

Shoshanah Inwood, Narrator

Anneliese Abbott, Interviewer

August 26, 2021

Location: Remotely over Zoom

SI=Shoshanah Inwood

AA=Anneliese Abbott

AA: All right! So this is August 26, 2021, and this is Anneliese Abbott interviewing—

SI: Shoshanah Inwood.

AA: So Shoshanah, thank you so much for taking the time to interview today. You want to start with telling us a little about your background in organic and sustainable agriculture and the connection you had to that?

SI: Sure. That's a big question. So when I was in college, I was a biology major and was really interested in soil, really always liked soil and playing in the dirt. I grew up in the city in Brooklyn, New York, so really urban. But I always played in the soil and the dirt and was in the garden. And when I was in college I got really interested in soils, realized that there was a lot of chemistry with soils, and chemistry's not really something that I excel at. But I did wind up majoring in plant biology. Really loved plants. And when I was a senior, that was when Michael Pollan started publishing a lot of his exposés on CAFOs and GMOs in the *New York Times Magazine*. And I was reading those, and I was like, "Wow, this is really interesting, and this is not the food we need," and really wanted to connect more into that, learn more about that.

So after college I was supposed to go into the Peace Corps and was going to go to Mozambique and was going to be a scientist working with agricultural projects. And then at the same time, Trish Mumme, who had gotten the contract at Malabar Farm to start reviving Bromfield's vegetable garden, was going around to colleges recruiting interns. And she was at Oberlin, which was where I was. And I went to her session and was like, "Huh, this sounds really interesting, really learning how to grow vegetables, and this place Malabar sounds pretty cool." And so I signed up to do that, thinking that I was going into the Peace Corps at the end of the summer.

And the whole time, though, I was really not sure about going into the Peace Corps because it was about how can I, as somebody who didn't grow up on a farm and don't really know that much about growing food, go into another country and teach other people how to do these things? It was like, this would be for me and not for the people that I was supposed to be serving, and my own self-growth. And I was never completely comfortable with that.

So I interned at Malabar for the summer, which was a really interesting experience. There was some pros and some cons to that, and I can get into what I actually did at Malabar, because I not only worked in the gardens, but I was also a tour guide and a naturalist and did all these other things.

So anyway, at the end of that year, at the end of the summer, one of the other interns, Shannon Farley, who actually had just graduated Dennison, was like, “Maybe we should start our own farm!” And we became very good friends with one of the farm staff, the farm crew at Malabar, and one of them, Peggy’s family owned some land right on 603, the house, five acres that hadn’t been farmed for a very long time. And she kind of hatched this plan that we should go and start farming. And I was like, “Sounds good!” So I called the Peace Corps and told them I wasn’t coming. Which turned out to be a good thing, because I was supposed to go to Mozambique and it was like flooded a couple months later and they were doing mass evacuations. So that kind of worked out.

And then in the winter we just started farming. So I graduated in 1999, so this was 1999 into 2000, the turn of the millennium. And we started farming, and we started a five-acre certified organic vegetable farm and marketed. We kind of tested both Cleveland and Columbus markets with the CSA to see which one there was more interest, and there was a lot more interest in Columbus. So we would go down to the North Market in Columbus and had a CSA there once a week. And then we also worked two part-time jobs off the farm.

And then after about a year it was really hard to be farming without really any social support network. We were both 22 years old, we were trying to date, we were both also working one to two jobs off the farm in addition to farming. And trying to have this other social life between it all. And that was really stressful. And then one day Shannon’s like, “I’m leaving, I’m going to Vermont Law School to get a master’s in environmental law.” And I was like, “Oh, god, what am I going to do?” Because I didn’t want to leave the farm, I really enjoyed doing that. My boyfriend and I did not really get along well either, so I was like, whatever with him. And there was a professor from OSU on one of my tours at Malabar. And I was going on about Malabar and Bromfield’s views of sustainability and strip cropping and rotational grazing and all of these other things, and I was talking about how would that be with GMOs today and all the current issues that we’re looking at in the food system. He was like, “Huh.” He was actually a rural sociologist. And he’s like, “Do you want to come to graduate school?” And I was like, “Well, that kind of beats working at Starbucks. So, sure!” He said, “What do you want to do? I’m in the environmental science graduate program or I’m in the rural sociology program, so you can choose which one you want to go to.

At the time I was like, being a bio major and such a snob, I was like, “Rural sociology? What is that? That sounds like a made-up major.” So I went into environmental science and got my master’s in environmental science and then took one rural sociology class that was taught at Ohio State. And I was hooked. And then for my PhD I went into rural sociology because I realized that a lot of the issues that we face are actually more human and social issues than they are technological. And I’d also seen some of those divides as I was doing my master’s. And I did it up in Wooster, actually, at OARDC, I was based there. And then I was also, I clearly stopped farming, went full-time into grad school, but I still stayed connected to the sustainable ag communities, so OEFFA, Shaun McGovern invited me to come onto the board, so I was a board secretary. I took those skills I learned in high school for typing into good use when I was a secretary for a couple of years in OEFFA and was really involved with the organization there. They actually tried to recruit me when Shaun left to go to SARE to become the director, the executive director. And I was kind of like, it was really tempting, but at the same time I felt like I didn’t really have that skill set to be executive director and to really lead the organization, I still felt really young. And so I declined on that. We wound up hiring Carol Hollen, which was

absolutely the right choice at that time, to bring in someone with her caliber. And she's really taken the organization very far. So that was really great.

Again, I had this, when I finished my PhD, I was at this crossroads of what to do. And I applied for a job as director at the Countryside Conservancy up in Cuyahoga National Park. And was offered the job, although it was interesting, some of the people were like, "Can you actually work the job?" and I was like, "As a graduate student, as a research assistant, I've worked a lot of jobs." But anyways, I was pregnant and decided not to go. My husband and I talked it over, we were living in Columbus at the time and would have had to move. So we decided not to do that. And then I became director—I was working, I had my baby, and then had a postdoc at OSU and was working with the Center for Farmland Innovation. And then I took a job as the state's first farm-to-school coordinator. There was a grant that was Emily Lipstru, who you should totally interview if you haven't already, she was the first director for the office of sustainable agriculture at the Ohio department of ag. And she had gotten this grant with the Ohio Department of Education. And I really wanted to learn and be mentored by Emily because she's a really interesting person and perspective on sustainable ag. She gathered the first Ohio State food policy council and did all this work. (8:39)

So I was working between the Ohio department of ed and sustainable ag. And we were implementing five farm-to-school projects, largely in southeastern Ohio where there is a lot of poverty and issues. And then Emily left actually for South Carolina, so then I got appointed as the director of the office of sustainable agriculture. And that was a really interesting experience because we had the Ohio Food Policy Council, farm-to-school, we had the aquaculture, specialty crop grants were under our review, we had a whole interesting types of organizations. And one of the things that was happening also at the time is that Emily had constructed this food policy council that was enacted by the governor, so it was actually by executive order, which meant that all of the state agencies came to the table in addition to the nonprofits. So after like, it took about three or four years for relationships to finally actually thaw, people to talk to each other and subgroups to be making progress. And we were starting to really build.

