

Harry Rhodes, Narrator

Anneliese Abbott, Interviewer

June 24, 2021

Location: Remote over Zoom

HR=Harry Rhodes

AA=Anneliese Abbott

AA: All right, this is Anneliese Abbott doing an interview with Harry Rhodes for the organic oral history project. And this is June 24, 2021. We are doing this on Zoom. So Harry, do you want to start introducing yourself? Tell us a little about your background, your connection with organic or sustainable agriculture, how you got interested in that?

HR: Sure, I'll be glad to. I'm Harry Rhodes, I'm currently the executive director of FACT, the Food Animal Concerns Trust. We work for humane and healthy production of animals that are produced for food. Before working at FACT, I was with Growing Home in Chicago, which is the leading urban farm in Chicago and the only to this day certified organic production farm in the city of Chicago. I started with Growing Home back in 2001 and was introduced to the idea, to the program, through Les Brown, who was the visionary, the person who had the idea to do. He was with one of the founders of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. And he had this idea to do urban farming with homeless people and giving them a real hands-on job opportunity that included training but not just training. People were going to get paid for the training that they did.

And when I started in 2001 it was an idea on paper. We had some land, but there was no program up and running yet. So I was introduced to the idea of urban farming and organic farming at that time. Started reaching out, connecting with potential partners, collaborating. And one of the few ways I did that was just through conferences, through things happening both locally and nationally. So I was participating in the Illinois Food Security Summit, which ran 2001, 2002, and 2003. And that brought together people concerned about food, food and farming issues, from all over the state. It was a great networking opportunity. Great learning opportunity, and a lot of interesting initiatives began at that time.

Some of the programs that began in addition to Growing Home, there was Windy City Harvest I think started then, that's with Chicago Botanic Garden. We worked closely with Angelic Organic Learning Center, so the Angelic Organic CSA program, which is one of the biggest CSAs in the country, was an active member in getting things started. Together we started a few organizations that are still working today, organizations like Advocates for Urban Agriculture [and] Chicago Food Policy Action Council. There was a lot happening in the early to late 2000s. At the time, local, organic, people were trying to understand what it meant. When we were starting Growing Home, we were debating, "Do we start certifying organic farms, is that important to us, or sustainable?" which is what most urban farms are. And we decided that, after looking into it, that being certified and having that organic certification was important to us. The movement was kind of based on that and supporting that certification. So it's not just me saying that we're organic and we use organic practices, but you have someone come in and make sure

that you're actually following the organic standards that have been set. And also working with partners to make sure that those standards are true to what the organic movement is all about.

So we started a farm, we had some land outside Chicago, and we started that. That was in Marcelles, Illinois, about 75 miles southwest of Chicago. Corn and soybean country. We had ten acres. It hadn't been farmed in years. In fact, it used to be a weather station that was shut down in the early '90s. And it was just this odd place in the middle of corn and soybean country. And we came in, people from the city of Chicago. And people were looking at us a little strangely, these farmers from Chicago, as well as homeless people from Chicago coming to work in Marcelles. But in general, the community nearby really supported the idea. We worked closely with USDA, NRCS, Natural Resources Conservation District. They were real supportive and real helpful for us to get started. And within a couple years we had the farm certified organic. And it eventually developed a CSA that had over a hundred members, mostly in Chicago but also local people who were members of the CSA.

So we were closely involved in the organic movement from that time, as well as CSAs and local food, developing what has proven to be, 20 years later, a very vibrant local food scene in and around Chicago. We started our urban farm, what turned into our biggest urban farm, in 2006 when we got land in Englewood. And like I said, we have been certified organic from the start. And believing that organic certification is important, even for a small urban farm. Started small, had one acre. Today, I think Growing Home has about 4 acres, all contiguous. There's a lot of empty land in that area. And it's really about more than just growing the food. It's using that organic farm to transform lives, transform community, transform individuals through the training and the hands-on jobs that we provided.

