

CATAWBA COUNTY

Farmer Spotlight

CALDERON PRODUCE

Reynaldo & Martha Calderon

Reynaldo and Martha Calderon are in the process of developing a website for their impressive farm. On the website (www.calderonproduce.com), you can see beautiful aerial pictures of their over 100 acre farm planted in tomatoes, cucumbers, and various types of peppers. They even have a U-Pick option for their tomatoes perfect for a relaxing day outside with your family, open Monday through Saturday while tomatoes are in season. The farm is manned by the couple and their five children who range in age from 21-30. During the off season, the Calderons plant cover crops in order to protect their fields from erosion and other risks associated with leaving fields bare. The Calderons did not always have their own farm however. They began working in agriculture as migrant workers in Florida, Georgia, and North and South Carolina. In 1989, after almost two decades of travelling, they decided to settle in Waynesville in order to let their kids have more stable schooling. They wanted to be able to have their children participate in extracurricular activities and get involved with a community. Martha says she is especially proud that she was able to watch all of her children's games during high school and that settling down enabled that.



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They began sharecropping, but knew that their ultimate goal would be to one day have their own farm. It took about ten years and plenty of perseverance for the transition to take place, but now their operation is thriving in Vale. Martha says that one of the most important pieces of advice she has ever received was to evolve with the industry, because change was coming whether you wanted it to or not.



The Calderons have certainly changed with the times; They recently received the Value Added Producer grant and with it are currently building a processing and packaging facility next to their home that will make their production even more streamlined. They are hoping that it will be finished by the end of the summer.

The family is working towards establishing a professional relationship with MDI which will involve their farm being GAP (or Good Agricultural Practices) certified and having their produce in the stores that MDI distributes to.

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The Calderon farm is already garnering national attention. speak about her life's experience."

Martha has been asked to speak at several large events. She was recently nominated for the Champion of Change award and was able to visit the white house to speak about her life's experience. She has given speeches about the rural development grant program and agricultural insurance that were facilitated by the USDA. Martha has also been active in the local community, helping to start Hispanic Women in Agriculture. This club, comprised of 8 women from the Catawba County area have been meeting for the past four years. The purpose of the group is to help members gain marketing and purchasing power. Martha's sister-in-law, Esmerelda, came up with the idea, realizing that since they were already advocating for each other unofficially, it could help them to organize their efforts.



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