



## Meet Raúl and Lilian Chanchavac

Raúl and Lilian are a very kind and loved couple in their community, both are children of farmers in one of the regions of Guatemala with the highest levels of malnutrition.

At the age of 29, Raúl lives in Tonicapán, in Guatemala's western highlands, with his wife Lilian and his two children (Dylan 5 and Marcos 1).

The biggest dream for Raúl and Lilian is to transition from subsistence farming to profit-generating agriculture, guaranteeing and selling harvest surpluses. They want to have a prosper future for their children but they know will the next challenge is to find stable markets with fair prices that allow them to prosper. When they entered CRS programs, they had no idea how to sell their products in formal markets, and they consider themselves extremely shy.

Raúl and his wife received seed capital and technical training from CRS's SEGAMIL project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). This allowed them to build a greenhouse to expand their vegetable production with a greater focus on quality. With his eyes on

new markets, Raúl was one of the first participant to register his agribusiness on the Tax Administration Office and start selling their products at better prices.



Two years ago participating in the Our Harvest Local and Regional Food Aid Procurement project (LRP) funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) they were trained on agricultural production to small producers to be

linked to stable markets as part of the National School Feeding Law. The Law requires schools to buy a minimum of 50% of their food from local producers like Raúl. That guarantees a stable market for local producers and improves local economies and community wellbeing. Raúl and Lilian found the opportunity they were looking for to establish a formal business.

Raúl and his wife continued expanding their agribusiness, they replicated the local procurement model as part of their own initiative, in schools outside the Our Harvest project area. In the last year and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, Raúl and his wife signed 10 new contracts with schools outside of the project coverage area, so they now sell to a total of 16 schools.



Raúl and his wife attended one of the first Our Harvest Smallholder Producer Fairs in the Fall of 2019. There they initiated business relationships with six schools. Since Raúl already met all the certification requirements needed to sell to schools under the Law, he was one of the first entrepreneurs to take advantage. Raúl and his wife start to supply vegetables and eggs to these 6 schools in his own community at fair market prices. This new contract represents a 25% increase from his previous sales on informal markets. Family's income increased up to \$ 750 per month, more than double the minimum wage in Guatemala.

"I now prefer selling to formal markets because they better appreciate the quality of our products and the pay is better, which is more fair considering our efforts. Before sowing, we analyze the demand so we don't saturate the market and therefore always get good prices. I owe CRS for the motivation gained to formally start my agribusiness and sell quality products at a better price."

Raúl and Lilian work together every day, now the vision of the couple is the strategic management of the agribusiness. They are in charge of managing business relationships in order to make the business grow, and because the demand for their products has grown, they have begun to hire their neighbors into the business.

Currently, a total of 17 people work in his agribusiness, during the harvest season. There are five men sowing and harvesting the crops, up to 15 people (giving preference to women and young people) to wash and pack the products with high standards, and 2 more people with vehicles for delivery to schools.

"My wife and I have always dreamed of seeing prosperity in our community and we are very happy to give work to our neighbors, we try to pay fair salaries so that they too will prosper," Raul said.

With the vision of helping their neighboring farmers who are not yet formalized their business, Raúl and Lilian started an agro service to offer agricultural products and supplies at fair prices, in addition, they provide advice to each of their clients for the implementation of improved agricultural practices, such as proper use of fertilizers and supports them to choose the seeds correctly, much of this knowledge they learned at CRS.

“Our business has grown and we see the need to buy vegetables from our neighbors, we help them implement best practices to increase quality and pay them better prices”.

Raúl and Lilian sold vegetables and eggs for more than USD \$22,000 in just six months of 2020 to 16 schools, an unimaginable amount for them a few years ago.

“We are still farmers, but now we think like entrepreneurs, and we see prosperity in our community,” Raul said.