And then it grew and did really well, and still working to this day. I finished out at Growing Home in December of 2018 and started working with FACT in 2019. FACT works like I said with livestock and poultry farmers. It's a national organization directly supporting farmers who raise their animals humanely. Many of them are certified organic, but not necessarily. And also working for policy change, policy that supports the humane farming that we believe in so that animals are treated well, they're raised without unnecessary antibiotics or unnecessary drugs. And informing consumers. Consumers have a challenging time when they go to buy food, and they don't know which labels to believe and where to get good, healthy food. Something we work on is helping provide consumers with that information.

That's the background. (10:04)

AA: Thank you.

HR: Any questions about that?

AA: Well, you've only worked with FACT for a couple years. Do you want to say a little about the mission? So this is an organization, if you could give a little detail about what FACT does, and what their goal is for animal farming.

HR: Yeah. So we have a vision that all food-producing animals will be raised humanely in a healthy manner and that everybody will have access to good, healthy food. And we accomplish this vision by supporting humane farmers directly, working for policy change at the national level that supports those farming methods that we believe in, and working to inform consumers to make good eating choices. So our humane farming program works to support farmers around

the country through the grants program that we do every year, our fund-the-farmer grants. This year we gave out over \$130,000, 56 grants. Racial equity was one of the focuses for us this year. So half of our grants went to black, indigenous, and Latinx farmers all around the country. In addition to the grants, we have a scholarship program where we give out up to \$15,000 a year in scholarships to conferences. Farmers, especially beginning farmers, they have a lot of needs. Among them capital, learning, education. And many of them can't even afford to go to a conference, it often costs two, three, four hundred dollars. So to get the information they need is costly. We give them scholarships so that people can attend those conferences.

We offer webinars, educational webinars. We do between 15 and 20 webinars in a year. These are free webinars. We usually have 100 to 200 people, farmers, who participate in those webinars. Everything from, how do you start doing a pasture-based farm for cattle? Then we look at other animals: chickens, turkeys, what are the best practices in all those fields? And we have a strong network. Today over 8000 farmers are in our network. We regularly do surveys. And work to make sure that our webinars and our programs actually answer the questions that farmers are interested in. Marketing and financial questions are among the things that come up, so some of our webinars focus on that. It really has a broad spectrum. And some of the webinars we bring in experts, academic experts and others. We bring in farmers to share their experiences and what they have learned over the years.

Our fourth program is our mentorship program. Another good way for beginning farmers to get experience and learn from veteran farmers. And it's proven to be very attractive. Farmers are interested and mentorships are something in high demand. So we offer these mentorship programs. And then this year we've been doing, as a result of the surveys we've done and reaching out, another area of interest that I mentioned is business and financial services. And so this year we're going to be partnering with University of Wisconsin, the Food Finance Institute, I think it's called, to offer business and financial training for farmers. That will be a new program that we're doing.

And then just the networking. Farmers find that very helpful, which is why our network has grown. Over the past year it grew from 6000 to 8000. And it's growing.

Our food policy work has focused the last few years on antibiotics and other drugs that are medically important drugs and are not given necessarily when the animal is sick, but they're used for preventative purposes, and used for often to help animals to grow faster. And we've been operating and leading the Keep Antibiotics Working Coalition. Because over 70 percent of the antibiotics that are given out in the US go to animals and not to people. And this has resulted in superbugs and antimicrobial resistance that according to the CDC many people get sick and die from this antimicrobial resistance. Antibiotics are not as effective as they should be because of overuse of antibiotics. But we've been working on lowering that and working on making sure that the animals are raised correctly and humanely. And when the animals are raised humanely, I've talked to many farmers who say they either never had to give antibiotics to a sick animal, or very rarely. Because the animals are raised outdoors, they're raised on pasture, and they don't have the rampant infections that you see in an industrial factory farm. So we work on that with the government agencies, with the FDA, many departments there, with the USDA, with the CDC, to work on changing policy, which is, there have definitely been accomplishments, but it's a long-term effort that can be frustrating at times. But it's very important work, and like I said, it affects the animals and human health.