And then John Kasick got elected, Stricklen lost. And when John Kasick came in, we got a new director of ag, and my position lasted about a week. And then I was brought in and told that they were closing down the office of sustainable agriculture, that it was seen as Democrats trying to infiltrate and take over agriculture, and that with farm-to-school we were trying to turn children into vegetarians because we had a specialty crop branch. We've always said that children should have Ohio milk and meat products. We're not trying to turn anybody into vegetarians. I could go into more detail with that. This is a super broad overview, maybe I should pause and let you ask questions, or I could keep going about where I am today and how I'm still involved in sustainable ag. (10:48)

AA: Yeah, just go ahead and keep going, and then we can go back to the things that I might have more questions about.

SI: So I then collected all the materials, because they turned the office of sustainable agriculture into the office of agribusiness development. And the guy they put in charge had actually come from the soybean council. And his office was just full of soybean products, like windshield wiper fluid from soybeans. And I saw how quickly our webpage disappeared. And we had had all these amazing products, and in the age of everything online it became very clear how quickly everything could be wiped out. And my mother-in-law is really big into genealogy, she's part of

Daughters of the American Revolution, really big into that. And she spent a lot of time at the Ohio Historical Society, and I was like, “You know what? I’m going to take all of these things and donate them.” It was kind of traumatic, actually. You were given 15 minutes notice to shut down an entire office and escorted out by security. That was not pleasant. So this was like, “How are we going to end this?” So I took all these materials and wrote up a little history of the office of sustainable ag and brought them all to the Ohio Historical Society. What was interesting was that they were actually really appreciative because of things changing so fast online, they can’t document, they don’t have the staff to capture all this history. So it was like, great, in 50 years some ag history student—and not realizing that you would be coming along maybe a little sooner.

And some of the things that I donated were not just the reports of the Ohio Food Policy Council, but it was also like those social relationships that were made, like the energy that was being developed in the state that we could all come together as a state across agencies of government and nonprofit sector and private businesses to actually have a collective goals, which is a story that’s often not celebrated and appreciated. But then also the vulnerability. Because this was done by executive order, how quickly it could all be shut down within a change of power. And even though people tried to keep it, Jill Clark really tried to keep it alive with her position at OSU, because it was under executive order the state agencies never felt mandated to come. So only the Ohio Department of Health would stay engaged. So we really lost a lot of that momentum that was going on.

And the other thing that we had that’s also kind of interesting was the Ohio sustainable agriculture office had a really beautiful poster and logo. I don’t know if you’ve ever seen it. It was really great. It was actually Governor Stricklen’s wife, Mrs. Stricklen had helped choose it. We also had a license plate. And this logo was the shape of Ohio, with sunset or sunrise colors, and there was corn and then there’s what’s clearly a man, farmer, holding a little girl’s hand, their silhouettes, and there’s a windmill in the background as well. So it was really interesting, because it’s very layered in terms of you have intergenerational succession, you have things about gender in agriculture, women in agriculture, you have alternative energy and the idea of multifunctional land use space, and also commodities that are very important to the Ohio landscape. And then there’s also opportunities for diversification. It’s kind of like, hey, it’s a bright new day. So it was really, really interesting. And the other part of this was also that there was the sustainable ag license plate that had this logo on it. And you still see cars driving around with it. And after I got fired, I was calling the Department of Motor Vehicles, saying, “Everybody has to pay \$20 a year for this license plate, and there’s no more office of sustainable ag. Where is this money going?” They were like, “Uh, we don’t know.” To this day.

And then what I thought was very interesting was that they changed the office to the office of Ohio agribusiness. And their new logo was “Ohio means agribusiness.” And it was this big black circle that was stamped with white letters. And to me it just looked like a big petroleum oil drop, and it’s kind of like—I give them truth. At least they were honest with what they were standing for. But it was very, very different than the vision. And working at ODA, I mean, I actually worked in the Bromfield building. So again, it was like, Louis Bromfield, and the things that I had learned and internalized at Malabar that I was trying to work for, the landscape, the environment, but also the people. And rural development and rural livelihoods, and how do we have connections between urban and rural communities and making a stronger Ohio were some of the goals that I was really interested in.

And then I thought what was really also very telling was when I sent out an email, because the security guard gave me some extra time to send out an email, because I was like, “Look, I’ve got a lot of responsibilities here, I’ve got to let people know that this office is being shut down.” So he gave me some extra time. When I did that, and I sent it from both my personal email and also my ODA email, I thought it was really interesting that I only got one or two emails in response saying that they were sorry to hear that. There was no uproar in the media. I think there was one blog posting about it. Some of the closest nonprofits that I worked with never said anything about it. To me, I was really surprised and hurt by that. But also it just showed me how vulnerable these movements are. We think that they’re strong, but they’re really, really fragile. And people were not going to stick their neck out about this, this was not something that they were going to be willing to go and fight about. And that was a really big lesson. And I think that maybe there’s a variety of reasons for that, but it was also again just kind of recognizing that maybe this movement isn’t as strong as I thought it was.

So then after that I went back to OSU for my postdoc and working as a research assistant and then a job at the University of Vermont opened up. And I was hired there as a faculty member. And so my family and I had this big debate, but we moved there, and I was in the department of community development and applied economics for five years. And then after that we moved back to Ohio four years ago, where I was recruited back to be part of the INFACT initiative, which is the Innovation for Food and Agriculture Transformation at Ohio State.

I work both at research and extension position, and a lot of my research and extension is really embedded in those experiences that I had at Malabar and actually living in Lucas. And really trying to understand what it takes to make a living off the land. And I think when I emailed you I mentioned that the folks that we rented from, they were really affected by the deindustrialization that was happening across the country and the Midwest. And all these small towns and regional areas like Mansfield, that Lucas was connected to, that really relied on manufacturing for good jobs with good benefits. And with globalization and kind of like the race to the bottom what we started to see across the country and definitely with my neighbors was, they’re talking, we don’t know if the factory’s going to be closed in a week, in a month, in a year, there was always this precariousness to it. At the same time there was also a lot of abuse that was happening within the family, and I think a lot of it was triggered by some of these economic issues. So again, trying to see what it takes to make this living.

