



Episode 1,803: Small Farms, the State, the Market, and You

Guest: Max Kane

WOODS: I'm really, really interested in what you're doing. Can you start off by giving us a little bit of your background and maybe that part of your background that might have led you into the kind of work you're doing now?

KANE: Yeah. Well, I'm 43 now, and when I was 10 years old, I grew up in Chicago and started experiencing just horrific abdominal pain right around the age of 10. And it took them about a year and a half to diagnose me with Crohn's disease. And it was degenerative Crohn's disease, so I was really emaciated. I couldn't put on weight. And I went through all different kinds of medical therapies and treatments for about a decade. Nothing really worked. The medication was never really effective. I ended up having a surgery, and then after the surgery, it just kept getting worse. And then eventually, I made my way to this nutritional coach who ended up helping me change my diet. I mean, I grew up on the kind of the standard American diet of just fast food and processed food, and so I changed my diet and started getting fresh farm food from local farms.

And by changing my diet, my health just flourished. It totally turned around. It was literally a religious changing experience for me, literally. I just started believing different things about life. And I got healthy enough to the point where I didn't need to take medication anymore, and I've been off all medication for over 15 years now. And my health has just flourished. I put on over 50 pounds of healthy, athletic weight. So I was around 110 pounds, and now I'm closer to – I think I weigh 167. I'm in really good shape.

And so I became very active in the local food movement, because I was just literally inspired to get the word out, because there's so many sick people in the world. And I never knew that diet could be this powerful toward a person's health and longevity. And while I was supposed to, I guess, die early on medications, now I'm off medication and I'm continuing to live and get healthier and thrive and make memorable experiences with my loved ones and just have a life that I wouldn't have had if I continued eating the way I ate.

So as an activist in the local food movement, I started going around to different court rallies and just I got active with legislation and trying to help create laws that are more favorable to small farms. It's crazy out there, but the government is actually cracking down on small farms that want to sell their product direct, because they think it's unsafe for people to eat food direct from farms. On a side note, Michael Bednarik says hello –

WOODS: Oh, great.

KANE: And so does so does John Moody. These are two guys I met during my effort toward helping liberate small farms and healthy food. I spoke with both of them yesterday. They said to say hello to you.

WOODS: Oh, I love both of those guys. All right, all right, well, I knew you were in good company just from the base of the person who contacted me about having you on was familiar with work I've done, so I figured there was some overlap in our audiences. Well, this is all really great. I can understand if you had a story like yours, where your health is transformed that much, I would want to devote myself to that too, because who knows how many other people I might thereby help? Did you create Farm Match, the website?

KANE: Yeah, so as I get involved in the local food movement, I saw that small farms needed some kind of software technology to help expedite orders and payments and help get their food out into the marketplace. And so I kind of built – Farm Match, if you can imagine, it kind of decentralizes and makes all these small-scale farmers – it's like an online marketplace, where you can buy food direct from small scale farmers in your area. And we lost the website, and on September 11th, 2012. It just happened to be that's the date when we launched. It had nothing to do with the attack in New York on 9/11; it had nothing to do with that, it just happened to be that's when we launched in 2012, on September 11th.

And so we've been going for about eight years now, and the website has facilitated over 600,000 orders, where people have bought food from small-scale farms. And now we're in the process, we want to build out an application for delivery drivers, like this feature that would allow – I mean, most everyone's familiar with Uber Eats or DoorDash, or you can go on your smartphone and have a delivery driver bring your food from a restaurant to you without having to go to the restaurant. And we're kind of leveraging all these different people that want to help participate in the world and get you what you want, whether it's like Airbnb someone can rent out their room to you if you need a place for the night, and if someone's got a vehicle, they can help bring food to you from a small farm.

So right now we have all these small farms all across the country, and most people are unaware of this, but there's just tens of thousands of small farms that are making deliveries into the city already. And they have these drop location or pickup location food distribution models, where they go to all these different neighborhoods around the city, and you meet them at the pickup location and you get your food. And the thing is, with that distribution model, there's a huge positive benefit, which is that the farmer does not have to make all these home deliveries, so it helps them be really efficient with their time and the amount of fuel they buy and everything. And the buyers like that, because it helps the farmer keep the cost of food so it's affordable, so it helps keep the cost of food low. So the buyers like that as well.

