



# IDAHO INNOVATORS

## Home-delivered organic produce



Courtesy of Kristin's Farm Stand  
**Kristin Varela-Schild expanded her family business to southeastern Idaho, providing home delivery of fresh vegetables and hormone-free meat.**

By **DIANNA TROYER**  
For the Capital Press

Kristin Varela-Schild never planned to become an organic greenhouse farmer in southeastern Idaho. Last year, however, investors convinced her to expand her family business, Kristin's Farm Stand, to a 490-acre farm south of Malta.

"Investors who owned geothermal property there found us because we're skilled at running greenhouses and raising livestock for consumers who crave organic produce and hormone-free meat delivered to their doorsteps," Varela-Schild said.

Eight employees tend to tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, green beans, lettuce, spinach, kale, arugula, eggplant, microgreens, eggs, cattle and pork.

The farm stand differs from other

### KRISTIN VARELA-SCHILD

**Occupation:** Founder of Kristin's Farm Stand

**Education:** Bachelor's of science degree in biology/zoology with a Spanish minor from Colorado State University, 1997. Also completed master gardener certification.

**Family:** Husband and three daughters, ages 16 to 20.

**Motto:** Food is Medicine

**Online:** More information about the farm's weekly food delivery can be found at [www.kristins-boise.com](http://www.kristins-boise.com) or [kristins-saltlake.com](http://kristins-saltlake.com).

"We don't offer a subscription service," Varela-Schild said. "All of our products are sold individually. You can cherry pick exactly what you want, in the quantities you want, including meat by the individual cut. We like to make it easy on people without the fear of a commitment. There's no minimum to order, either."

She said the motto "Food is Medicine" motivates her.

"I can't claim the motto as my own," she said, "but our family has lived this and seen its truth with our very own eyes."

She established the farm stand after their daughter became critically ill. In 2016, her daughter lost 32 pounds in three months and was diagnosed with severe celiac disease.

"She was intensely intolerant of gluten and certain preserva-

tives and chemicals in food, so we started raising our own food," Varela-Schild said. "The only change we made was eating the food we grew, and she regained her health and weight. It made such an impact on me, seeing the connection between what food you eat and your health."

Their friends and neighbors began asking to buy their home-grown food.

"Our vegetables are flavorful and nutrient dense because they're grown as soil-based vine crops and are delivered shortly after they're picked," Varela-Schild said.

Due to high demand for the vegetables, she began the farm stand near their home at Brighton, Colo., in 2018 as a customized fresh food service with home deliveries.

*This story was first published Oct. 9, 2020.*

## Ag engineer battles 'legacy of erosion'

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**  
Capital Press

Heavy rain keeps Erin Brooks up at night.

The University of Idaho associate professor and agricultural engineer monitors extreme weather that can flood cropland and increase erosion.

If climate change model predictions of more intense rain prove true, Brooks said, some farmers could see more erosion, even those who have reduced tillage.

Brooks looks for water quality patterns using satellite imagery and crop-yield monitors. He wants to manage landscapes with a "legacy of erosion" to allow farmers to maximize profitability, minimize the loss of soil and improve long-term sustainability.

No-till practices and more organic matter from the use of cover cropping are ways farmers can make their fields



University of Idaho  
**University of Idaho agricultural engineer and associate professor Erin Brooks looks for patterns in water and soil quality using satellite imagery and crop-yield monitors.**

"more resistant to disaster," Brooks said.

Farmers are also considering more fall-seeded crops, such as winter peas, to reduce erosion risks.

Brooks grew up in North Bend, Wash., but his parents' families both farmed in East-

ern Washington, where he would visit every summer.

As a college student, Brooks decided to pursue agricultural engineering, wanting to help maintain agriculture's economic vitality and improve the environment.

Brooks recently received a one-year, \$20,000 internal university research grant to explore better management of water and farm sustainability. His research team will examine soils that were degraded by water stress such as erosion.

They will use soil-moisture and crop sensors on center irrigation pivots and examine various crops' responses.

"I think we're in a new era where a lot of farmers are looking at regenerative ag," he said. "They're tired of applying more and more fertilizers every year because their soils are degraded and at best getting 50% of that

fertilizer coming back into their crop."

Many farmers are willing to accept losses in their cash crop for cover crops if it will help restore soil health and get more nutrients from organic sources, he said.

Brooks worked with Genesee, Idaho, farmer Eric Odberg on site-specific, climate-friendly farming as part of the Regional Approaches to Climate Change research project, or REACCH.

