



NM Legislature's Economic Development & Policy Committee Meeting- “Access to Healthy Food”

Anita G. Rodriguez, PhD

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“There are major responsibilities linked to our decision to assemble here in community. So, how can we be together? How can we be together in a unity that is not simplistic and oppressive? How can we be together in a unity that is complex and emancipatory?” Angela Davis

It starts with you-- me, us.





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Las Cruces, New Mexico



OUR MISSION

Small family farm in Las Cruces, NM nourishing community with fresh, local food and inspiring holistic, creative lifestyles.





Implementing healthy soil practices, growing nutritious food, and caring for the environment.

- We utilize **beyond Organic** practices...
- **Non-GMO, heirloom** and **ancestral** seeds.
- My Dads' sugar cane seed **35+ years old**, stored in our shed, and still viable. Late Grandfathers' chamomile seed **50+ years old** still fragrant and productive.
- A **social entrepreneur**: in a company, non-profit or organization seeks to create replicable, sustainable, and responsible systems: for community, country, and the world.





Small-scale, Regenerative Farming is Key to a Just Economic Transition

Utopia Valley LLC creates **value-added food & other products** utilizing our organic and regenerative practices/ingredients.

We prepare: Dehydrated Culinary/Medicinal Herbs (for spices, tea &/or salves); Baked goods, Jams & Jellies.

Smudge sticks: using Eucalyptus leaves (we have 2 trees), sage, and other herbs and flowers grown at Utopia Valley LLC.

Barriers to investment I've experienced my farm/food business include:

- Gender Discrimination- Female
- Ethnicity- Hispanic
- Small farmer (3+ acres in production)
- PPP Covid loan obstacles at bank (possibly given to aforementioned reasons)
- Climate Change- weather changes, plants bolting (seeding sooner), drought stressed due to decreased water
- Water: Drip Systems- Initial investment cost/continual maintenance. More water efficient yet increased sodium. EBID/Well water concerns- aquifer strain, periodic safety concerns, allocations to non-food use in NM/TX. Abuses by other industries/large farms as well as.





Seeds of Hope...

“In every
community, there is
work to be done.
In every nation,
there are wounds to
heal.
In every heart, there
is the power to do
it.”

Marianne Williamson
Founder of The Peace Alliance
and Author



What is Possible with Sufficient Investment?



- **Be Community Food Hub-** North Valley aggregation site for La Semilla & neighbor farmers
- **Build Small Solar Commercial Greenhouse/Kitchen-** Teach community classes/workshops: food safety, preparation, cooking, marketing, clothing construction, arts/crafts. Prior experience: Foods and Nutrition Teacher at The American School Foundation- Mexico City, Family & Consumer Sciences Teacher- Picacho Middle School in Las Cruces, NM. Also taught bilingual adults food safety and preparation nutrition workshops in Rio Arriba and Taos County for NMSU Cooperative Extension Service.
- **Employ More People-** Diverse areas of farm: Field- pecan orchard, regenerative ag area, culinary garden (spices), medicinal herbs (teas); other transition areas: beans/lentils; fruit trees; Art Studio/Gallery- make jewelry and paint; Kitchen- test/create more value-added food products, etc...
- **Offer salary/benefits-** Many small farmers have multiple roles to be sustainable.



Commercial Equipment Purchased



**UTOPIA VALLEY
LLC**

Mountain View Market Close-Out Items:

- **Stainless Steel: 6-burner Gas range; Pizza oven; 3 Compartment Sink; 13 Knives; Grocery Cart**
- **Sliding Glass Door Merchandiser Refrigerator; 2 Extra Large Cutting Boards, 13 Pot holders, 7+ Pizza pans; 4 large Stainless Steel NSF (National Sanitation Foundation) shelves**
- **4 Rod-Iron Patio Tables & 4 Rod-Iron Chairs; Wooden Storage work area with 2 cabinets and shelves; Tierra Organic Merchandise Display shelves; Tiered Rotary Display baskets; Pellet Cooker; Diaper Changing Table; 2 Wood chairs; 2 Push Carts; etc...**



A Liveable Future is Possible By Investing in Small Farmers

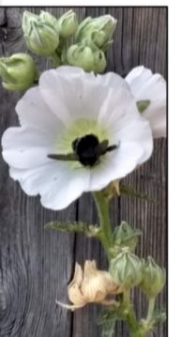
- **Increased Local Food; Decreased energy/resource waste**- less transport/gasoline/pollution.
- **Nutritious and delicious foods**- picked ripe/fresh, not green.
- **Increased community health/wellness**- mental, physical, spiritual. Farming can be therapeutic. Working with the soil/plants can be restorative, plus it builds character and keeps you humble.
- **Regenerative, agroecological and beyond organic** practices strengthen communities.
- **Community Workshops/Collaboration**- Agriculture, marketing, climate change discussions- impact on plants environment, drought, winds, rains, insects +/-, plants bolting early.
- **More efficient water use**- Consider environmental impacts. Water concerns given:

EBID (Elephant Butte Irrigation District) allocations- **only 1** irrigation Summer 2021

DAMDWA (Dona Ana Mutual Domestic Water Association)- Drip system runs on this-- costly as County water rates are more expensive than city. Collaboration with NIFI (National Immigrant Farming Institute) in El Paso, TX provided materials/labor to get 4 areas of Utopia Valley on drip.

Well- Aquifer safety concerns- strain & equity disparity-- larger farmers' disproportionate amount over-use/abuse by purchasing from small farmers/pumping water to fill 2-3 areas of EBID laterals that extend miles down road to sell it to other industries and larger farmers. Food produced is not staying local. Shipped to other states/countries, yet we still have children/community members hungry here.

Produced Water- Fracking may contaminate aquifers/nature/food production in various areas. Need "independent" research re: fracking impacts, not US Dept of Energy &/or oil industry funded studies.





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Thank You!!!



**Inspired by my parents...
Raymond & Celia Rodriguez**