So what's going on is this is something that's kind of naturally occurring right now, is when the buyers come to the pickup location, they pick up their order, and then other people who live in their neighborhood say, "Hey, by the way, can you pick up my order, too, and bring it back to my house because we live near each other?" And so there's a lot of people who want to order fresh food from these local farms that are making these deliveries, but for whatever reason, they can't quite make it to the specific location where they go to pick up their food in their neighborhood. Maybe they don't have a car. Maybe there's a conflict with their work schedule. There can be all different reasons, right? So why don't we build out this application that allows buyers that are already picking up their order from the pickup location to also

pick up orders for other people in their neighborhood, and then go expedite those home deliveries?

WOODS: This is really smart. I absolutely love this. So I'm looking at the website right now. It couldn't be simpler to use.

KANE: Yeah.

WOODS: This is obviously very much in the tradition of what's called Community Supported Agriculture, I assume?

KANE: Yeah, yeah.

WOODS: So the idea is, it's kind of twofold. I mean, number one, obviously, I as the consumer benefit because I'm getting fresh food and I know where it comes from and I know that they use good practices and this has many beneficial effects. But likewise, for them, it's helpful because there's a lot of uncertainty that goes along with farming, to say the least. I don't think I could handle all the stress of it, of all the things that could go wrong. And then you do have to have pretty big expense outlays certain times of the year, that then you make up later through sales. So it'd be nice to have people who are regular customers, who support you, so you have a built-in market. And so you help each other in this way.

KANE: Yeah. And in addition to that, there's two major issues in our food system that make the current food system model unhealthy and fragile. So first, let's address the fragile issue. We have these really long food chains that have all these dependencies in the middle. So from the producer to the person who's eating the food, there's all this unneeded bureaucracy and middlemen. And so we have all these dependencies, right?

And so we started seeing this when all the fear started hitting. The media just started spreading all this stuff about COVID-19, and people started panicking. And at that point, we saw how fragile our food system was, because grocery store shelves started becoming empty, people couldn't get food they wanted. So whenever there's any kind of crisis or whether it's a manufactured crisis or non-manufactured, our current food system, that model is fragile, and it does not sustain a public crisis or mass panic very, very well.

And so this kind of a food system where you're getting food directly and having these delivery drivers from people in your own neighborhood, it summons the power of a cooperative effort to help make food available, even in times of panic and crisis. So in an effective, tangible, it really addresses the fragile sense of our food system.

And then, in addition to that, the other problem it really addresses is the food system in general is really unhealthy. You see cancer and all these other dietary problems just increasing every year. And a lot of food that – I mean, the government, they say they're keeping us safe, but the FDA is legalizing all this food for sale that actually is unhealthy to eat and causes disease. But that doesn't seem to stop them.

But anyway, so a lot of the food in circulation, if you drive through any major city, there's just tons of junk food. There's all these convenience stores and gas stations and everyone's selling food, so when you're driving by and you're just hungry and you need a quick snack, like

a lot of that food is just really unhealthy to eat. And so this is going to also increase the availability of healthy, nutritious food that actually nourishes our body and doesn't cause disease.

WOODS: Well, so what kind of things would my, let's say, local farm be doing in terms of their agricultural practices that would make — it's not just that the food is fresher because it doesn't have to travel as long a distance. What kind of practices are they engaged in that make the food safer for me than other practices would?

KANE: Yeah, awesome question. So a lot of the big farms out in the world, I mean, they're very toxic. They're spraying chemicals and all kinds of pesticides and herbicides. And when we hear *pesticide*, a lot of us don't think, well, what does that mean? What does it do? But if you can imagine like a miniature like nuclear bomb that's supposed to kill the insects. So it's strong enough to kill this tiny little insect, right away, totally dead. But we're bigger, a lot of us maybe we weigh 120 pounds, 200 pounds. We're bigger creatures, so that that pesticide doesn't necessarily kill us dead right away instantly, like it does the insect. But what it does is it creates like a miniature death in our body.