We were each, Shannon and I, working two part-time jobs like I mentioned. We were working as cooks, so again, \$6-an-hour positions, and then trying to drive, pack up for market, and then driving down to Columbus, which is an hour and a half each way, twice a week. And again, trying to have relationships, like date men outside of our circle. And that was really hard. And then our parents would come visit. And I remember both of our fathers were just like, “Girls, this is,” my father said, “Girls, this house is such a dump.” And our friends would come over and just start cleaning. And Shannon’s guy came and started mopping the floor. He’s like, “Your truck, Shoshannah, is more disgusting than the floor!” And Shannon and I were like, “We don’t have house-husbands!” This is the role of why people have a housewife, because it’s a fulltime job to take care of the household and the business.

So I really carried over those lessons into my graduate work, and so a lot of the things that I’ve studied have been issues about intergenerational succession. How do we, what are the different strategies that people take to make a living off the land, especially if they’re in places like the rural-urban interface where land is really expensive and there’s increasing development pressure and you only have so much space. How do you stack enterprises, how do you figure that

out if you're a family? And then also when I was doing a lot of this research, people kept talking about how important health insurance was, and working off the farm for a job with benefits. And now the only study in the country that's looked at the on-the-ground experiences of farmers and ranchers under the Affordable Care Act. And so again, USDA grant in 2014 that's been looking at this and trying to understand how major policy shifts, especially social policy shifts, affect farmers and ranchers. Because when we think about this will be the next generation of farmers, and USDA's been investing a lot of money in this because the average age of farmers is 58.9, and less than 2 percent of the population is farming. A lot of the resources tend to be sunk into things that address access to land, capital, markets, super important. But they're not addressing the household and social issues. So things that affect workforce attraction and retention as a quality in jobs. And how are the kids that are growing up in these families who are struggling with multiple jobs, why would you want to stay in agriculture if it's going to be that hard when you could sell out for a lot more money? (21:14)

So a lot of my research is trying to understand how big policy shifts like the Affordable Care Act actually play out in the farm sector and across different types of farmers, recognizing that farmers are not a homogenous population. They're very, very different in a lot of different ways, whether race, gender, ethnicity, also geography, commodity, production style—those things are going to make a difference. And then also I've been looking at how childcare costs and the availability of childcare affects economic development and quality of life for farmers and ranchers. And I think what's been really interesting is that these are the questions about social sustainability. When we think about sustainable agriculture, it's much easier to operationalize economic and environmental sustainability. We kind of are a little bit more comfortable with those, those are more clear-cut metrics. And there's been a tendency within sustainable agriculture to equate economic sustainability with quality of life. Well, if you're just making more money, then your life is great, right? That's all we need to do, is help farmers make more money. And we're not addressing these other issues that are within the household that are really affecting the viability of the farms whether people choose to stay or not.

And as I've been doing this research, it's been really interesting because farmers will actually cry and thank us for doing this. Because nobody talks to them about this. And this is an issue that really cuts across all farmers. It doesn't matter what you grow or how you grow it, everybody has a family who they want to be healthy. And this is a topic that they can actually cut across. This is the real hard heart of social sustainability that we can actually talk about. So a lot of my work now is increasingly thinking about how do we operationalize social sustainability and give more comfort into people being able to talk about that. And I've been working with the national SARE office to write a bulletin on social sustainability.

And I should also mention that SARE actually funded my graduate work when I was a grad student and a PhD, I got a SARE grant. And because of that grant I spent like 6 hours with a farmer in Ohio in the middle of February. It was so long and so cold that my lunch actually froze in the car and I was starving by the time I got out. An icicle sandwich. But he kept talking about how workers' compensation and health insurance were such big issues for his workers and his family and was affecting his decisions about succession and things like that. And we were working on this national project, and I told my advisor, "Hey, I'd really like to put this question on health insurance on." And he's like, "What are you talking about?" And I was like, "Let's just try it." And we sent this national survey out to farmers at the rural-urban interface and gave them like 16 issues that could be affecting the future of their farms, like the cost of land, the cost of inputs, your neighbors, planning, zoning, all of that normal stuff. And everybody was pretty

surprised back in 2008 when the number one issue that farmers wrote back was health insurance, the cost of health insurance. And that was especially important for commercial farmers, more than folks who classified as hobby farmers.

And so that's kind of this thread that I've been following through time. That was 2008, so when we had a big policy shift in 2014 with the Affordable Care Act, how did this play out within the farm sector? Because the whole idea of the Affordable Care Act was that you're supposed to release people from jobs, that there would be other alternative health insurance options, so you wouldn't be tied into that 40-hour work week. What also happened was there was the 2016 election. And when Donald Trump came into office, all of a sudden we were really questioning what was going to happen with the Affordable Care Act, because there was a lot of backlash towards that. And what was really interesting is that was the middle of our study. So we were doing both qualitative and quantitative interviews with farmers across the country, and we had selected two states in each section of the country, and they were paired by whether or not the states had extended Medicaid. So we had these really interesting policy environments. And we were able to talk to farmers of all different backgrounds to understand how they were experiencing these changes and how they had been influencing what was on their state policy landscape, but then also how did it affect the production decisions they were making on the farm. (25:36)

So we're still continuing to understand and analyze all of that. But that's kind of like a big, broad overview of where I am currently, at least in terms of sustainable ag. The other thing that I do is with COVID. The dean of the college of food and ag and environmental sciences at OSU appointed me on the phone to be co-chair of OSU's college of ag COVID-19 and the food supply task force last spring. So for about a year I did that. And that was another really interesting thing, understanding what was happening to the food system in COVID. And it's actually been a long-term interest of mine of what would happen in a disaster disruption. And how does a lot of the ideas that people have around local and regional food systems tie into the ideas of resiliency if there was a big disaster. And I'd always been thinking like, oh, if there was a cyberattack, or if there was something else, what would be our response and how do we organize. And for years I couldn't get anybody to talk to me. It was really interesting, they were like, "No, what are you talking about, that's not interesting," and then COVID happened and now all of a sudden they're like, "Oh."

