

Katie Rose Seward ([00:00:10](#)):

My name is Katie Rose Seward. We're at Head Over Fields in Charlotte, Vermont. I've been farming here since 2021. My husband and I conserved the farm with the help of the previous owners, and we grow vegetables for our roadside farm stand, wholesale, local farmer's markets, and CSA.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:00:39](#)):

I'm your host, Andy Chamberlain, and I take you behind the scenes to learn how farmers are building their business in sustainable agriculture. These farmer-to-farmer interviews cover a wide range of topics from cropping systems, marketing channels, lifestyle decisions, and lessons learned along the way. This podcast is supported by the University of Vermont Extension and the Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association. It has funding from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets, as part of a specialty crop block grant. Unfortunately, the end of that grant funding is coming to a close soon. So if you enjoy the show and would like to help keep more episodes coming, please consider making a donation. Any amount is greatly appreciated and can be made on our website, thefarmersshare.com/support. Thank you.

([00:01:24](#)):

Today's episode comes to you from Charlotte, Vermont, where we visit with Katie Rose Seward of Head Over Fields Farm. Katie Rose has been farming for 10 years and half of those are here on her home farm. She sells organic veg from about five acres of production with several high tunnels through a retail farm stand, CSA wholesale, and farmer's markets. We start off with a winter tour of the farm after some fresh January snow, where she shares about growing winter greens, getting water on the farm, and growing in varying soil conditions across the sloping landscape. We then pull up a stool in the wash pack and talk about how she got into ag, the challenges of starting a diversified veg farm in the 2020s, and how friends and mentors helped her through the growing pains she experienced while building up this farm business. Thanks for listening and I hope you enjoy the show.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:02:22](#)):

Yeah, so our property line is basically our road. We own the two willow trees. The people who owned the farm before us, the snow has kept the old farmhouse and the dairy barn and 14 acres. And the road is basically the property line until where the prop house is and then it wraps back around. Their property, and we have some pasture, 30 acres of pasture and then another... Our property goes up to that tree line, but we own the barn and that was really the only piece of infrastructure here when we closed in 2021. We've done everything else. Our soil is super variable with really sandy, lovely stuff around here, and behind the shop and on that other side of those trees. But where the tunnels kind of are and further up, it all switches to Virgin's clay.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:03:36](#)):

Keeps it interesting for you.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:03:38](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. And even where it is sandy, everything is clay deposits, so it's like you realize how much clay is really in it when it's wet. Even though when it's dry, when it's bone dry, it's like, "Oh my gosh, this is sandy." I feel like learning the soil has probably been the hardest thing.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:04:04](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:04:05](#)):

And it's a work in progress.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:04:08](#)):

Right. Every season is a little different.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:04:13](#)):

Yeah.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:04:14](#)):

And you're trying to improve soils.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:04:15](#)):

For sure. We put up the other two of those tunnels this summer and just didn't seed enough of the ground around it. And seeing how muddy it was last week, I was like, "Oh my gosh. It's just a mess everywhere."

Andy Chamberlain ([00:04:33](#)):

What's the little booth?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:04:36](#)):

That holds tools. It used to sit on Church Street. Actually, a friend of Brian's from high school's dad, he grew up here in South Burlington, he went to South Burlington, and his dad owned a publishing company and they did brochures. So he actually built that and it used to go and sit on Church Street every summer. And then when we found it, it was sitting kind of all covered up near Barge Canal Market, because that's where they're doing the new truck stop. What's it called? The South End Get Down now. Yeah, they own that lot, so they needed to get it off the lot. And I don't know, I was fascinated to buy it, so we took it. We took it, and yeah, it's basically, we call it the field house, but it just holds hose and shovels.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:05:31](#)):

No, it's unique looking.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:05:36](#)):

So it's fully electric in there.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:05:38](#)):

Nice.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:05:38](#)):

We could easily turn it into something someday. Yeah, what do you want to know? What do you want to know, Andy? What do you want to see?