The other area I mentioned we work on is the consumer information. We just updated our nutritional pamphlets, which highlight the benefits of raising animals in their natural setting, as

opposed to in industrial factory farms. And it's very much science-based. We don't make claims unless we can back them up. It's unique that the organization does go at it from that scientific point of view. In addition, we have a label on our website, we have a whole section for consumers. In addition to the nutritional benefits, we have a consumer labels section that tells people when they go to buy meat what you can count on, what is actually good for animal welfare, and what is, when someone makes a claim that eggs are "cage-free," that doesn't necessarily mean that they're raised in a good atmosphere. There could be 10,000 chickens cage-free in a huge building that's a lot of them die because they're packed so closely together. The animal welfare is not the chief concern. So there's things that you see when you go to buy food that are misleading, and we work against that, and work against the misleading advertising that goes on.

So that's most of our work. It's had a big impact over the years. FACT's been around for, next year's our 40th anniversary. And it's one of the few, if not the only, organizations that works nationally on farm animal welfare and acknowledges that most people eat meat and everyone's not going to become vegan overnight or eat just plant-based foods. And so it's important to make sure that the meat we eat is healthy and safe to eat. (21:18)

AA: Yeah, that's great. So going back to the gardening, you did the vegetable production. I'm curious to hear more about the farming methods you used, how you chose them. And you talked a little about how you decided to be certified organic, and what influenced you. And something I'm also curious is comparing, because you farmed that piece 75 miles out of Chicago and also right downtown. I'd be really curious comparing those two areas, if there were any differences, challenges in those two different environments.

HR: Yeah, so we started like I said 75 miles out of the city because that's the land we had, that was available. And when we started, the land was completely dead. There had been, it had been impacted by the farms around it, which are spraying pesticides and herbicides regularly, which leads to destroying the soil. So we had to build up the soil. And that's the core of growing organically. It isn't just what you don't use, it's the positive things you do to improve the soil. So bringing in compost, adding compost was the first thing. And then crop rotation, coming up with a system that will help bring in the nutrients through what you grow so that the soil will be healthy. The other things is building a biosystem that is healthy. Bringing in trees, berries, everything that's going to make for a healthy farm. We had chickens, free-range chickens. When they weren't eating the berries, they were very beneficial to the overall health of the farm.

It was challenging. And sometimes over the years we had to argue with the farmers who were spraying when they shouldn't be, when there were high winds. We definitely saw the negative impacts of that. We also were fighting the pests, which I'm sure they were happy to see organic not-sprayed food being raised, so they all came to us because they couldn't go to the corn next door, so they came to us. It's challenging and very labor-intensive to deal with conditions that aren't easy. For many years we didn't even have a large tractor. We had a walking tractor, which is very common in Europe but not so common in the US. And after about ten years we hired a new farm manager who wanted a tractor, so we purchased a little tractor.

But it was at one point, I would say three to four acres that we were actually farming, where we produced over 35,000 pounds of organic, really good vegetables every year. We had a small greenhouse that we built, a hoop house that we used for our own starts. So we did everything from the beginning through productions. And like I said, we had a CSA, and we also

went to farmers' markets. Most of the markets were in the city. So eventually, after about 15 years of operating that farm, as we developed our urban farms, we decided that it wasn't practical to keep the rural farm going. So we sold that farm in order to focus on the urban farming. But it was a great farm. I loved going out there. I loved helping when I could. And it was great to see the development of that farm as an organic farm. And it was also a demonstration farm in many ways. There were people, there were groups from the USDA, from the city would come out to see what we were doing out there. It was a very unique effort.

The urban farm was different in that it was more intensive, growing smaller spaces. We focused on building hoop houses. Hoop houses are unheated greenhouses. So that we could do farming year-round. Even in Chicago we were able to start putting things in the ground in the hoop houses in February and went all the way through December. Gave the land a break in January, then start up again in February. When I left in 2018, I think we had seven hoop houses. And with the intensive growing we were again producing close to 30,000 pounds on just an acre and a half. So it was smaller, more intensive growing. It was also more focused growing fewer products than the rural farm. The rural farm had a CSA growing 50 different plants. The city would focus on ten to fifteen, with a real focus on a lot of greens, things that did well in the city. Lettuce, spinach, other greens. Carrots always did well. And then in the summer, growing a lot of tomatoes, which love growing in the hoop houses. They love the heat. They grow all the way up, it's amazing to see a hoop house that's filled with tomatoes growing all the way up to the ceiling, which can be ten or twelve feet high in a hoop house.