We got hooked up with the Ohio emergency management agency and we now have a really nice ongoing project to actually try to address some of these questions and issues. Not necessarily for COVID, but further ahead for the next disaster or disruption. So also taking a lot of what we learned from the Ohio food policy council and also get some food system scholarship in sustainable agriculture and try to bring that into current policies and programs. (27:24)

AA: Thank you for explaining all that. So, going back to Malabar Farm, is there anything more detailed you want to share about what you did there, or, one of my questions is about farming methods and how you were influenced and which methods you used. I'm assuming Malabar was probably one of the things that influenced you, so if you would like to share a little more about that, and then some of the methods that you used when you had your own CSA with Shannon and what influenced that and where you learned how to do the things you did there.

SI: Yeah, sure! So I really learned a lot from Trish Mumme. She was really a great teacher. She was an educator and a religion professor. So I learned a lot about the actual mechanics of

farming, and she really tried to infuse a lot of what Bromfield had done. So we had restored his vegetable shed, we were using the spring that was irrigation system out of the natural spring to cool off the vegetables at the roadside stand and continue to flow down to the vegetable fields. We were learning about green manures and integrated pest management and the pros and cons of organic certification. So there was a lot of techniques that we learned from her that we also transported over to our farm up the road on 603.

It was really a good lesson in what are the positives and negatives of organic. We were certified organic, so that really limited what we could spray. And I remember looking through the window and watching all these Japanese beetles come and infest our green beans. I wanted to get the nastiest, deadliest pesticide I could find and go out and just like spray those beans. And I couldn't. You have these customers who are depending on you, what happens when you lose your crop? And then how do you fill them? We had to rely on our social networks to go to other growers to fill in what we were losing. Or recognizing that there was a hailstorm, the importance of having crops in lots of different fields that are spread out because a hailstorm could be really localized, and we lost maybe part of our crop, but not the other part of our crop because we were farming on different pieces of land.

Again, learning the importance of mechanization and tractors and rototillers. Sometimes I think there's different ideas in the sustainable ag community about what is low technology, and there's this discussion about appropriate technology and the issues of that work. And the ergonomics, we never really paid attention to that. And I think that's actually a really big issue with beginning and young farmers, is what you can do when you're 20 is going to be really different from what you can do when you're 30, 40, 50, 60. And so how does the enterprise also change as your body changes? Are you making decisions about hiring labor or not?

What was also really interesting with the internship was that we were paid—we weren't paid, we got room and board in exchange—and we did learn a lot. But there was also friction there. And I think that this is actually very common in internship experiences is that there was a lot of exploitation. And we were working for people who did not ever have their own children. So it got into issues of actually trying to limit how much food we could eat. And things like, you can eat three grapes. And that created a lot of tension. And I think that this is one of the big conundrums in agriculture, is this farm labor. And how do you do, if you're not getting paid a lot for your crop and you're trying to do it profitably and make a living, this issue.

And I think that was kind of the experience of how you also self-exploit, because when you're talking about techniques, a lot of it really is about self-exploitation and about staying up really late at night and harvesting in the dark, or harvesting early in the morning, harvesting in the rain. And you're also again trying to do all these other activities, and neither Shannon nor I had kids that we were also taking care of, or aging parents that we were responsible for in the caretaking. So we actually had a lot of flexibility that I didn't understand or appreciate at the time. And that's also again why I did actually go into research on childcare, was because I was actually having my own kids, and then actually talking to Shannon, and hearing about the experiences that she was having with her kids and trying to farm, work, because she went on, after we left grad school she went on and eventually continued farming full time. It was, we don't talk about these things. And this is a big part of the technique of sustainable ag that it's really time to reconcile with.

And I think that actually with COVID we have new opportunities as a country, went through a collective experience of caregiving and childcare and health insurance, and so maybe there's an opportunity now to talk about things in a way we haven't been able to, especially in

terms of food systems work. It's always just kind of been presumed that there's a wife that works off the farm for benefits, will take care of the childcare or if there's inlaws around. It's very heteronormative, Leave it to Beaver type of scenario that there's this kind of myth about in America. And the truth is, farming's actually a lot more complicated than that, and it's actually time for us to, if we're thinking about creating sustainable systems, especially those in the research world, and they're coming up with these perfect mechanisms, but they often aren't thinking about what's actually happening in the family. So you're saying that you should only spray twice a week, are you thinking about the person who has two jobs, and looking for that little window where there's no rain. When you're developing your field plots and you have a farm crew that you can give explicit directions to and graduate students that can do these things, that's great. But to what degree are you actually testing these in the real world conditions and under the real constraints that people actually operate in? (33:48)

I guess that's kind of a long way of saying, those are some of the things that I took. And we obviously, the other things, the other resources we learned about, Carol Bollan, actually was the director of OEFFA, she was actually Shannon's advisor at Dennison. And Shannon was very close with her, used to babysit their kids. And so she gave us a lot of resources like Elizabeth Henderson's CSA *Sharing the Harvest*. And that was a really important tool, and so was Eliot Coleman and the square-foot gardening guy. Those were really important to us. And I eventually got to know Elizabeth Henderson, and I was like, "Oh, thank you so much for what you've done, and helping." It was really those kinds of folks, and going to OEFFA conferences and learning and talking to people. But again, it was really that hands-on learning that we did with Trish that was the most important of the learning. (34:54)

AA: Thank you for sharing all that. Is there anything you want to say about your philosophies? And I know you've covered a lot of this, but is there anything else you want to add? Like I said, you covered a lot of it with the childcare and things that you were talking about, but how your experiences influenced your philosophies and how they've changed over time?

SI: Yeah, I think it's just kind of like you were saying, it's the life course, right? As you age, you think that you know it all when you're 20, all of a sudden you find out you really don't know it all. And I think all of the different experiences I've had, I hope have made me a better listener and I hope helped me do more impactful work. One of the things that I really try to take to heart is the importance of my job. I am funded by taxpayers. So I feel like I had responsibility to do work that benefits the taxpayers. And when I was in Vermont, I worked in the Morrill building. Most land grant universities have a Morrill building, because Justin Morrill was the senator from Vermont who proposed the legislation that passed, even though it was the Civil War, to fund the land grant university system. There's a lot of problems with the way that land grants are funded right now, as we're starting to talk more and more about land from dispossession of Native Americans and indigenous populations.

But when I was working in Morrill Hall, and actually I made a pilgrimage to Justin Morrill's homestead in Vermont, and in Morrill Hall there's all these busts and paintings of Justin Morrill. It was like, every day walking past that and him being like, "So what are you doing today now for Vermont and the constituents of the land grant system?" And so taking that broader perspective, about how is the work I'm doing not just sitting on the library shelf but actually being implemented. And that can actually sometimes be really hard, because also I think what we have to grapple with in sustainable ag is that issues aren't black and white, especially

when we're talking about social issues. So when you're looking in the gray, there's a lot of the threading the needle you have to do, and you're walking some fine lines. So trying to keep that perspective, how are you going to benefit the greatest number of people possible?

