

Rafael Teran Melchor Named 2025 Farmworker of the Year

4 Finalists Named, 2025 Farmworker of the Year Winner Announced

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, June 4, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Rafael Teran Melchor of Stemilt Growers has been named the 2025 recipient of the [Farmworker of the Year](#) Award, a national recognition program that honors farmworkers for their exceptional leadership, contributions and impact on the fresh produce industry.

Now in its second year, the award was created by Equitable Food Initiative to shine a spotlight on the people who form the backbone of the agricultural workforce. This initiative ensures that the underrecognized voices and accomplishments of farmworkers are elevated and celebrated. The program was developed with support from The Packer as part of a shared commitment to honor the people behind our food.

"Rafael represents everything this award is meant to highlight," said LeAnne Ruzzamenti, EFI's director of marketing and communications. "His consistency, willingness to overcome challenges and the positive impact he has on his colleagues reflect the profound ways farmworkers shape their teams and companies."

Rafael, who has worked at Stemilt Growers for nearly 17 years, has been in agriculture for 23 years and is widely respected for his thoughtful mentorship and calm, solutions-oriented approach.



West Mathison, President, Stemilt Growers, presents the Farmworker of the Year Award to Rafael Teran Melchor

Working in the sanitation department, he goes above and beyond what is asked of him by participating in numerous trainings such as first aid, CPR, forklift, chemical handling and safety response, as well as attending the Food Safety & Sanitation Workshop. There are approximately 25 areas within sanitation that employees can study, and while most workers have trained in one to five of those areas, Rafael has completed all 25.

Adrián Pantaleón Sandoval, sanitation supervisor at Stemilt, shares that “Rafa’s work ethic is completely and truly admirable. He is consistently going above and beyond his responsibilities, always taking initiative to finish tasks and take on new challenges. He is willing to lend a hand when needed and comes to work with a positive attitude, which is contagious to his coworkers.”

Rafael approaches his role in agriculture much like his passion for running – with focus, discipline and unwavering dedication. His commitment recently culminated in qualifying for the Boston Marathon, a testament not only to his physical endurance but also to his mindset of giving everything his best effort.

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*LeAnne Ruzzamenti, EFI's
director of marketing and
communications*

A trusted colleague and friend, Rafael supports coworkers on the job and invests time outside of work to foster connection and camaraderie. His nominator describes him as someone who brings people together and leads with heart, qualities that exemplify the spirit of the Farmworker of the Year Award.

This year’s winner and four finalists were selected from more than 50 nominations, and they represent a diverse

range of contributions to their workplaces and communities. Finalists included:

- Franklin Rolando Carrillo Rodas, Windset Farms®
- Guadalupe Huerta de Jesus, Frutos de Huerta Real for Sunset®
- Rene Orozco, Lakeside Organic Gardens
- María Bárbara Reséndiz Martínez, Sierra Farms for GoodFarms

“This award is one of the most meaningful recognitions in our industry because it brings



Farmworker of the Year Finalist, María Bárbara Reséndiz Martínez with her award plaque and supervisor, Maria Cervantes

attention to those whose efforts are often unseen but are absolutely essential,” said Jennifer Strailey, editorial director of The Packer. “The finalists this year tell powerful stories of leadership, generosity and perseverance—and it’s an honor to help share them.”

Each nominee reflected core values that are essential to a thriving workplace culture: humility, teamwork, resilience and a deep concern for others. Through this award, EFI continues its commitment to highlighting the individuals whose work touches every step of the produce supply chain.



Farmworker of the Year Finalist Rene Orozco with award plaque and team

More information about the Farmworker of the Year Award and this year’s finalists is available at equitablefood.org/FWOY.

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