities for program participants. Participants received direct marketing support by selling at the Forest Grove Farmers Market and we were able to establish other direct marketing relationships with Pacific University and the Forest Grove Community School who have a continued interest in purchasing produce from Adelante's farmers. We have also established a relationship with Ecotrust which has created the online farm-to-plate food distribution resource called Food Hub.
- **We have produced a curriculum that will enable other organizations to model our approach as well as a comprehensive training manual that will be made available to interested parties.** The class curriculum and training manual have been created by project coordinator Alejandro Tecum with the considerable help of our abovementioned partners. The training is culturally appropriate for the specific target audience as well as being written in Spanish. It is organized according to month. The training manual is still being formatted but all the content has been created. The final training module will include the class curriculum, the formatted training manual and appendices that cover the specific techniques and resources that Adelante Mujeres has found helpful in creating a successful sustainable organic farming and marketing project.

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- **We have recently expanded our program into Yamhill County by seeking other funds.** This is thanks in large part to the opportunity we have had to work with the Organic Farming Research Foundation. The ability to fund this project has allowed us to see the increasing need for growth of the Sustainable Organic Farming and Marketing project. Consequently, we applied for and were awarded a three year grant for a total of \$300,000 from the USDA's Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (OASDFR) grant program, administered by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). Of the more than \$14 million grants to organizations throughout the country that will provide training and assistance to socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, Adelante Mujeres was the sole grant recipient in Oregon. With this money we have been able to hire a Marketing and Outreach Coordinator and significantly expand the overall scope of the project.

### **Introduction to Topic:**

Many low-income, Spanish speaking immigrants have the skills and interest in farming but lack the logistic knowledge and support to adapt their skills to Oregon's environment and business reality. Throughout the country, demographics of farmers are changing. In order for the farming sector to remain viable, it is important to direct outreach and training at the underserved minority and women farmers. Support for organic farmers and access to direct marketing channels is also critical to adapt to the challenges and benefits of urban growth near rural areas. We have seen a significant increase in Latino farmers. Three percent of the farms in the state are operated by Latino farmers. There was a 63.7% increase in the population of Latino principal operators between 1997 and 2002. While the total number of Latino farmers is not large, the percent increase in Latino principal operators is tremendous, showing a need to reach out to this population. Latino immigrant farmers are underserved by federal programs. They are limited by language and cultural barriers, and access to funding and land. Those that do seasonal or temporary farm work make hardly enough to live on. The average income for farm work is \$10,000-\$12,499 per year (National Agricultural Workers Survey, 2001-2002). Also, according to a Pew Hispanic Center study, "The median income of non-citizen immigrant households fell 7.3 percent from 2006 to 2007 ... while the median annual income of all U.S. households rose 1.3 percent" (Kochhar 2008).

Spanish-speaking immigrant farmers in the region often have experience with work in agriculture in their home country and desire to continue this work; however, much of their experience is limited to conventional farming with a heavy reliance on chemicals. Commonly reported health problems among migrant farm workers and their children include: lower height and weight, respiratory disease, parasitic conditions, skin infection, chronic diarrhea, vitamin A deficiency, accidental injury, heat-related illness, and chemical poisoning (Oregon Health and Science University 2001). Immigrant farmers may know of the human health benefits of organic farming, however they lack access to organic farming training and are unaware of the potential economic benefits. They also have limited knowledge of soil structure and the damage due to chemical farming. Also,

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in our experience working with Latino immigrants for the past five years, we have found that farmers are often open and interested to learn about organic farming practices.

Available resources are scarce and inadequate for outreach to low-literacy Latino farmers: many materials are not translated into Spanish, those that are translated are not designed for persons with limited literacy skills (language level is too high and there is too much verbiage, the presentation is confusing).

In 2006 Adelante Mujeres launched the Sustainable Farming Program and successfully helped 19 families develop the knowledge and skills necessary to operate a sustainable farming business through 22-week classes and training. No other entity is doing specific outreach and training for Latino farmers in Oregon. Alfredo Sanchez, a participant, expressed his gratitude for the program in this way,

*“Este es un programa de aprendizaje. Nosotros estamos en el camino, aprendiendo; aunque todavía no ganamos mucho dinero, sí ya tenemos la satisfacción de estar proveyendo comida orgánica, fresca y cultivada localmente, tanto para nuestros clientes como para nuestras familias.”*

“This is a learning program. We are on the road, learning; even if we are not yet earning a lot of money, we have the satisfaction of providing organic food, fresh and locally grown, to our clients and our families.”