And also, growing up in the city and living in rural communities also has been very important in helping me understand both sides. And then rural and urban actually weren't that different, as much as they like to say they are. You can be just as cosmopolitan in Lucas, Ohio, and you can be just as provincial in Brooklyn, New York. And so there's a lot of things to be said about mindset and exposure. So how do you also bridge the urban-rural divide so that we're actually working together and not seeing them as opposing and contrasting? And so I think that's also helped in a lot of different ways, the influence that the mutual interdependence of those two regions have on each other. And how they meet. And unfortunately there's been more divisions across rural and urban. But I try to also in the classes I teach to see how do we bridge that, how do we look beyond those differences? (38:23)

AA: So you touched a lot on this in some of your answers to the other questions. Is there anything else you want to share about your perspectives on the connection between organic or sustainable agriculture and the broader historical and cultural context?

SI: I think it's interesting that I was really involved in farming right when organic, especially in the Midwest, was really gaining steam. I think there's also recognition that these things start on the coast and then diffuse inwards. In the Midwest we're a little bit slower. Also in the middle of this whole contestation of what does organic mean. And as it was codified by the national organic standards, there was what was gained and what was lost. And also a lot of the social components of what organic meant to the grass roots movement never got codified. I think that's something that has been really lost. And there was a turn towards local foods, too, in addition to just organic, because how do we also get away from this issue of concentration and consolidation? How do we find alternatives? Because we've seen some of that in organic as well.

And that's been really interesting to try to navigate what happens on the farm and what farmers are doing and whether or not they should become certified and what does that payment mean? I know a lot of friends in certification, and it's a really tricky world that they're trying to bridge, particularly as more and larger businesses become interested as it becomes more mainstream. So I think that there's a lot of big questions. And then as a sociologist in my training, some of the things that I was thinking about are structured agency. And so I was also thinking about food in a capitalist system, what are the rules of the game? And how does that capitalist system affect the farming system and the food system? Who's winning and who loses? And how do they lose? So those are some of the things that I'm also always kind of looking at and trying to understand that both from an agroecological perspective. But that's also important to understand from a human dimension perspective. Thinking about this also, not only in the US context, but also internationally. How do we look at what other countries are doing to learn from what they're doing, what are their successes, what are the challenges they are having, and how can we share ideas cross-nationally that actually gives us a stronger, more resilient food system? (41:00)

AA: So I'm curious, one thing that I'm trying to learn a little more about is different people's perspectives on why sustainable agriculture and organic agriculture has been so controversial. And I know you mentioned a little bit about how the politics were really involved in that, which

was detrimental to the sustainable agriculture movement. So I was wondering if there was anything else you want to share about your perspective on that.

SI: Yeah, it's really interesting. Going back to this idea also that farmers are very heterogenous even within the sustainable ag movement. I remember being at, hanging out at OEFFA and OCIO, the other certifying agency in Ohio. And they were setting rules, and people got upset at some of the meetings at OCIO. There was a lot of anger. Then they actually had armed guards at the barn doors for one of the other meetings. You know, there's a lot of passion. And what people were trying to do. Maybe you can also help me understand a little more what you're trying to get at, which controversy are you thinking about?

AA: Well, this relates to my next question too, which is about the connection between the land grant universities and organic and sustainable agriculture. But I'm thinking back from my time in Ohio, too, I was around people who were like, "Organic agriculture is terrible! That could never feed the world!" back to Earl Butz, "Oh, if you go to organic, then 50 million people are going to starve!" And on the other hand, of course, the proponents of organic and sustainable agriculture, and just seeing how the opposition to organic, from what I can gather, doesn't seem to be based on as much factual evidence. These people are scientists, but they don't talk scientifically, they're just as emotional as the people they accuse. So I'm curious about why the debate is so emotional. Because at face value you wouldn't think it's really like a moral issue, and yet it brings out those same kinds of emotions as a moral issue would. So I'm just curious in your perspective as a sociologist on why that might be the case.

SI: Yeah, that's really an interesting question. That's so interesting. I think one of the things we know is that people farm for the lifestyle. It's really not for the money, unless you're like one of the largest farmers. People are always saying things like, "I get to be my own boss, I get to spend time with my family, I love being out in nature." And there's this connection to the land. And I think that becomes a real passion and a real motivation for people. And especially when you're going into some of the farming techniques that really put you very close to the land, and you're not doing a lot of remote, large acreage, extensive large-scale farming, you're not just on a combine all day.

And I think what also happens, from the land grant researcher's perspective, is the paradigms that they're embedded in. They're actually not farming for a livelihood. And I think increasingly that we are a country and a world that's increasingly removed from agriculture. It used to be like, "Oh, this is my grandparents' farm." Now it's like your great-grandparents or your great-great-grandparents' farm that people are really talking about. And I think more and more people are going into agricultural research don't come from a farming background. And this is actually a big issue that I'm trying to raise at Ohio State, how are we preparing this next generation of policy makers and also researchers to make decisions?

Because it also happens on the sustainable ag side, where you have, I've seen some very good-intentioned young college graduates going to DC and lobbying for change in what they think is sustainable agriculture without them understanding what the realities of farming really are. And what the ideal is that they read about in Eliot Coleman or Joel Salatin versus what the reality is, having to make a living in that. And that's where there is also some of this contestation that occurs. And I think again, when I look at the land grant universities and what's taught and what's also reported by federal grants, by private grants, by private research foundations, by

industry, and there's a very specific paradigm, which is get big or get out, and it's all about that size of production. And it's not about what is scale-appropriate. And what are also the social implications of having these certain types of production systems, and also thinking about those social components.

Like I run into all the time as a rural sociologist, and I'm based up at OARDC in Wooster, so at Ohio State's ag research station. And we're looking for new faculty, we're looking for a soil scientist. And I was on the search committee, and we asked, "What's the role of a rural sociologist?" And they were like, "Well, their job is to get the information out that we develop." So we're seen as extension, and never questioning the scientists. And I think that's one of their issues in their training in the way that we train, the conventional training for scientists is not to really question and tend to think about ethics and humanities and sociology. They can think about economics, but that's about as far as they get into sociology. So that's actually a detriment to our livelihoods. And I think in many ways the land grants did a really good job, in some cases we're almost putting ourselves out of business because we made farming so efficient and there's so few farmers. We're so hyper-efficient now, but what happens when there's a shock to the system? We don't have any redundancy built in because of that aging farm population. And that's a real concern. (47:02)

So I think we also need to start thinking about our paradigms, and how they're changing. And I think that there is this movement now of sustainable agriculture becoming more infused into the dominant system, and also universities trying to create more sustainable agriculture programs. At what point and how does that become mainstream is a big question. And then also, to what degree are social science classes integrated into that sustainable ag system, inside the sustainable ag curriculum. Because that is actually one of the biggest limitations and one of the biggest hurdles that we need to move upon.