Again, building up the soil was important. So we were growing, at the beginning, almost entirely in compost. We brought in tons of compost, which was one of the most expensive things to get started, and grew directly in compost. Not knowing, as experimental, most places have some type of mix, they're growing in soil outdoors, the compost is added. But we were growing directly in compost that was over cracked concrete the first two hoop houses that we had. So we weren't sure exactly how it would turn out. We did a lot of work at Michigan State at the time, which had a student-run, certified organic CSA which was 48 weeks, so it was really year-round. So we went there, our whole team went there to learn from them, to learn what they had been doing, a lot of those practices, and use them in Chicago. And they were also interested to see how it would work, our experiment would work. And well, it succeeded. It worked really well.

You need to change the compost and add compost every few years. But it was very successful. And since it expanded and also did some outdoor growing, so we were able to add things like asparagus and different squash, zucchini, things that do well outdoors. Right now it's a good combination, and it's a good, healthy farm. It's great to see how much you can produce and what you can do in a city, in an area that's been labeled a food desert. And yet it's a misnomer, because it's, there's a lack of access to good food because of the disinvestment that's happened there. But people eat everywhere. And we, and partners have shown you can grow right in the city.

When we started in 2001, people thought we were crazy, and they thought urban farming is not really possible. You could have gardens, but not really a farm. And I believe we, along with partners, have changed that view. I helped start Advocates for Urban Agriculture, which started right around I would say 2001, 2002, which is a network. At the time it was a loose network of people who really wanted to do urban farming. There weren't more than six or eight organizations doing it at the time. Today there's literally hundreds of gardens and farms throughout the city. And AUA is the lead go-to organization for urban farming in Chicago. So to

see the progression of urban farming, even if it's not certified organic, most are using organic practices. And growing good, healthy food right in the city. (33:05)

AA: Yeah, it was really cool to see how urban gardening has increased so much in the past twenty years. That's definitely a positive thing. So do you want to share anything about your philosophies of organic farming, how you developed them, anything you want to share about that? Maybe how they've changed over time.

HR: Well, I think, and I was talking a little about what organic means, and that it's not what you don't do but what you do do positively as a farmer. And it's working with nature. It's building a strong biodiverse system that is going to be healthy for the soil, healthy for the people working there, and healthy for the plants. And it's certainly challenging when you're, like I was talking about in the rural area, dealing with the pests, and trying to figure out the best way naturally to fight the problems we're having. Many people out there working, trying to get the Japanese beetles that are eating your berries, or your fruit trees. At least in the Midwest you don't see a lot of organic fruit growers, and I think the challenges are just huge. Because whether it's a fungus, or the bugs that are coming to it, it's hard work. But it's fulfilling, and you feel good when you have food that you know is healthy, and you know hasn't been sprayed with chemicals. And that's good for people. People can count on, nutritionally there have been a lot of studies showing the nutritional benefits, like I was talking about, meat and poultry that have been raised naturally, but also vegetables raised organically.

And I think I heard that some of the people had been influenced by Francis Moore Lappé. She came and visited our farms once and spoke. Very influenced by all the great work she's done, talking about how organic is good for nature, it's good for the soil, and it's good for people. And she talked about changing the way we look at food and describe food, so that one day conventional will mean that food has been raised in a healthy manner, has been raised organically, has been raised with the cows on pasture. And anything that hasn't been raised that way will be called "chemically-treated food." So those will be, change around the labels that you see in the store. Point out the stuff that is not good for you. That had an impact on me. I think all the food we eat should be raised in a healthy way. It doesn't make sense to raise food that has chemicals on it, to raise food where the animals are in small, contained areas, thousands of animals together, that certainly they aren't being raised humanely.

But also, it influences the whole system. It influences the way the workers are treated. The workers at the farms are often treated badly, not paid what they should be. And on the processing lines, we saw this past year especially, how many people got sick and died from COVID because they were not being treated right. So it's a whole system that, to me, the system is not working. The larger system is not working today. The system is sick, and as a result, the people who work in it, the animals are influenced, and the food we eat isn't healthy. And this impacts health all around. And there's also been studies about the disparities in communities, the lack of health, and it's related to food that isn't good and healthy. (38:36)

AA: Yeah, thank you. Those are all really good points. Thank you for bringing that up. Is there anything else you want to share about your personal perspective and views on the connection of organic/sustainable agriculture to the broader historical or cultural context, including other movements?

