

EPISODE
CLOSED CAPTION
SCRIPT



SEARCHING FOR SUSTAINABILITY
FARMING PRACTICES
AND SUSTAINABILITY

Michael Finney – So, I always look at, again, agriculture as oftentimes a bridge between what happens in nature and what happens with people and when that bridge is strong, both sides are healthy when that bridge starts to break and crumble both sides of that bridge start to have impacts.

Margaret Krome - But you know I hear farmers, mainstream farmers in the state who say it's time we ought to be responsible. We want to be held responsible. We are stewards and we're proud of our stewardship. We don't want to have bad actors contaminating the water and ruining our reputation.

Dr. Richard Crates - We are all in this together and we have to realize that each one of us has our own separate strengths so there's a lot of room for a lot of farming systems under the umbrella of sustainability but what we need to do is identify the most significant goals that we're trying to achieve and clearly it is to protect the waters of the state. Clearly it is to keep our soil in place and clearly it is to raise healthy food.

Dr. Rod Olsen - I am so excited about the way a culture is thinking about things, how the producers are looking at how they can make a profit and keep the soil on their land, keep the phosphorous on their land that's good for them and it's good for our waterways.

Margaret Krome - One of the things that's been happening because we have a lot of farmers in the state in livestock and dairy that are very interested in finding new ways of handling and feeding their animals. A lot of them are trying managed grazing.

Dave Vetrano - The managed grazing programs are designed to allow a person to you know raise either milk or beef off an acreage and do it in a way that from an environmental standpoint really has no impact. A well-managed pasture the manure stays on the pasture, there's no herbicide pesticide runoff there's no soil erosion and so many of the issues that as a biologist I would have had with conventional ag systems pretty much disappear with the grazing system. The grazing community is not only a way for people to maintain make a living at it but it's also a way to fundamentally rebuild the rural community, which in my mind is has been suffering a long time since the since the 1970s.

Rick Adamski - For 30 years the foundation of our farm has been grazing so it's not the same as my grandparents when they were grazing. I think they were building barbed wire fences. Fifty years ago New Zealanders were developing a low-impedance energizer that was able to transmit electricity on fences and being able to do a better job of containing those animals, not to mention the portable reels and the poly wires so that we can change fences more often, being able to handle a larger number of animals, being able to move them frequently and actually utilize the pasture better. We know that cattle do best when they harvest fresh pasture. An old friend of mine, he said years ago, "There's two things that always happen when you harvest hay: One its costing you money. Two it'll never get any better than when you cut it". So, when cows graze its always the best quality that is possible and it doesn't cost that much money because the cattle know how to harvest it. We don't have to handle any of their manure. It's being deposited back on the land. And when I see a cow pie I think of all the bacteria that's in there I think of the food stuffs that's regenerating into organic matter . I think of beetles and earthworms that are going to feed upon that and supply other nutrients so that they can break it down and it's the circle of life.

Joe Tomandl - Managed grazing is what really brought us here. That is the most sustainable way for us to get started farming from an economic and environmental standpoint. So, in essence, our cows do a lot of the work through the growing season. Plants have roots, cows have legs, send them out to do what they're naturally supposed to do for millions of years on this earth. And go out and graze good high-quality forages. Basically, harvesting their own feed and bringing milk back to the barn.

So as agriculture progresses, our farms have gotten larger and larger and when farms get that large it's very difficult for a new farmer to enter into it. It's just plain you cannot afford to do this. One of the benefits of managed grazing is it is the perfect inlet for beginning farmers. In Wisconsin we lose 500 dairy farmers a year. That's just dairy farmers. So, we really need to be looking at this not only as an ag industry but as a rural community and a consumer. It's important that they're there and that they stay. So, in addition to that 3,000-cow dairy or that 5,000 cow dairy we should also have 30 independent 100 cow dairies. The sustainability of our actual dairy industry takes all of them.

Andy Jaworski - And trying to understand how the ecosystem works naturally that's the measurement that we should be shooting for. You think about on the plains where we have great soil and a lot of organic matter and what grew that soil it, what made that soil, and what made all that organic matter was grass growing and then the animals grazing it. The role of the ruminant animal is to take low energy forage and convert it into a higher energy product like meat or milk. The free energy we can get is from the sun right. All this grass here that can absorb that sunlight, use a photosynthesis process it in grow forage and I think then that's where the call comes in that room in an animal can take that forage that's what she's built to do he's not built to digest grain she's built to digest forage eats a lot of it and converts it into meat and milk. So, they're storing energy you could almost think about the cows being a battery for energy and how we could store more energy on this or it's just with cows it's kind of an interesting thought. When you see the cattle out here as they get to fulfill their role on this earth and I think it's really important that versus the confinement lot where okay, well, we're just going to use you we're going to use you as a thing you're going to produce milk for us and that's all you are. I think you have to have a respect for what the animal is. I'm not just saying this to fluff for your film. It's I think it's part of what I really do believe here and why I'm doing what I'm doing. It feels good it feels right to farm this way.