And right now there's a lot of focus on racial justice, which is definitely extremely important. But what does racial justice really look like? How do we actually infuse justice into the food system? And if we really, it's not just by saying and having one or two people in the room who are people or color or by making sure that our pronouns are listed and we're respecting them. That is definitely a part of it, but it's really looking at those root requests and root demands and root needs of economic justice. And how you have access to health insurance and childcare and to have a living that pays for your needs and so you're not constantly stressed all the time. And that's at the root of a lot of those justice movements, that we really have to start reconciling within the food system.

And it's not just what happens on the farm, but it's across the whole food chain. So if you are working in the field, in the processing sectors, in distribution, in retail, in restaurants, those tend to be the most flexible—and when I say flexible, it means like not necessarily having a set schedule. The least-well-paid jobs and the least likely to offer benefits; they're often called dirty jobs. Jobs people don't want to do. We have to talk about, why is that? And so we talk about green economic development through food and agriculture, we actually have to start talking about the quality of the jobs. And that's also where a lot of my work is tending today, is we can't just count how many pounds of produce that we produce. We have to actually say, how many people earned a real livelihood? Where were their kids? What was happening? What's the quality of their job? How many days off? Do they have time to manage their household needs? Do they have savings for retirement? Can they afford college? Can they afford the house that they're living in? Do they have enough money for heat? And that's an issue that cuts across the supply chain that we often don't talk about, the fact that farmers are on food stamps. We need to

think a little more critically about what does that just economy look like in food and ag if we really want to have economic development in that. (49:38)

AA: Yeah. So you touched a little bit on it, but is there anything else you want to say about your perspective on the connection between the land grants and sustainable agriculture?

SI: So I think what was also really interesting was when I was working at Malabar interning and then also as a grad student where I just did a lot of hanging out with farmers, supply chains, looking up connections between restaurants and farmers and farm produce was, a lot of farmers, when they receive a letter from Ohio State, they said it goes in the “circular file.” And I was so dense, I said, “What’s the circular file?” It took me a while to realize that’s a garbage can. And I was like, “Oh, that’s really interesting.” And so one of the things that I’ve tried to do is create legitimacy. One of the reasons I actually got a PhD, I didn’t really want a PhD, but I saw how people with master’s degrees were treated. They had really good ideas and a lot of times they would just be served or sucked up by other PhDs. They were never given credit. And then also being a woman in the field, I was like, “I need to get my PhD to have credibility.” And so I also recognize the privilege that gives me.

And so trying to really work on those issues, but also, how do we make the land grant responsive to all constituents? Again, we are funded by tax dollars. We cannot only focus on one sector of agriculture when agriculture is so big and diverse. We have enough funding to do it all. But that’s a really important thing for us to be able to do. So I guess that’s just another part where I see this disconnect with the land grant. People hear the term “social capital,” you often hear it’s not what you know, it’s who you know, it’s about building relationships. It’s really hard, it takes a lot of time and energy to build relationships, but they’re really easy to destroy. And I think that’s another thing that we have to constantly keep in mind is that it’s really easy to create things and then have them be destroyed. So we also have to pay a lot of attention to the social relationships to different stakeholders that we are responsible to. (51:52)

AA: Yeah, thank you so much for sharing. It’s good. I haven’t interviewed many sociologists before, so it’s good to get this kind of perspective in there. How much do you know about the sustainable agriculture program at Ohio State? I think that was started a little bit before, maybe even before you were at Malabar, but if there’s anything you want to say about that, I’d be curious.

SI: They’ve been trying for 20 years for that. So I was a grad student working in the agri-grants that they were putting in. And I’ve had many conversations with other faculty. And every time the program continues to develop, I continue to say, “Why is my class in sociology of agriculture not a required class?” It’s very production-focused and very market-focused. And market-focused I mean by business school approach. And ag business. And again, ag business or the business school, they’re not taking into account, well, where is the cost of health insurance? Who’s going to get the health insurance? If you have a kid, where does that go into your line-item budget? If you have a kid, who’s going to do the work to watch the kid? Do you need to hire labor in the house to help do dishes and cook, or do you need more field labor?

So there’s none of these kinds of human dimensions that aren’t put into sustainable ag. It tends to be very much this environmental kind of perspective of what is the best production practice. And I think that is to the detriment of preparing people to go into actually farm. But

then also for people going into policy work, or people going into certification, or into ag business. They're not understanding these issues. And so that's really my biggest critique. But also the biggest place for opportunity to come in is to see these as really critical and fundamental, and not just to give lip service to social sustainability but to actually integrate it. And to be fair, I think it's been really hard to do that. And that's why I've tried to do that work, trying to figure out how do we operationalize it. And at the same time, it's not like there's one bar. It's like a bar that constantly moves, and you need to talk about social sustainability.

And also, as issues come up and issues change, it's something that we need to evaluate all the time. And it's not just one checked-off box, but it's how do we put social sustainability and social justice issues and infuse them into all the other issues we talk about? So it's not like it's one thing, but it's actually taken into account in everything else that we do. Like intergenerational succession, or the way the different marketing channels, how are we thinking about those things all together and not in isolation? (54:44)

AA: Thank you. Is there anything, I know you said you were involved with OEFFA a little bit, is there anything you want to say about your involvement in organic organizations and your perspective on those?

SI: That's an interesting question. Because I've gotten into OEFFA and also NOFA-Vermont. And I think what's really interesting is just how dedicated the folks are that work in these fields. I don't think it's often appreciated that they do not get paid a lot of money. And how much time and knowledge there is that these folks do, and that they're really trying to create at many times system-level changes, and they do so differently in different parts of the country. I think it's also just something to be said about a welcoming community, and folks that you offer childcare. This idea that this is a family farm system, so you actually have to acknowledge the family. And I think they have also pioneered the way in how you have conferences that have local foods. I don't know that we always appreciate that many of these organizations actually figured this out a long time ago.