HR: Yeah. Sure. I know that people my mom's age, my mom is now 90 years old, they grew up, the food they ate was mostly organic. It wasn't treated, it wasn't full of chemicals. And so they are not used to having to make these choices at a store. They just believe that the food that they get is healthy. You look at the history of our food system, you read Michael Pollan's books, you go into the depth of it and what's happened over the years. There's a lot of people looking into it that have shown the negative trajectory of our food system. As industrial food has grown, as the factory farms have grown, and as the food system's been much more consolidated today, for different percentages, but at least 70 percent of the meat we eat is processed and controlled by four different large corporations. And this consolidation has meant that the food is really treated like a commodity instead of the basis of our health.

People are paying a lot less today for their food than they were, as a percentage of their earnings, than they were 50 years ago. And cheap food, while it's been marketed as the way to get food to people and the way to feed the world, I think is actually making people sick. And it's not healthy. It's bad for the farmers. The farmers, there's fewer and fewer farmers every year. The average age of a farmer is upper 50s, I believe, or maybe even 60. And it's hard for a smaller farmer to compete against these big forces. So the bottom line for these companies is to make a profit instead of selling and making sure that food is healthy food.

So that's kind of what we're fighting against. It's great that there are people like Michael Pollan and Francis Moore Lappé, some of my heroes. Wendell Berry, people who have done a better job than I can do of really explaining the system and being very descriptive and very good at getting the word out about these systems and about what needs to change. Michael Pollan put it very succinctly in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, talked about eating food. I think he said there's five basic things you should do. Eat food, not too much, make sure to look at how many ingredients are in the food you are eating. I'm not sure of the rest of it. But he doesn't say you should never eat things that are sweet, or you should never eat meat. It's just eating in moderation and making sure that the food you eat is healthy and it comes from farmers and not just something in packages.

So while on one hand it's interesting the rise of industrially-raised food, you also see this movement of local food that is fighting against that. And that's increased over the years. And you see it through the increase in CSAs, community supported agriculture, which if people don't know, a what you could call a subscription program where people buy in at the beginning of the year and get a box of good food directly from the farm weekly during the season. Usually vegetables, but now there's meat CSAs, a few fish CSAs. So the CSA movement, which began in the '80s, has really taken off. The farmers' markets. Every community now wants to have its own farmers' market, where you get to go and get the food directly from a farmer. It's great to see all these different local food systems that have taken off. And at first they often didn't include some of the communities in Chicago, communities of color that were left out in other cities. But today you can find opportunities through Growing Home and others to access good, healthy food in those communities as well. And hopefully that will continue.

Restaurants that buy food directly from farmers. Twenty years ago there were a handful in Chicago. When we started out in Growing Home, we were working with some of those really good farmers. Rick Bayless and others in Chicago remember the days taking boxes of onions and delivering it to some of these really good restaurants in Chicago. And today most restaurants, certainly a large number of restaurants, advertise that they buy directly from farmers. So there has been good movement over the years, at the same time as the fighting against the industrial food system. (46:21)

AA: So you talked a little bit earlier, you've already covered some of the organizations you've been part of, especially FACT. Is there anything else you want to say about Growing Home and the other organizations that you haven't said before?

HR: One of the organizations which doesn't exist anymore but did some really important work in the early years I think of the local food system was the Community Food Security Coalition. I'm not sure when it was started, sometime in the '90s. When I was with Growing Home, I would go to their conferences almost every year. They brought people together from all over the country working on exactly that, food security, working on building up local food systems, building up organic farmers. And it was a great place to network and meet with others. There was a committee on organic farming, there was a committee on urban farming. So outside of their conferences, these committees would meet together and work on changing systems and sharing information. That was really good. I think what happened was people started working more regionally than nationally, and so there were a lot of regional organizations that spun out of those efforts. That's why they don't exist anymore as an organization, but they started a lot of really good work and connections were made among farmers and organizations.