So when we get bombarded with lots of pesticides and put that on our food, which is what a lot of the large-scale firms do to knock out the insects, I mean, it kind of like — there's no real way to measure this and it's kind of nebulous, which is why it's gone as far as it has, because it's not as black and white. I mean, I come up to you with a baseball bat and I hit you in the knee real hard, and your bone shatters and all of a sudden, three minutes later, you have a big huge bruise. I mean, it's obvious that happened because you got hit with the baseball bat, right?

But we have these weird things happening, or we're running fevers, we get these weird rashes on our body, our energy's low, and it's like, well, what's the cause of this? So when we're interacting with these pesticides and they come into our bodies, they create these symptoms that are kind of a little bit trickier to pinpoint, because the symptom might not show up instantly right away. Now, it actually does for some people, and probably biggest — this is probably what kind of goes to the vaccine argument, is some people get they get a vaccine, they die that day, so it's pretty evident that it's from the vaccine. But some people don't die right away from a vaccine.

So it's kind of like these miniature deaths that go on our body, the miniature poisoning that happens whether it's from pesticides or vaccines, sometimes it's a little bit trickier to prove than getting hit with a baseball bat, and so that's why it goes on long as it does. But the good news is that small-scale firms, some of them do use pesticides, but not many. So the good news is that when you're getting food from a small-scale local firm, not only is it going to be fresher, but it's not going to be raised with pesticides.

And if you're getting meat, the greater the likelihood is that that animal, whether it's a cow or a chicken, has been free to arrange and live its natural life, eating grass and interacting, getting sunlight, so that food is going to be a lot healthier for you than from a big farm, where maybe the animal was kept in confinement. Some animals never even get sunlight. They never get to go outside. And now in the food industry, they want to come up with what I would refer to would be an animal-less meat farm, where basically they're going to be raising meat in a test tube inside. And it's just like the quality standards keep decreasing and decreasing with these big farms.

And one of the other problems is, these big firms have now realized that, hey, this natural food, organic movement, without chemicals, without pesticides is gaining steam, and people are willing to pay more, because they're understanding the fact that diet does cause disease if you're getting chemicals in your diet. So they're trying to get in on that market. And what they do is they send these lobbyists to Washington, DC to try and lobby to make the organic standards more relaxed. So that, hey, we can call this thing organic, but we can still load it up with tons of pesticides, but still call it organic, because the new organic law allows you to do this. So these big food companies, a lot of the big farms and the big food companies are constantly lobbying Congress to try and relax organic standards. Their heart isn't in it. They don't really care about healthy food; they're just trying to make more money, but their heart isn't in it.

But so small-scale firms, their heart is in their work. They're farmers because they love the land and they love what they do. They're like an artist on their land, creating this really, really high quality food. So that's the benefit you just kind of asked about: what's the benefit of getting food from a small farm that's close to me? Besides that it's fresher food, it's going to have a lot less chemical residue than food from a big farm from far away.

WOODS: Right. Now, I'm curious about how you start something like this. There are many, many farms out there. And when I enter my zip code into your system, I get several hits that, I've lived here for years, I didn't know about any of them yet. So that's terrific. How did you find them all? Did they come to you, and how did they know to come to you?

KANE: How did the firm's know to come to FarmMatch?

WOODS: Yeah. I mean, it's like starting a Facebook. It doesn't really work if there are three people on it.

KANE: Yeah.

WOODS: So how do you get going?

KANE: So I've been going out to different farming conferences. But besides that, I've been really active in the local food movement for a long time. So I literally traveled – I ended up leaving Chicago and started focusing on my health. I traveled the country. I visited over 200 farms just to learn about food production. It was kind of like a self-directed food education course. And I would just drive in the country and show up on farms and say, hey, I'm trying to learn about food. I see you've got some cows and chickens out here. Can you teach me anything? And I'd be happy to work on the farm, so I traded my labor on a lot of farms for education. And so I created a great network of farmers just from doing that. But besides that, I went to conferences. And farmers talk amongst themselves as well. So when one of them gets on FarmMatch and starts having a good experience, they usually tell their neighbors about it.

WOODS: Okay, all right. So this has been up for eight years now. As I say, I just I just called up my own zip code and stuff's coming up. So I love this. I definitely want to recommend people check it out, Farmmatch.com. Now, other than the stuff you were talking about, about organic standards, are there aspects of the existing system, including the FDA or the

government in any way, that you think on net tend to benefit larger scale agriculture than smaller?