Andy Chamberlain ([00:05:46](#)):

What's in this tunnel?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:05:47](#)):

This is our prop house. Kind of been double dipping and growing in it a little bit. There's nothing in it right now, but my hope is this summer to have a late tomato crop in it. So we usually are finished with the bulk of our seating, I don't know, late July.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:06:12](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:06:13](#)):

So it'd be cool if by the end of July we could have a late round of tomatoes in here.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:06:19](#)):

It's a short tunnel.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:06:21](#)):

It is tiny. Yeah. It's 50-feet. It's not the greatest pad that it's sitting on and this corner definitely gets water in it, especially during those really heavy rain events or if we get rained when there's a lot of snow and ice on the ground. Someday I think that this location will be maybe a barn, just because of where it's located on the road and it has power. We have all the power running here and, I don't know, this just isn't really long term. It's also not perfectly sealed. I feel like I see people's propagation houses these days and they're tight. They're buttoned up tight and we just don't really have that.

([00:07:15](#)):

There wasn't a whole lot of soil to work with when we put this up, and so it kind of just got built at grade. And in hindsight, we should have built it up a little bit more, but it gets the job done and it's the right amount of space. It's not too much. This was a Rimol Rolling Thunder, and we bought it used from somebody that had already taken it down and just bought the ground stakes and put it up as a stationary tunnel.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:07:47](#)):

You got some nice views here.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:07:49](#)):

You got lucky with the weather.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:07:51](#)):

Yeah. Bluebird today.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:07:53](#)):

And just the snow, it looks pretty again. It really was like mud season here all last week. Wasn't fun walking in between the tunnels, because your boots are just carrying five to 10 pounds of extra weight and just mud. Yeah. This is, all of these tunnels have food in them. They're our biggest winter yet. Just finished season five and sales have been strong.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:08:24](#)):

That's good.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:08:25](#)):

And we joined the Burlington Winter Farmer's Market, which has been going well, but we re-covered everything. Tunnel four is not covered, because it's ready to be cleaned up, but mostly spinach and we picked pretty hard over the weekend. This chard actually made it. There's a bed here of chard. I didn't think I was going to survive. Hearing all the farmers that have been doing this for so long at the High Tunnel Conference talk about how they all had heaters coming on.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:09:03](#)):

Oh, yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:09:03](#)):

I was like, "What? I didn't know that we were all using heat."

Andy Chamberlain ([00:09:08](#)):

"Nobody told me that."

Katie Rose Seward ([00:09:09](#)):

Yeah.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:09:11](#)):

But they've been doing okay without the heat?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:09:14](#)):

Yeah, like I said, I was surprised that the chard made it. I actually got scared that the kale wasn't going to make it either, because we did plant half of it at the end of August, which I kind of think of as, historically has been kind of like that end last call for it to size up enough. But we've been pushing that, and so we did two beds two to four weeks later. I can't really remember, the end of September. And so, I thought that that stuff wasn't even going to make it at all. It looked so dead. Even when we uncovered it finally last week, when it broke above freezing, they looked so bad. And then by the day it was 40 degrees on Saturday, the tunnel looked completely different. Everything was happy again. I was blown away by how much.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:10:05](#)):

Well, sunlight goes a long ways.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:10:07](#)):

Yeah. And just how much of the leaves ended up being harvestable. This is mostly spinach again, parsley. Lettuce, yeah, we cleared the lettuce right before it got really cold in December, but usually I like to try to have it until the end of the year, at least for Christmas, but that didn't happen this year. So that's why I think lettuce was really one of the main things people were putting the heaters on for. We cleared bok choy. This week, I was really surprised by how that cropped it. It was Black Summer from Johnny's and I couldn't believe how much of it survived through the December cold. Do you want to see all of them?