In Chicago there's, we were involved in Green City Market, which is one of the biggest sustainable markets, always rated as one of the top markets in the country. And they work on advocacy, and not just running a market, but making sure that the food there at those markets is good, sustainable. There was, I mentioned I think Chicago Botanic Garden, Angelic Organics, Tom Spaulding was one of the leaders in and around Chicago. When we started, Heifer International was one of the big supporters of urban farming. They moved on to other things. But they brought together a lot of people. Growing Power and Will Allen were also big. They were based out of Milwaukee. Will really helped push along the good food movement. Eliot Coleman is one of the people who's done a lot of research, and he's out of Maine and has written books about urban farming and year-round farming, growing in hoop houses. Learned a lot from him.

Those are the big organizations I can think of, that I've worked with. Over the years especially Growing Home, and working with a different set of organizations, working with KAW, Keeping Antibiotics Working. Worked closely with National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, NSAC, on a lot of policy work. And many other partners. One of the things I found about farming is when you go to a market, you're competitive and you want to sell more than your neighbor. But you're also, your neighbor in the booth next to you, they're your friends. You share a lot of information. If somebody needs some help, you'll see the other farmers jump in to help them. A friend of mine called it, "co-optition." Get people cooperating. And you see this in farming communities all over the country. This past year, when there were the fires out west, one of the farms that FACT supports, they were near where there were fires happening, but there weren't fires happening at their farm. So they brought in hundreds of animals from other farmers and helped other farmers escape the fires that they were fighting. It's that atmosphere and that beliefs of farmers that this is something important, and they're all in this together. So they don't want to get out there and beat the next guy and be better, even though they want their product to be better. They want to help the person so that we're all growing good food and everything that's available is going to be good and healthy for people. (53:00)

AA: Thank you. So is there anything you want to share about your perspective on organic certification? Like some people think it's been a good thing, some people think it hasn't, some

people don't like the way the rule is, some people think it's working really well. So I'd just be curious to hear your perspective on that.

HR: I think overall it's good. I know that there have been efforts to water down the certification so it's not as meaningful, but I think it still has a place. What I'd like to see is that we all, whether it's certified organic, or certified regenerative, or biodiverse, or—over the years there have been a lot of different terms that have come out. And people will say, “Better than organic.” Well, it would be better if we all just agreed that if it's organic or regenerative or if it's grown in the city or grown hydroponically, as long as it's being done in a healthy way that supports nature's support systems, that works with nature instead of against it, then it's positive. We don't need to say, “This is the best way to do it *ever* come up with.”

With regenerative farming, it is a good term, and yet most consumers have no idea what you're talking about with regenerative farming. Whereas organic, people have come to understand that organic means healthy, means that it doesn't have chemicals. It's important to realize, to think about the person that's eating the food and not just growing it. Farmers understand regenerative, at least a lot of them do. And then you have other groups, we've talked to indigenous groups, Native Americans, who say, “We were farming like that before that term even existed. So you're making up a new term that is based on what we've been doing for hundreds or thousands of years.” So it's good to look for new ways of doing things and new terms. I think we have to be careful that we don't say, “This is *the* be-all and end-all farming, and this is what everybody should be doing.”

Everybody should be working within nature, they should be making sure their animals are treated well. And then they're building up positive systems that are good for the soil and good for people. And that is also going to be good for the environment, if you're looking at climate change. Farms can certainly hurt the environment and contribute to negative impacts of climate change. If you look at CAFOs, which are concentrated [animal feeding operations], factory farms, there there's a lot of degradation and a lot of harm to the environment, whether it's the runoff from those farms or just the animals being too close together. There's been a lot of things written about how negative animal farming is for the environment and for climate change. I think that's because of the way they're being raised, not necessarily that animals are bad for the environment. If you include animals in your system, and you have a biodiverse system, it's going to be overall better for the planet and better for everyone. Whereas the factory farms are going to be negative, and they are going to harm the environment. (58:05)

AA: Yeah, thank you. And related to that, I'd be curious to hear your perspective, there's been debate also about the land grant universities and their relationship to organic and sustainable agriculture, and how that relationship has changed over the years. So if there's anything you would like to say about that, go ahead.