I will say also when I was in college I went to Oberlin and I always ate in the co-ops. And that's also where I really learned about buying direct from farmers and this idea of how do you support farmers. And I don't know if you're heard of Hartsler's milk, the glass-bottled milk in Ohio. They're actually based in Wooster, they're a family dairy. They call themselves "pretty near organic." But when I was in college in the '90s, we were buying from Hartsler's just as they were trying to find markets. They came to us and they're like, "We'd really like to get this product to you." And I mean, they were still really working the kinks out, because I remember being at lunch and the milk cap would pop off of the glass bottle because there was a little too much bacteria that was fermenting in there. I still buy Hartsler's; that doesn't happen today. But there was also the need for partners that were going to work with you as you're working these kinks out.

It's also like, you having the time to prepare food. That's the other part about food and agriculture, is sometimes people can get a little uppity about what they expect, who's going to buy this, and having the time to prepare. And that's also where I think, sometimes when you were talking about divisions earlier, there can be divisions that are based on class issues and about: What kind of access to food do I have? How much time do I have to cook it? What is my life really like? How much money do I have to buy food? And so I think that sometimes there are these tensions that also emerge when higher-income individuals think they know what lower-

income individuals should be eating and how they should be eating and try to instruct them in those ways, and I think there can be a lot of tension and resentment that builds into that as well.

And I think that some of the things that we are setting ourselves up for with failure in some cases is this idea that everybody, especially in low-income communities should be having a community garden or should be farming as a livelihood. America's rural farmers can't make it. I think it's important to be realistic when we're trying to train people into these jobs. What kinds of jobs and lifestyle are we really encouraging them to go into? And that's not to say we shouldn't do it, but I think it's like we really have to say, How do we make these jobs better? What are the different ways of making these jobs better?

And I think this goes back to your question also about the idea about organics and the professors who say, "We're all going to starve to death." You know, that's a lazy response. Because I think the question should be, "How do we make organic better?" We've never funded and put the same kind of funding into organic and sustainable ag as we have into other types of research. So how do we increase that? And when you look at it, we get drops in the bucket compared to what is funded for other major projects.

The other issue that comes up because we are in a really capitalist system is, who's going to make money off of it? Because we have these really deep interconnections between business and the universities and government. It becomes really sticky, and you also have to understand, what are the rules of the game and what's driving that? And capitalism is really good at adapting. Organic was kind of set up as this opposition, wait, we can do something in a different way. But it also became very much big business. And when you see a lot of what's happened to the mom and pop types of businesses, whether they're Cascadian Farms or Stonyfield, all these other things. You look at Phil Howard's work from Michigan State, he's really showed very nicely how they've been absorbed and bought up by larger companies. So when you have this concentration and consolidation, what does that mean for the food system? But also, what does that mean for the types of grains that are being used to grow for bread? When you need to move toward uniformity for ease of distribution and for efficiency, what you lose in terms of the heterogeneity, the ability to respond to shocks in the system for diversity.

So that's again another place where I think sociologists and social scientists have a lot to offer. Because one of the other things that I look at a lot, and I did a lot of my master's work on, was actually looking at the social diversity of farmers. And why do people go into organic or go into alternative markets, and the way that they structure their farm. And in fact there's actually a lot of different reasons. And there's kind of these archetypes of a multigeneration farm or is this a first-generation farmer. And one of the things is that it's good that they're not all doing it in the same exact way with the same exact motivations, because if there's a disaster or disruption, like a huge market shock, they're all not all vulnerable at the same time. The same way we learned about the Irish potato famine, even though it's a huge fallacy in and of itself. But the Irish potato famine, the idea is, you need more genetic diversity on the landscape and more heterogeneity and more biodiversity then you're stronger. We need the same kind of social diversity, because that makes us stronger. And we're also less likely to be shocked, the whole system won't collapse if there's a shock to the system.

And the reason why I also mention the potato famine is because, maybe you already know this, but there's also again this kind of hyper-focus on the genetic diversity of the plants without recognizing that at the time Ireland itself was actually exporting food to the British Empire. So they were exporting all kinds of lamb, honey, butter—there was plenty of food to go around. And so then we get caught in this trope of how are we going to feed the world when it's

really a question of distribution and can people afford to buy food. And that's again a place where we need to shift the conversation to talk about equity and inequality. And that's a big issue within agriculture but also in the country and in the world. And that's where I think sometimes agriculture separates itself and kind of says, "We're different, we're special." But really, farmers and people in the food system and food chain workers, we're all affected by the same large or macro government and socioeconomic issues. And I think we need to start layering those things on top of each other if we really want to get towards the true idea of sustainability and resiliency and regeneration. (1:02:20)

AA: Do you have anything you want to say—I know this is probably, you weren't super involved with it—but about organic certification? I know there's been a lot of controversy. Again, this is one of those things. And even within the organic community, over the USDA certification. So I was just curious if there's anything you want to say about that.

SI: Yeah. You know, I think what is interesting, like in the example of hydroponics, there's a lot of debate around, is it grown in soil or not. And there's also, I think that this gets at these larger questions that people don't actually want to talk about, which is, who's doing the farming? Because these can also be very mechanized kinds of operations and getting to a certain scale, and how does that also jive or not with some of the ideals that these on-the-ground nonprofit certifying agencies hold here? And the people who are involved in them. And I think you kind of have this collide of big business with what are movement and values that are coming together. And that's where you see a lot of the clashing and a lot of the contestation. And it comes out in terms of who's appointed to the board or not. And which farmers will benefit from this, and which companies will benefit from this. I haven't looked at those in detail enough to really be able to say which one is better or not. But I think that's also where you see a lot of this clash really starting to materialize. (1:03:56)

AA: Now it's a little bit beyond the scope of my research because I don't feel like the pandemic is far enough back to analyze historically yet, so I'm kind of cutting things off at 2019 in my research. But I am curious about this research you've been doing about resiliency of sustainable agriculture. I'm curious if you've had many findings that you want to say anything about yet as to whether sustainable agriculture has been more resilient than conventional agriculture or not.

SI: Yeah. So one of the things that we did is actually in 2019 we sent out the Ohio farm poll. So one of the interesting things is that when I came back to Ohio State and I was teaching and getting ready to teach my first sociology of ag class—this was four years ago—I was trying to find the latest numbers on Ohio agriculture, number of farms, all these things. I was like, nobody's done a report on this. I was shocked. I couldn't find anything. So like the night before class I'm trying to download census of ag numbers and kind of come up with a story. So I talked to my colleague, Dr. Douglas Jackson-Smith, and I said, we need to do a long-term farm poll where we can have a series of questions that we ask periodically—in Iowa they do this, they call it the Iowa Rural Life poll—and we can get a cohort that we can track in time, where we're getting not just production data, but really social information and questions that the census of agriculture isn't asking.