In the first year of the Sustainable Farming Program, we met with Oregon Tilth, OSU Extension Service, and Oregon Sustainable Agricultural Land Trust (OSALT) to determine what services were being provided to Spanish-speaking immigrant farmers and what resources existed for this work. We also helped develop the B Street Permaculture Farm (a project of Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon; Metro of Portland, Oregon; Clean Water Services; and Adelante Mujeres) to provide land for farming and onsite training. This partnership with B Street ended in February of 2009 but we have since leased 12 acres of privately owned farmland within the Forest Grove city limits in order to expand our onsite training capacity. We contacted other non-profits in the area to see if anyone was already meeting the need for organic training for immigrants and developed partnerships with the farmer/owners of three organic farms--Square Peg Farm, Gales Meadow Farm and Natural Harvest--securing their involvement as mentors and field trip sites.

## **Objectives Statement**

**Provide effective land-based training in organic practices, and access to farmland for low-income Latino families.** In 2008, we had 11 families participating in the sustainable farming classes and growing at B Street Permaculture farm and 5 vendors who sold their produce at the Forest Grove Farmers Market. In 2009, we had 21 families participating in the sustainable farming classes and growing at the Forest Grove

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Community Gardens and 3 vendors who sold at the Forest Grove Farmers Market. The only reason that this number reduced instead of increased is that we dissolved our partnership with B Street Permaculture farm in February of 2009. This meant that we were looking for other land to farm during an important planting time. In the coming year we expect to expand our program to at least 30 families and see the number of vendors and direct marketing opportunities increase.

**Increase economic equity for low-income Latino families through marketing support of farm products.** Our Sustainable Farming Program has a successful track record since launching in 2006 and continues to provide marketing support and assistance to the original families served who now operate their own businesses. Participants in the 2009 program now average sales of \$130 a week of their vegetables, herbs and plants, an increase of \$60 a week from last year. Also, participating families are guaranteed an outlet for business by selling their produce in the Forest Grove Farmers Market, managed by Adelante Mujeres. The Market began in 2005 with average attendance of 250. The average attendance for the 2008 season was 1,600 visitors. The total number of participating vendors has increased from 6 to 32 with a waiting list. We continue to work with these participants to determine additional markets for their produce.

**Systematize our course into a training manual that shares methodologies and resources to encourage organic farming practices.** Project Director Alejandro Tecum has worked from a variety of sources to create a culturally appropriate designed for persons that may have limited literacy skills. All the material for this manual has been gathered. All that remains is to format it so that it will be ready to widely distribute. A farming course curriculum and resources have also been created. We have attached a copy of the manual glossary and will send a bound copy to the Organic Farming Research Foundation.

## **Materials and Methods**

This project is an outgrowth of requests from Latinos in our Small Business and Adult Education programs. Adelante Mujeres was founded in 2002 to provide holistic education and micro enterprise services to low-income Spanish-speaking immigrant families. Participants in these programs requested support to start farming operations in their new home in Oregon. In addition to developing the Sustainable Farming Program, we opened the Forest Grove Farmers Market to provide an avenue for participating farmers' product sales. Participant feedback is sought and highly valued in all of our work. We rely on ongoing participant feedback to help shape this project.

The goal has been to provide resources to Latino farmers and farm workers who are interested in learning sustainable farming methods and to put this acquired knowledge into action. There are many more Latino immigrants in the region who do not know of, or have limited access to our program. Most Latino farmers also lack the necessary channels to access land; they are unaware of opportunities for leasing or available loans. With our project we hope to continue efforts to outreach to these individuals.

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Adelante Mujeres has proven success at reaching the Latino immigrant community. We have helped over 300 families since our organization began in 2002 and continually develop and evolve our programs to meet various needs for the population served. Because the majority of our staff is first generation immigrants (85%), they can empathize, communicate and connect with the families we serve. All other staff members are bicultural/bilingual and have lived and worked in Latin America. Our educational model is based on Popular Education theory developed by Paulo Freire. Our methodology views education as a tool for liberation, builds from and validates participant experiences, and makes education relevant to daily living.

Through surveys and discussions with the families involved in our program we determined that hands-on learning coupled with a classroom environment and lessons in Spanish would provide the most consistent training and support. Having a training module adapted and written in Spanish has helped us to more effectively deliver the program as well as provide participants with organic farming materials created with their educational background in mind. Some of the resources for creating this manual have been the Small Farms Team at Washington State University Extension, Oregon State University Extension, the Oregon Sustainable Agricultural Land Trust, El Instituto Cooperativo Interamericano de Panama (The InterAmerican Cooperative Institute of Panama), and the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements.