HR: I think some universities, I'm not sure about most, but some have developed really good, positive sustainable agriculture programs around the country. My son went to Evergreen State in Olympia, Washington, which had a student-run sustainable farm. I mentioned Michigan State. Cornell has had a great program. And it seems like other big universities have started developing these programs, because they see that's necessary, and there's an interest in it. But they still train farmers for industrial food system. And I think a lot of their funding comes from big corporations. And so they're not working to change the system as quickly as I'd like to see. And

so if they look for things that are better for climate change, often they will look at complicated new systems or technology that's going to get rid of carbon, and come up with solutions that are more complicated and not necessary. Whereas if you just raise your cattle on pasture, that solves the problems. And there's solutions out there. I think often the big universities, they get grants to come up with new things and use technology that isn't necessarily going to help. It may help, you never know. But I think it would be better to focus on things that we know work and ways to raise animals in a healthy way and ways to farm in a healthy way that is going to help the planet, it's going to help the environment instead of harming it. (1:01:11)

AA: Thank you. Is there anything, I'd be curious to hear any perspectives you want to give about the past and current trends in organic and sustainable agriculture. And you've already talked about some of them, but maybe opinions on what's controversial, or maybe some things are controversial, or the most important aspects of this history that we want to preserve, or the most important lessons to teach younger generations as they're moving ahead.

HR: I have talked about a lot of that. I think the important, there's a lot of things that are important. I think for the farmers, sustainable organic farmers, to come together and support each other is really important. And that's another organization, farming business that has actually done that, is Organic Valley. They've stayed as an organic co-op while other organic, big organic farming businesses have been bought out by major corporations, Organic Valley has worked hard to show that there are different ways of running a business and staying organic and also sticking with your values. So that's encouraging. I think working with national policy work, organizations like NSAC, the National Young Farmers Coalition, NRDC, Natural Resource Defense Council. Working with them to influence policy is important.

And it seems sometimes we think we're in our little bubble, so we put out a letter to the FDA or the USDA saying they shouldn't do this, and we think they're going to change because of what we're saying. And then someone else, I'm not going to go into names of corporations, I'm thinking on in particular, but they'll put in millions of dollars in lobbying. And you'll have the USDA saying, "Well, we'll give a little bit here and there to the organic and sustainable," but the amounts, it turns out to be just crumbs. They're not really doing enough to change them. So trying to figure out how we can have power and influence, whether it's through the departments or through Congress, actually get things changed. I know Senator Cory Booker has a lot of legislation out there that would change the way the government goes about approaching and supporting farms and farmers. So working with them and trying to influence them, and building up coalitions, is going to be really important if we want to make any long-term sustainable changes. (1:05:22)

AA: Thank you for sharing all those perspectives. This is all very useful and very interesting. I really appreciate it. Is there anything else you want to say before we end the interview, anything else?

HR: For me personally, as I've gone through my journey and my learning about food and farming, I'm certainly eating healthier food today than I was 20 years ago, because I've learned about the way livestock and poultry should be raised, and just food in general. When you go to the grocery store, you make choices about what you want to eat, where your food's coming from. The more you're aware of the positive ways food can be raised as opposed to the degradation of

the earth, the soil, animals, it will change the way you eat, and change it for positive reasons so that I think you'll end up as individuals be healthier, and our society will be healthier if we change the way we eat. And impacts just who we are. So just being aware of what you're eating, be conscientious, is important. It's important for everyone as individuals as well as communities and society as a whole.

And the impact we do around the world. If you look, there's definitely countries that are healthier than the US and countries where there's a lot more organic and healthy food that's being eaten in those countries. And people are living longer in those countries, and overall the health index shows that people are healthier when their food system is healthier. So I 'd like to see us come together and promote healthy eating and healthy living, and promote farmers. Farmers need our support, need our help. There's a lot of good young farmers who want to make a difference, and we're not doing enough to help them, help them get the land they need, help them build up their farms. If we could take the billions that are being given in ag subsidies and move those into supporting young startup farmers, we could change the system. Resources, it's all about the resources. We have the resources available, the question is where are we putting them? And what are our priorities as a society?

AA: Well, thank you so much for all that. I think that's really great advice. Thank you very much for taking the time to do this interview.

HR: Thank you. I look forward to seeing your work. (1:09:35)