And so in 2019 we launched the Ohio farm poll. And we actually started to get at some of these questions that you're asking. We did this early response because 2018-2019 were some of

the toughest years, there was a lot of rain that was coming, the drought, also farmer suicide was really big in the news, and farm stress was really big in the news. So we really wanted to get a pulse on what was happening with the farmers. And what we learned was kind of interesting was that folks you don't necessarily categorize as sustainable, but we look at scale, that was one thing we've done the analysis on so far, is that larger farms that were more specialized did not do as well as farms that were more diverse and had direct marketing. And one of the reasons for that was there was also a trade war that was happening that really affected corn and beans. So if you have all your eggs in one basket, then you can be much more vulnerable than if you have a more diversified portfolio and lots of direct marketing.

Now with COVID, what was really interesting was that we were starting to have all of these meat shortages. And so there was this huge push for and rush into local foods, buy from your local farmer. And the dominant story was really like, "Oh, the farmers are rolling in dough, this is great." And I was like, hmmm, really? I bet some farmers that's true, but for other farmers the reality is a lot more complicated, especially for those who have kids, or have other caretaking responsibilities. And they were having to make decisions of, do I put myself, or a family member, at the market where we might get sick or I might bring something home? What do I do? I talked to farmers who chose only one member of the family was going to be forward-facing with the field crew and also at the market, and they hired additional family labor because if they both got sick, who was going to take care of the kids? So people were also putting themselves at risk every day.

The other part was, farmers talked about how stressful it was to also meet the demands of their customers. They wanted to give their customers a really good product, but they may also have had children that were being homeschooled at the same time or other caretaking responsibilities when everything shut down. Or again, maybe they were working another job.

The other part that we don't also talk about, and this is from our research that we looked in the hired in ag project, is that the majority of farmers are actually really well-insured because they get off-farm health insurance. And the majority of off-farm health insurance is actually through the public sector, so like health, education, government. And with COVID there's a real strain on the whole economy, local government services, tax dollars. So there's been a lot of conversation about cutting back benefits. We don't really appreciate that if we cut back those benefits, especially in the public sector, who is that going to impact? It's going to be mostly rural communities and especially in the food and ag world because again, in rural areas, the best jobs tend to be in hospitals, in government, and in education.

So there's these other types of questions that are happening, and most of the surveys that have gone out have really been focused on, "Tell me what happened to your markets. Was it good, was it bad?" and missing that bigger story. So we're actually hoping, just applied for funding to do another wave of the Ohio farm poll so that we can actually track some of these social components and how did it change your farm and your operation? Because there were also food platforms, the farmers had to learn those new online platforms, those things cost money. Did they have the capital to do it? Did they have the skill? Did they have the broadband? If you're in a rural location, your broadband may be awful.

So I think that there is a lot of different variables that it's a much more complicated story that was happening. And I think a lot of the people are really worried about, what's going to happen next? Is this high demand on local really going to stay? There was a high demand for local in 2008 when there was a big crash in the economy and it was kind of thrown by the

wayside. So I think people are really a little skeptical right now what's going to happen.
(1:09:30)

AA: Thank you for sharing that. That's really interesting. So I think I'm almost at the end of my questions. Is there anything else you want to add that we didn't cover?

SI: I guess maybe the one thing that I just was thinking about with all the work you've done at Malabar is, I used to give tours of the grounds, tours of the Big House, and I've seen some of the movies and films and things. And I think what has happened at Malabar is in some ways really a shame in how Louis Bromfield's alcoholism has taken over the story of what happened there. It's kind of become this really gossipy place, like oh, Lauren Bacall married Humphrey Bogart there, that kind of thing. And those things are fun, I get it. I'm like oh, tell me more. But there's a whole part of sustainable ag and what that means, and this need to evolve what does sustainable ag mean today versus then, how does the legacy continue? And I don't know how you revive that, but I think it's an unfortunate part of the farm that isn't always carried over. And it's also an opportunity to think about what does sustainable ag mean today and how can we demonstrate those things as well there.

Again, it's a complicated place. When I worked there, there were a lot of tensions with all the staff. Farm crew versus working in the Big House, the inn versus the gardens. The ideas that we were doing this organically. When we had the farm, people again think about, what's organic? Really staring at us, renting from our neighbors who had problems with alcoholism and would drive through our field and over our sunflowers and show up at our door at 10:00 in the morning with a case of Busch. Seeing the bar fights that happened, being taken to private gambling halls in rural communities. So it's like, I guess it's just that we have to think more broadly about rural development and how it's impacting the people, and not just an if we build it they will come focus on building the structure. And thinking about what's the social infrastructure that's needed, and also like the social services that are needed in a place. And what are some of these symptoms, like alcohol and social dysfunction and abuse, really symptoms of? Especially in rural communities. And I hope that becomes a bigger part of how we think about sustainability, is the people part. And that that's not seen as soft science, because it's actually the hard science. It's the part that we don't want to look at. But it's really the part that underpins resilience.

So I guess the last thing I want to say is that I really want to thank all the farmers across the country who have talked to me over the years, who shared their experience. Because what I'm sharing with you is really just a combination of the conversations I've had with them. They've taken their time to fill out surveys, hoping that what we do will be brought back to USDA and state governments to try to make a difference in policy and programs. I hope that is something that we can start to do.

As an another example how fragile these things are, with the health insurance project that I've led, I like to stay in contact with my USDA reps, and they really like what we're doing, what we were seeing, and so they put it in the USDA AFRI call for small and medium farms one year that they'd like to see an emphasis on research focused on health insurance. And then that was not there the next year, because they were told by their superiors that that can't be a priority. Because when the Trump administration came in, we're kind of cutting all of those things out. So it's another example of how things change from administration to administration. All the retirements that happened in USDA when it was gutted, and AFRI under the Trump

administration are really going to affect science and our ability to do research and to get programs and policies out. I think it's going to be interesting to see how that affects the sustainable and organic ag movement because it's not going to be something that we're going to see in a year or two. We're really only going to understand the impact in five to ten years of how things were impacted. So there's a history there that we're living in, but also it's important to understand what that history's been and the people who played the roles in that.

AA: Thank you so much!

SI: You're welcome. Hopefully it's things that you can use for your dissertation.

AA: Yeah, thank you! (1:14:29)