Andy Chamberlain ([00:10:58](#)):

Yeah, sure.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:11:00](#)):

Cool.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:11:01](#)):
So you have four Ledgewoods?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:11:02](#)):
Four Ledgewoods, 30 by 96. These two went up this summer and they all got water this summer. That's what that shed is, is that we're like, "Finally we have a farm well." We've been watering off of this hydrant, which is our house well, and we've really been pushing the limits of what we should have been using. And during the drought this summer, we were getting really nervous about pressure, because once we had crops in these two, we still didn't have the new well fully hooked up and we were watering four tunnels off of a house well that's not suited for farming. But now we're not using it anymore and they all have hydrants.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:11:56](#)):
But at least you also have redundancy. You've got two wells close by in case some other pump dies or whatever.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:12:02](#)):
Yeah. And the farm well is 20 gallons a minute, 23 gallons, something like that. 18 gallons a minute. Suitable for the farm.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:12:14](#)):
Nice.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:12:15](#)):
This is all our kale. These are the two beds over here that were getting decimated by somebody eating them. They were just taking out the stalks and then they were just falling. So totally decimated.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:12:30](#)):
Mowing them down.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:12:31](#)):
And we did find a rat in here before we covered everything back up yesterday. Smells nice and kaley.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:12:41](#)):
Are you growing things between the tunnels?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:12:44](#)):
What do you mean?

Andy Chamberlain ([00:12:44](#)):
Like here? Or is this just-

Katie Rose Seward ([00:12:46](#)):

So no, this is, it's mostly drainage. We probably are going to take down the cat tunnel and reorient those fields to be the same, because the field between the end of these tunnels and the cat tunnel is just, the water just is going through it. The cat tunnel stays pretty... The soil is so nice there, and down there, but yeah, we need to kind of change the orientation. And we didn't seed anything here. We need to. I don't know what to seed. Should we just let it be sod? Should we seed clover?

(00:13:35):

I'm talking at the NOFA conference about cover crops with one of my extension agents who's also a CSA member and I was going to talk about it there and usually get people's advice. But this is all kind of mud. We didn't really put anything down and it's a mess. So this tunnel is mostly picked over. The tatsoi did not make it through December, but we were able to kind of clear the bok choy mostly. We just cleared the rest of this radicchio yesterday morning before everything froze again, but this is the first tunnel that we're going to clean up and flip and probably seed in early Feb. We do a spring CSA now that starts April, runs April, end of May for eight weeks.

Andy Chamberlain (00:14:30):

So if you'll seed this in February with greens?

Katie Rose Seward (00:14:34):

Yeah. We might start trays and then paper pot, but we'll also put some seed down. I usually like to do an early round of carrots and...

Andy Chamberlain (00:14:48):

Do those catch in the winter or do they just kind of sit for a while?

Katie Rose Seward (00:14:53):

Last year they sat and I didn't think they were ever going to Germany, and then they kind of did. But the past, the other two times I've tried it, we've gotten lucky with like warm weather and they need to be covered with row cover for a while. Iceberg lettuce didn't make it.

Andy Chamberlain (00:15:17):

These are all single poly?

Katie Rose Seward (00:15:20):

Yes. The prop house has double and a fan, a blower. These are all single. These two new ones have insect netting.

Andy Chamberlain (00:15:31):

Oh.

Katie Rose Seward (00:15:32):

It's kind of crazy you can't even see it.

Andy Chamberlain (00:15:33):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward (00:15:33):

So that's a big change for us. We need to figure out the doors and the vents before the summer, but none of the other tunnels are screened, and so I'm excited to do tunnel cukes, because yeah, we're pretty much just doing field cukes, but it's not... Yeah, we don't have ridge fence on the first two, though we do have a frame there so we could put one in. And I kind of forgot that we put them all in so that we could have them open during the winter, and it was after the High Tunnel Conference that I was like, "Oh my God, we need to open the vents." And so, we also went into this winter and December with our covers being way too wet, especially in the kale tunnel, so...

Andy Chamberlain (00:16:31):

Does that one fan help move the air and keep humidity down? Is that your intent with that circulation fan?

Katie Rose Seward (00:16:43):

I think it was less about the humidity and more just about airflow and just seeing what other people were doing, but we have had them running. We run them all the time, including in the summer. And then that was another interesting fact to learn at the conference, that if all these sides are actually open though, then they're actually working against each other, the lateral airflow and the horizontal. So I don't really know. Maybe we'll unplug them for the summer, but I think in the winter it's really important. Especially when the weather is teetering on 32 degrees and we need to harvest, it just helps things thaw faster.

Andy Chamberlain (00:17:26):

Move the air around.

Katie Rose Seward (00:17:27):

Exactly.

Andy Chamberlain (00:17:28):

Less stagnant.

