

# María Jacinto: A Woman with Business Skills

*Crop diversification has allowed Maria to sell to nine schools and achieve \$6,700 in sales to date.*

Redacted by Cristina Molina Hernández

María Jacinto is a 36-year-old mother of two (Isabela and Gregorio) who is very determined and has a serious sense of business, along with a contagious smile. She lives in *Caserío Ixpo, Nueva Florencia*, in the municipality of San Miguel Acatán, in the northwestern part of Guatemala. María decided to begin farm production after tragically losing her husband nine years ago. Without any technicians available to advise her, she talked to other neighboring farmers, observed some local agribusinesses and managed to grow small amounts of high-value crops including potatoes, radishes, turnips, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and onions. The **Nuestra Cosecha** project discovered María Jacinto during a price monitoring exercise in a local Santa Eulalia market where she sells her crops. Since then, María has developed a very close relationship with the project and acquired the skills needed to become a commodity supplier. Last year, she was able to register with the Tax Authority and get certified by the Ministry of Agriculture, complying with all the requirements in the School Feeding Law to become a supplier and started marketing her produce.

Since then, María has expanded her production diversity to meet school demand and sold **5.6 tons of fresh produce to nine schools, with a value of approximately US \$6,700**, in only four months. *“With the help of one of my brothers who spends six months in the US and six months with us in the community, I have been able to buy a pickup truck to be able to transport my products. He supported me with some dollars, got the car and then I paid him back here in Guatemala,”* shares María. She speaks four languages (Akateco, Q’anjobal, Popti’ and Spanish) and has established a broad social network and the business skills needed to effectively market her products. Her family works together with her along with two employees as the business grows.



HUEHUETENANGO

María Jacinto, 36 years old. Speaks four languages: Akateco, Q’anjobal, Popti’ and Spanish

### María Jacinto’s sales:

5.6 tons of products  
 US \$ 6.700 invoiced  
 9 schools in Santa Eulalia  
 2.147 students

### Productos:

- ✦ Bledo
- ✦ Cilantro
- ✦ Carrots
- ✦ Chipilín
- ✦ Potatoes
- ✦ Güisquil
- ✦ Onions
- ✦ Green beans
- ✦ Broccoli
- ✦ Spinach



María Jacinto’s brother working on fertilizer.

*“With the help of one of my brothers who spends six months in the US and six months with us in the community, I have been able to buy a pickup truck to be able to transport my products”.*

María Jacinto,  
 producer in Santa Eulalia

Maria has also organized access to school feeding market demands for other local producers in her area. Together, with five other local suppliers, commodities are gathered at a common point and sent to the schools of Santa Eulalia using her truck, which is driven by her son Gregorio. The parent organizations, feeding commissions, school principals and teachers at receiving schools receive their orders, review them and when food quality and safety inspections are passed, sign for them. Gregorio explains *“The suppliers pay for the transport and distribution and delivery work that I do. Each supplier pays based on the quantity of products that they send. Thus, those who send more, pay more”*.



Maria Jacinto's crops in San Miguel Acatán, Huehuetenango.

Gregorio has been helping his mother since he was eight years old. Now, he has a little girl with his wife and they live with his mother, Maria Jacinto. He wants to continue working and planting on his mother's plots over time.

*“I want to support my mother and help her to get ahead in her work. I don't want to have my own land but to continue working with my mother. We have our money together, we are a family and share the work, the effort and the benefits,”* states Gregorio.

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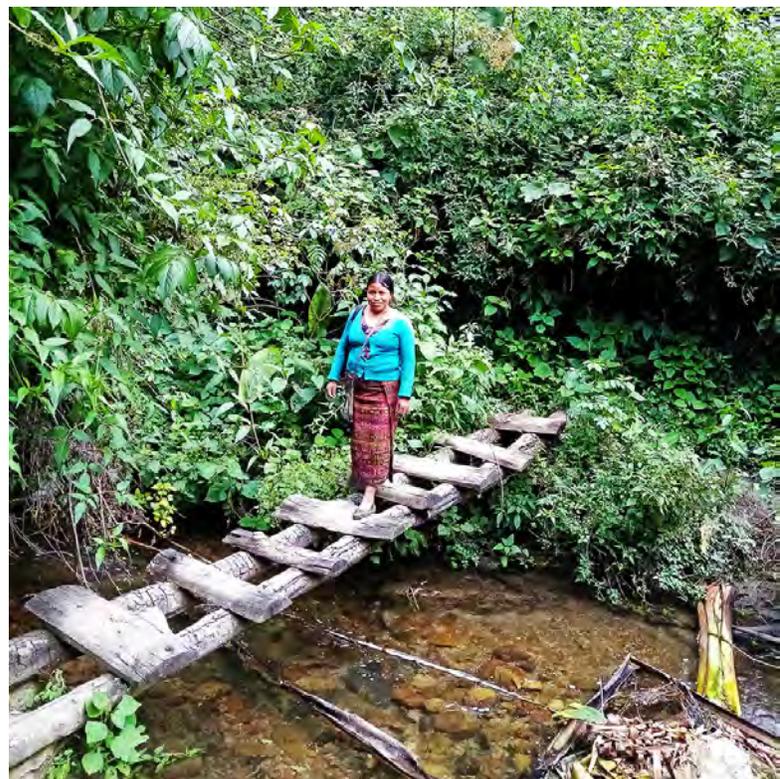
**Gregorio,  
Maria Jacinto's son.**

Maria knows that as she gets older, her son will continue to help her the way she has helped him. When asked about the new income they have accumulated, she told us that she is happy because the project has given her the possibility of connecting with and selling to the schools. Today she sells more through **Nuestra Cosecha** than she did previously in the market. She has begun planting Swiss chard, spinach and beets because the schools need it and she has also introduced in in her local market. *“In the market, the clients are very happy with the spinach as I am the only one who sells this product. I take two sack loads and it still isn't enough. I earn between 200 and 300 quetzals per sack (\$26 and \$39),”* she says with excitement.

At the end of the session, Gregorio and Maria talk about their dreams and say that they would like to have another room for their kitchen. They have thought about building it with cinderblocks and increasing its size since this is where the family and visitors, including ourselves, congregate. After they shared this, we turned off the recorder and camera to have lunch together, and chatted about life, the project and when we will meet again.

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**María Jacinto**



***Maria Jacinto is a supplier with great potential – and there are more like her!***