KANE: Oh, absolutely. I mean, if we could kind of open up a free market, small-scale firms would not these bigger companies out of the box. It wouldn't be like a non-competition. It would be like me boxing Mike Tyson or something like that. He would just like, one hit, and it would be over with, because a lot of these regulations, they make it hard for the small farms that are creating good, healthy food, and they make it hard for them to operate, and they favor these big food corporations and big farms that are creating this unhealthy food.

Now, we the idea of the government, right, there's this idea that the FDA is like looking out for our best interest and how keeping us safe and things like that. But that's not the case. That's not what happens in the real world. That's kind of like the imaginative idea. Where that idea comes, I'm not really sure, because I always thought people could make good decisions for themselves.

I mean, in this country, we're smart enough to sit on a jury and say whether or not someone should go to jail for the rest of their lives. We're smart enough to examine evidence on a jury. I'm smart enough to join the military and go mow someone over with machine gun fire. I'm smart enough to vote for someone that I think should be the president or the mayor or whoever. I'm smart enough to do all these things, but somehow the government calculates that when it comes to food, I'm too stupid to figure out what food is healthy for me, so they have to keep me safe by not allowing me to buy food from fresh local farms, because of the fear that's spread. They say it's unsafe, and you've got to have all these different sanitizing – you know, spend 150,000 on all this equipment just to make sure it's safe. I mean, people have been eating this way ever since the beginning of recorded history, but I guess in the past 50 years, all this food is dangerous now.

And that's the way they pitch it to us. A lot of us know that's not true. That's why we're fighting against it. We want a free market for food system, where I want to be able to get food from my local farmer and not have anyone in the middle of that, just like has been going on since the beginning of recorded history.

WOODS: Yeah, yeah, no kidding. I want to ask you something, if you don't mind, from before you did FarmMatch. I wonder if you could say something about you and raw milk?

KANE: Oh, yeah. Well, that's kind of where I got started, because when I went out to this farm, and I started drinking raw milk, that's where my health really started to just accelerate and blossom. And so I became very active in the raw milk movement. And oh, man, I've been to so many court hearings and rallies, it's kind of like a blur. But from my experience, I still consume raw milk. I get it from local farms. I have four children, and they all grew up on raw milk. And it's a staple part of our diet.

Interesting enough, raw milk has been the food that has actually allowed civilization to flourish, because as we settle somewhere in a new area, we need to figure out how do we feed ourselves. And having cows producing milk gave society that steady food supply for a long time to nourish us and feed us while we figured out how to build other infrastructure and society. But it was milking dairy animals, whether it's cows or – Genghis Khan used to milk their mares. They used to make this fermented milk out of the mare milk, this kind of Kefir offspring. If people are familiar with Kefir, it's kind of like a drinkable yogurt.

So getting back to my experience and raw milk, it's very safe. I've been consuming it for over 15 years, never got sick. I've interviewed over a thousand people that have that same testimony that have been consuming raw milk for a long time and had no problem. I just interviewed, I was out in Hudson, New York interviewing at Abby Rockefeller. This was a couple months back. She told me how she grew up on raw milk and her lineage grew up on raw milk. And they seem to be doing pretty well. And so that's my experience with raw milk, is it's just a great food. It's got tons of enzymes and benefits. I mean, I don't know if there's anything specific you have. I feel like I'm kind of rambling a little bit.

WOODS: Well, I was curious, mainly about run-ins with the authorities over this.

KANE: Sure. Oh, yeah. Okay, so, yeah, I had a run-in. So I had the FDA, they like to play puppeteer. The FDA, they like to play puppeteer. I don't know if they watched that cartoon *Pinocchio* from Disney, but so what the FDA and these other federal agencies like to do is, because they push money to the states, and so with that comes all the strings. So what they do when they have an agenda they want to push, a lot of times they like to hide behind the scene and go to the state agency and have the state try and enforce whatever the bidding is that they want done.