Katie Rose Seward (00:17:29):

Exactly. So we're not opening any sides in the winter.

Andy Chamberlain (00:17:33):

Right.

Katie Rose Seward (00:17:36):

The cat tunnel is kind of empty. We picked it clean. Our garlic is now in a field right on the right of that. You could totally see it last week. Something we're struggling with in our soil with our garlic is, it's the soil-borne pathogen that... What is it called? Ground rot turns the peels pink almost and they get slimy, and then it was so wet last spring. So wet. The crops looked beautiful until when we got to when it was harvesting time and we had quite a bit of loss and it's been kind of chasing us. We rotate. We had it down here where it's super sandy this summer and it was the worst so far. So I didn't save any of our seed. I bought all new seed. So you can even see this corner of this tunnel gets wet.

Andy Chamberlain (00:18:40):

Drainage is a challenge. So you say you don't have much in here at the moment?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:18:44](#)):

We had lettuce.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:18:44](#)):

It has been picked.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:18:45](#)):

And it was mostly lettuce. Actually, there is some spinach that I paper potted at the end, like right... I don't know that it's going to survive. The scallions probably will, but yeah, I think we need to just take this down and move it. I'm not really sure that we're going to have a lot of success getting it back up, because it was a pain in the ass to build as is. And it has gotten so warped even just in a few years that you can see, especially when you're up higher on the property, you can just tell that it's getting...

Andy Chamberlain ([00:19:27](#)):

You think the bows have been bent? Or...

Katie Rose Seward ([00:19:29](#)):

I don't know. I think that the ridge-pole would be really annoying to get back together.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:19:37](#)):

Bolted to each bow?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:19:39](#)):

Not to the bows if they have these.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:19:42](#)):

Oh, just clamps?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:19:42](#)):

Yeah. I also don't know that I would buy the gothic of these again, because I feel like the ropes just destroy the plastic.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:19:52](#)):

Oh, interesting. But you think-

Katie Rose Seward ([00:19:54](#)):

Which wouldn't happen in my imagination. It wouldn't be as severe on just a hoop, because it doesn't have that pressure point.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:20:04](#)):

The point, the peak of-

Katie Rose Seward ([00:20:05](#)):

Yeah.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:20:06](#)):

I see.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:20:07](#)):

We also haven't... I mean, I got it, because I was like, "Okay, snow load, we need it," but we haven't really needed it the past five years. And there's something nice about being able to put the plastic up for the winter.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:20:23](#)):

Oh.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:20:26](#)):

I think we're done with the big tunnels for a while, but I can see a use for these smaller cat tunnels, especially because you can put the plastic up easily for the winter and let the salts... We're having salt build up already, you could see it.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:20:45](#)):

Really?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:20:46](#)):

And I think it has to do with just the clay beneath everything, because it's not like we've been here for that long.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:20:56](#)):

Right.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:20:56](#)):

So...

Andy Chamberlain ([00:20:58](#)):

Are you heavy-handed on the fertilizer?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:21:01](#)):

I mean, we're following the recommendations from Becky.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:21:05](#)):

Like you said, certain points of the soil just doesn't drain.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:21:09](#)):

Yeah.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:21:09](#)):

And then it's covered under a cat tunnel or something and it sits. Yeah. So you like-

Katie Rose Seward ([00:21:17](#)):

But this, you can't really see it now, but there's just holes all along the plastic and... Maybe we put the rope on wrong, but it's unavoidable. It's just rubbing right against that peak.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:21:30](#)):
So this is four or five years old?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:21:33](#)):
Maybe three.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:21:34](#)):
Oh, wow. So that's disheartening to have holes in it in year three.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:21:39](#)):
Yeah. I was nervous that we were going to have to replace it this past summer. Also, the way that the holes are, they're not easy to repair.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:21:52](#)):
Of course.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:21:53](#)):
And it's so rare.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:21:56](#)):
At the peak, under the rope.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:21:57](#)):
Yeah, that it's dry, first of all, like that spot, because you really need the plastic to be dry to even get the tape to work. Yeah. So yeah, I don't know. It was so affordable. The Farmers Friend ones, that money, they make such a difference and they're so much more affordable than these Ledgewoods.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:22:16](#)):
Yeah, they're a lot cheaper than a full on high tunnel, but comes with some maintenance costs, I guess, too, so...