*This story was first published Sept. 4, 2020.*

### ERIN BROOKS

**Title:** Associate professor, agricultural engineer at University of Idaho

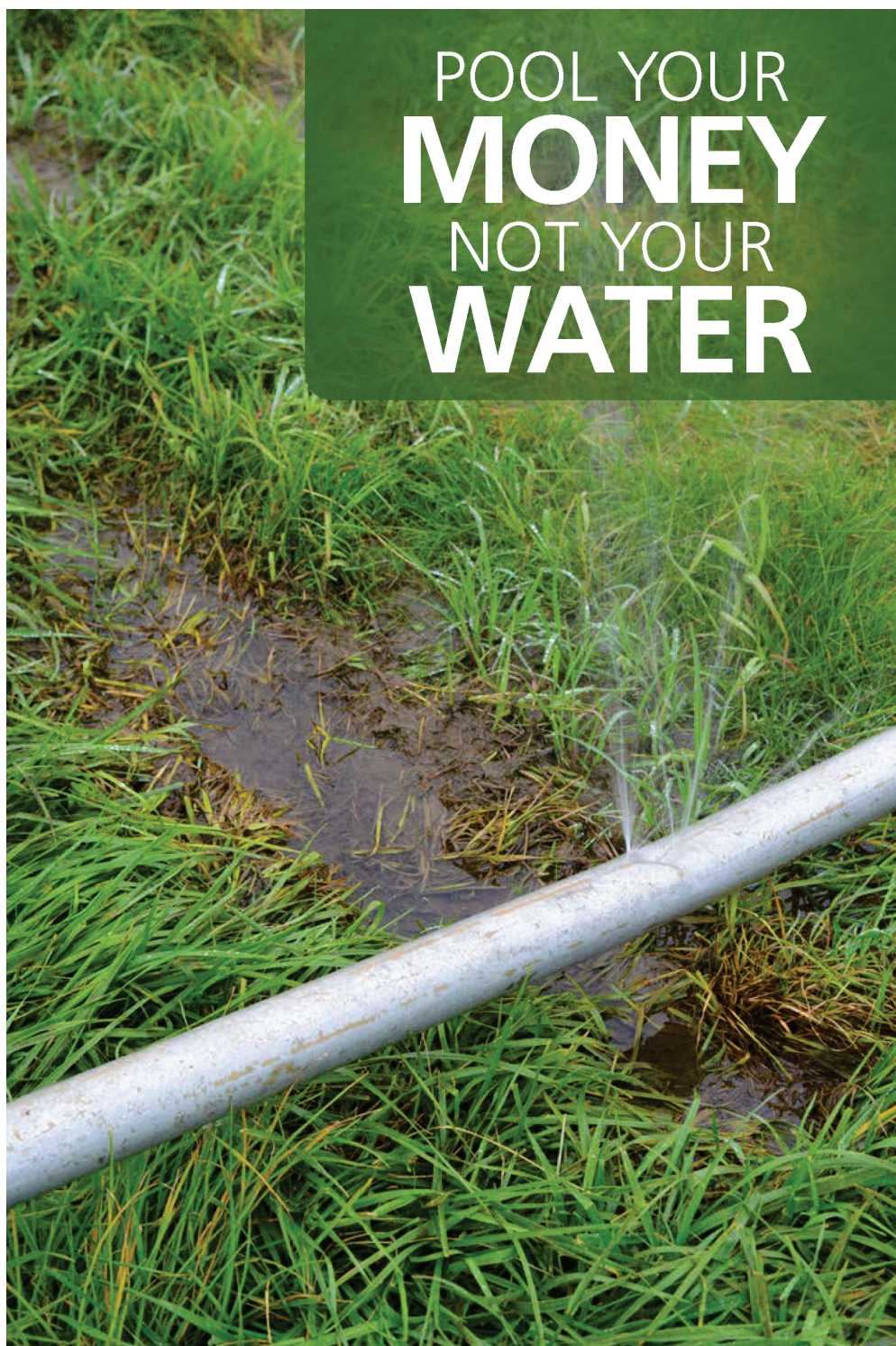
**Age:** 49

**Hometown:** North Bend, Wash.

**Current location:** Moscow, Idaho.

**Education:** Bachelor's degree in agricultural engineering, Washington State University; master's degree in agricultural and biological engineering, University of Minnesota; research at Cornell University; Ph.D. in agricultural and bioengineering, University of Idaho

**Family:** Wife Andrea; children Matilda, 20; Caleb, 18; Emmett, 15; Cody, 10



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