In addition to these resources, we have developed relations with the farmer/owners of three organic farms--Square Peg Farm, Gales Creek Farm and Natural Harvest--and continuously sought their involvement in the project. Specifically, Gales Creek Farm (Anne and Rene Berblinger) and Natural Harvest (Will Newman) helped develop the curriculum and all three have been mentors for this project.

With their help, we have established a process by which we recruit low-income Latino families to participate in a 22-week sustainable farming and marketing course. In addition to classroom and skills development, participants learn how to conduct a feasibility study, write a Farm Plan which includes all relevant business aspects, and learn how to grow, harvest and prepare produce for market.

Families then operate their own farming business and have access, for a minimal fee, to land for growing, irrigation and a greenhouse. Participants have access to the Forest Grove Farmers Market to sell their products and learn about other marketplaces. They also receive ongoing mentorship, support and access networking opportunities.

The weekly classes by experts in the field of organic farming and agriculture are laid out below.

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Introducción / <i>Introduction</i> Productos convencionales versus orgánicos <i>Conventional versus organic</i>
Plan de cultivo -selección y tiempo <i>Plot planning- selection and timing</i>
Fertilidad del suelo y la abonera <i>Feed the soil and compost</i>
Sistemas de riego <i>Irrigation systems</i>
Invernadero, túnel y cultivos de cobertura <i>Greenhouse, cloche and cover crops</i>
Recolección y almacenado de semillas <i>Seed selection &amp; how to save seeds</i>
Semilleros, siembra y transplante <i>Seeding, planting &amp; transplanting</i>
Requerimientos nutritivos de la planta, guía de fertilizantes orgánicos <i>Plant nutrient requirements, organic fertilizer guide</i>
Manejo integrado de plagas <i>Integrated pest management</i>
Control de enfermedades en las plantas y control de malezas <i>Disease management in plants &amp; weed management</i>
Tiempo apropiado de la cosecha y manejo seguro del producto <i>Harvest timing, safe handling of produce</i>
Gira educativa “Square Peg Farm” <i>Field trip</i>
El Plan de negocios <i>Business Plan</i>
Finanzas personales, fuentes de capital, control de riesgos <i>Personal finances, sources of capital, risk management</i>
Mantenimiento de registros, contabilidad e impuestos <i>Recordkeeping, bookkeeping, taxes</i>
Investigación de mercado, perfil del cliente <i>Market research , understanding your customer</i>
Servicio al cliente, diseños del puesto de ventas, hábitos del vendedor <i>Customer service, booth design, best vendor practices</i>
Establecimiento de precios <i>Price twice</i>
Publicidad y ventas <i>Advertising and selling</i>
Gira educativa "Gales Meadow Farm” <i>Field trip Gales Meadow Farm</i>
Gira educativa " Natural Harvest Farm” <i>Field trip Natural Harvest Farm</i>

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Graduación <i>Graduation</i>
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Participants also visit established organic farms--Square Peg Farm, Gales Creek Farm and Natural Harvest Farm-- for tours of the farms to observe practices and discuss successful organic farm management.

## **Project Results**

### **Qualitative:**

Program participants have been able to take the 22-week course and then apply the learned principles on land rented for a nominal fee for growing. Project Director Alejandro Tecum has assessed the progress of the farmers in retaining the information provided in the courses and reinforced in on-the-ground practical training. He sees continued room for improvement from program participants who often take considerable convincing that they can farm without any use of chemicals. Additionally he sees the need for improvement in persuading the farmers to reduce their water consumption. Overall, the program has successfully accomplished its principal motivation of promoting organic farming practices among low-income immigrant Spanish-speaking farmers in Washington County. We have seen such a level of need for this type of program that we are currently working to expand the project and outreach into bordering Yamhill County.

### **Quantitative:**

As mentioned in the measurable outcomes, Adelante Mujeres provides marketing support and assistance to the original families served who now operate their own businesses. Our numbers show that those who participated in the program in 2009 currently average sales of \$130 a week of their vegetables, herbs and plants, an increase of \$60 a week from last year. Additionally, in 2008 we served 11 families with the 22-week sustainable farming and marketing course and access to B Street Permaculture Farm. Five of those farmers sold their produce at the Farmers Market. In 2009, despite losing our partnership with B Street Permaculture Farm, we had 21 families that participated in the sustainable farming and marketing course and three who were able to sell at the Forest Grove Farmers Market. Also, thanks to this grant we were able to establish a partnership with Bienestar Housing Corp. in Hillsboro, Washington County, and now we offer our sustainable farming classes in three different locations.

We have also produced supplemental educational and promotional materials: a promotional brochure, an introductory power point presentation to the sustainable farming class, the syllabus and the sustainable farming manual. These materials can be utilized free of charge by any interested party.