So I had the Department of Justice and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture come after me for getting raw milk from farms and helping distribute it, and they wanted me to answer all these questions. They kind of subpoenaed me, and they wanted to put me into a deposition where I would answer all these questions that would basically, they would use my testimony to go shut all these farms down that were selling raw milk. And so I didn't want to testify, because I thought farmers should be able to sell raw milk. And in addition to that, I'd kind of be shooting myself in the foot, because if they go lock up all my farmers, how am I supposed to eat, you know?

So the Wisconsin Department of Justice and Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, actually the correct acronym is called DATCP, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer protection. They subpoenaed me into court. And they said, well, if you don't testify, we're going to put you in jail for 18 months. And by statute, I guess the state statute gave them the authority to do that, totally in violation of the Constitution. But when do they listen to that document? So I refused, and I talked with my local sheriff. And as it turned out, my sheriff grew up on raw milk, and he was still drinking raw milk, and he was actually getting it from his neighbor illegally.

WOODS: [laughing] Okay, that's the kind of sheriff we want.

KANE: Yeah. And so I talked to my sheriff. And right at the time is when I met Michael Bednarik and I'm learning about the Constitution. I run into this other guy, Richard Mack, Sheriff Richard Mack, who's teaching me about the authority of the local sheriff. And so I'm talking with my sheriff and the sheriff says, "What do you want me to do? What do you want me to do, Max?" And I said, well, the bailiff in court is a sheriff's deputy, am I correct about that? "Yeah, yeah, that's my deputy, the bailiff in court." I said, Well, if the judge orders the bailiff to lock me up and take me away, I want you to be in court with me, and I want you to tell the bailiff to stand down. When the judge gives the order to lock me up, tell the bailiff to stand down.

Now, I live in a small town here. We've got about 4,000 people, and so you everyone kind of knows each other. We don't even have metal detectors to get into the courtroom, you know, so it's like we're in a small town. And so the sheriff says, "Wow, we're going to really have a lot to talk about in town when that happens." I said, well, hey, I just want what's right. And he says, "Well, here's what I'll do." He says, "I run the jail," and he says, "if they lock you up, once you get to the jail, I'll just open the cell and let you out." I said, Okay, well, that's a lot better than the other option, the other option of just sitting in the cell. So I said, okay, deal.

And so as it turns out, the court case, we lost in the trial court. We lost the appeal. I petitioned the state supreme court. The state supreme court refused to hear the petition, so the case got pushed back to the local trial court. And it was time for the department – in court, the plaintiff is usually moving the case. I'm not really required, I just sit and go along for the ride. So it was the state's turn to take action to call my questioning again, and they never did. They kind of disappeared. And I don't have proof of this, but something in my gut tells me that my sheriff called up the state and told them like, hey, just so you guys know, this isn't going to happen in my county, so you might as well not show up. That's what I think happened, because once the sheriff got involved, the state where they were pushing so hard, Tom, they were just pushing so hard to get my testimony, and then once the sheriff got involved, all of a sudden, the state just disappeared. They never showed up. And then so court kind of came to an end. It didn't go any farther. And that was back in 2009, so it was 11 years ago.

WOODS: Wow, so you've got some serious street cred having endured that.

KANE: [laughing] Yeah.

WOODS: Geez, holy cow. So you've been out there in this kind of cause for quite some time. Well, I love what you've done with FarmMatch, and I think I'm going to start using it myself. I did not know of its existence until a couple of days ago. And now I'm an instant convert, so tremendous work. Any parting words for my folks, before we wrap up today?

KANE: Oh, man. Yeah, absolutely. The parting words are that your diet is so closely related in governing your health. I want you to think of your diet as like the constitution of your health. And when you when you violate the constitution – your health is like your liberty and your diet is like kind of that constitution. When you start violating your diet, you're going to lose your liberty, your health. And most doctors in the world today, they just want to give you drugs and surgery. They don't tell you how profound food actually is toward recovering from disease. And so that's the final word I'd like to leave your listeners with, is that do not underestimate the power of fresh, healthy food from a local food source.

WOODS: All right, and FarmMatch.com is where to go check that out. I'll link to that also at TomWoods.com/1803. Well, thank you very much, Max, and continued good luck to you in this important work.

KANE: Yeah, you're welcome. Thank you as well, Tom. Keep up the great work.