

Six Kids Farms: Striving for quality above all else

By **DAVE LEDER**
For the Capital Press

SUNNYSIDE, Wash. — Javier Lopez had never tried his hand at farming until about five years ago. But now that he has gotten his hands dirty, the longtime agronomist from Sunnyside, Wash., is hooked.

Since 2017, Lopez and his parents, Javier Sr. and Susan, have been growing a variety of crops on their 7-acre farm in Central Washington under the name Six Kids Farms.

The family sells sweet corn, eggplants, pumpkins, tomatoes, leeks and an assortment of peppers out of their barn, at farmers markets and online. This year, they will be adding alfalfa, wheat and cherries to the mix by utilizing an additional 28 acres on their property.

Business has been steady, but no matter how popular their produce becomes, the Lopezes have no desire to expand beyond the Yakima Valley.

“For us, it’s not about getting



Dave Leder/For the Capital Press

Six Kids Farms co-owner Javier Lopez and his 6-year-old daughter, Bella, examine cherry branches on the family's 35-acre farm in Sunnyside, Wash., in late January. He will be growing Bing and Chelan cherries for the first time in 2022 after focusing mostly on sweet corn, eggplant, tomatoes and peppers since 2017.

rich. It’s all about the lifestyle,” said Lopez, whose five siblings lend occasional support but aren’t involved in the day-to-day operations. “We’re not looking to send our produce to a warehouse. We just want to grow a quality product that satisfies a niche market here in the valley.”

The family also wants their customers to know that every crop grown in their fields is cultivated with care and meets the highest standards.

“People want to know where their food comes from,” Lopez said, “and being able to tell that story is very important to us.”

Six Kids Farms started out by selling “the best sweet corn you’ve ever had” and gradually added to the cornucopia. Everything they grow earns rave reviews from their customers, but five years in, sweet corn remains their signature product.

The secret, Lopez says, is using drip irrigation instead of sprinklers or rill irrigation.

“Instead of watering on a schedule, the drip system allows us to concentrate the water where it needs to be when we need it,” he said. “We have also found that by putting the water at the root zone, we don’t lose as much to evaporation.”

The result is a delicate texture that is less starchy and more digestible than the mass-produced corn typically found at the supermarket.

“You can grab it right out of the field and eat it,” Lopez said.

Offering a one-of-a-kind product has helped Six Kids Farms establish a loyal following at farmers markets in Union Gap, Toppenish, Granger, Prosser and Kennewick. And while

they could likely add to their customer base outside the Interstate 82 corridor, the family prefers to keep the business local. After all, there are only so many hours in a week.

“I want to enjoy life and not have to work all the time,” Lopez said. “I love farming, but I also want to spend time with my family. I honestly feel like I’ve found the secret to happiness.”

But it’s not as though Lopez has ample free time, either. When he’s not working the land, the father of four operates an agronomy consulting company called Treskilion Management. Fortunately, both businesses provide plenty of overlap, which has worked out well for Lopez and his consulting clients.

“Now that I’ve been farming for a few years, I understand the needs of my clientele better than before,” he said. “I’ve been able to adopt the mindset of a farmer, and that has given me much better insight into what my clients are facing from year to year.”



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