## **Conclusions and Discussion**

The Sustainable Organic Farming and Marketing Project developed organically based on the requests of participants in other Adelante Mujeres programs. This expressed need has

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developed into a project that relies on the feedback of both sustainable farming participants and the participation of local organic farmers. The project is a valuable asset to the mission of Adelante Mujeres, which is through education, empowerment and enterprise, Adelante Mujeres engages Latino families in holistic development for the common good.

Some participants who have successfully completed the program are now selling their produce at the Forest Grove Farmers Market. Whether or not the participants go on to create their own farming business, adapting organic farming practices also benefits the participant's overall health and wellbeing. Increasing access to healthy foods for low-income and Latino residents is a high priority goal. Undernourishment is a problem facing many low-income Latino immigrant families. Another problem local residents face is childhood obesity. Among male youth, the highest overweight and obesity prevalence is found in Mexican American boys (ages 6 to 11), 43 percent and 27.3 percent respectively, and Mexican American adolescent males (ages 12 to 19), 44.2 percent and 27.5 percent respectively ([www.obesity.org](http://www.obesity.org)). With the demands to feed a family and little money to do so, expensive fruits and vegetables often are left off a grocery list. This project exposes low-income families to fresh, quality produce and increases nutritional intake.

In addition to serving the local population and our plans to expand our services into Yamhill County, the project model that we have created will help other organizations that are interested in teaching sustainable farming or who need access to a comprehensive and culturally competent farming manual.

One unforeseen setback this past year was the dissolution of our partnership with B Street Permaculture Farm. This meant that we went almost 4 months (from February to late April 2009) without land for our farmers. We have learned the importance of establishing a formal lease agreement. Because in the early stages of this project we were in great need of land we agreed to enter into an informal relationship with the managers of the B Street Farm. It would have been wiser to wait until we found a partner willing to have a formal lease agreement. We learned from this situation and, with our new farm, we have created a formal lease document that ensures that we will be able to stay on the land for at least five years with the possibility of an extension.

We have procured the funds to expand this program and with this new growth we have modified our objectives as followed:

- Conduct outreach to locate and aid Latino farmers in the community who are interested in running their own farming business and current Latino farmers who want to pursue organic farming practices and enhance their business through marketing support.
- Provide an intensive, practical and comprehensive sustainable organic farming training program with marketing support for Latino farmers in rural Washington and Yamhill Counties in Oregon

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- Continue to adapt and produce a Training Manual and resource guide, which includes workshops and asset building tools for low-literacy Latino farmers, to be available in print and via the internet.
- Develop a database of Latino farmers in rural Washington and Yamhill Counties in Oregon and conduct a needs assessment with these farmers.
- Create successful economic farming opportunities for Latino farmers by coordinating production and developing marketing skills and capacity.
- Facilitate access to land for farming through leases or purchase and include training on these processes.

As our project continues to develop, we will use these objectives to weigh our success.

### **Outreach**

During the course of the project we have used many outlets to outreach to the local Latino immigrant community, including Bienestar Housing Corp., Oregon Childhood Development Coalition - Poder Family Literacy, Western Farm Workers Association, local churches and Adelante Mujeres program participants.

We envision the training module as a tool that can be used by other organizations that hope to create a similar training program. The training manual will be provided to the students that attend the sustainable agriculture classes. Recruitment of low-income Latino farmers will be conducted via word of mouth, flyers, the radio and presentations given at appropriate venues. We will announce the availability of the Training Module using various methods including:

1. Our website ([www.adelantemujeres.org](http://www.adelantemujeres.org)): The training module will be available for download free of charge
2. National Farmers Market list serves and other connections we have made through farmers markets
3. Oregon Tilth
4. USDA state and national connections we have available due to grant funds
5. Oregon State University - Extension Service

### **Citations**

Oregon Health and Science University. 2001. Reducing Pesticide Exposure in Minority Families. Online at <http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/research/centers-institutes/croet/research/minority-fam.cfm>.

Kochhar, Rakesh. 2008. Latino Workers in the Ongoing Recession: 2007 to 2008. Pew Research Center. Online at <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1054/latino-workers-in-the-ongoing-recession-2007-to-2008>.

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**References/Resources**

William Newman II, Primary Agriculture Trainer  
Oregon Tilth and Oregon Sustainable Agricultural Land Trust (OSALT)  
Natural Harvest Farm, organic farmer/mentor  
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Bienestar Housing Development Corp.  
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<http://bienestar-or.org/>

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### **Addenda**

Included with the Final Report are:

1. Photos at the Farmers Market and Community Garden
2. Promotional Brochure in PDF format
3. Class Syllabus for 2009/2010
4. Glossary for the Training Manual