Katie Rose Seward ([00:22:22](#)):
Yeah.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:22:23](#)):
But you like growing in them primarily summertime if you're going to consider rolling up the plastic for the winter.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:22:30](#)):
Yeah. No, it makes a huge difference in the summer.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:22:34](#)):

Would you pull that plastic right down in April once the snow is looking done for the season?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:22:37](#)):

I think so. Yeah.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:22:39](#)):

Yeah. Get it warmed up and go.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:22:39](#)):

Exactly.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:22:40](#)):

That's an interesting thought.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:22:41](#)):

Yeah. Did you go to the tour at the High Tunnel Conference?

Andy Chamberlain ([00:22:44](#)):

Yes.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:22:45](#)):

Yeah. I thought that was really cool that was Edgewater, right?

Andy Chamberlain ([00:22:49](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:22:49](#)):

They were saying they've just invested in these smaller hoop style tunnels for just tomatoes because of that primary reason. They are just using them for this one crop and they are able to put the plastic up and they're able to avoid these issues that other people are dealing with when you are just using the growing space over and over and over again for the same disease-prone crops. This is our new farm well, and we built this shed this summer. We didn't build it, but we dug a foundation around it and put the foam board in. And I don't know if I'm going to be able to get this open, but we have an electric baseboard heater in there too, to make sure that we can use it.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:23:41](#)):

So you've got a pressure tank in there?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:23:43](#)):

Yeah, the NRCS paid for it.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:23:45](#)):

Oh, wow.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:23:46](#)):

Well, they didn't pay for all of it, but it was part of our grant. It's actually wall mounted too, so it's small.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:23:55](#)):

Interesting.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:23:57](#)):

Yeah. And I forget the gallons per minute. It's 18 to 20, I think. Whereas our house well is not even two. So we've really been-

Andy Chamberlain ([00:24:08](#)):

Is your house well deep?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:24:09](#)):

600-feet. This is 120.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:24:13](#)):

Only a few 100 feet away. Oh, man.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:24:16](#)):

So when we drilled that one, thinking it would be fit the farm and it wasn't, we were like, "Okay, let's make this a house well, because we need a well for our house anyway." That's why it's stupidly far from our house. But the soil is so different down here. We have neighbors with really significant gravel wells. So we talked to our geologists and we were trying to gain the system and figure out where the best place to drill is. And honestly, we just got lucky with this location, but it was worth it. We waited a whole year before having the drillers come back again, because we were in over our heads with one well. They're not cheap. And even though the NRCS was helping, none of that money comes through until the whole thing is done anyway.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:25:07](#)):

Right. What program did NRCS use to pay for that?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:25:13](#)):

It was AMA, and it's not common for them to do wells. And I don't know that they have it anymore, or... I honestly don't even know how we got it done. It felt sneaky and it felt like it's not common.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:25:36](#)):

Who's your planner?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:25:37](#)):

Johan.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:25:37](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:25:38](#)):

He's wonderful.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:25:39](#)):

He knows how to pull some strings.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:25:40](#)):

Yes. Yes.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:25:42](#)):

Interesting.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:25:42](#)):

We've been having, since the first few years we were getting tossed around and there was a lot of turnover, but ever since I've had Johan, he has just been really wonderful and our relationship has been really strong with the NRCS. It sucked finishing this as the government was shut down this fall, but we're paid for it now and it's all... We're all ready to go.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:26:08](#)):

So did that cover the well itself or the little house or all of that?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:26:11](#)):

So the well, they actually paid for. They gave us money for the well after that was drilled, and we did that spring of 2024. But we didn't do all the groundwork to get it plumbed up to the tunnels until July of 2025 when we had the excavator here doing the pads for the tunnels. That's a good question, because we had micro irrigation in either EQIP or AMA, I'm blanking, so that was part of it too, and it just made sense to do those things together when we were putting up, because the contracts were three years. I don't know, things kind of shook out the way they did just because we had our house project delaying other things as well. But as of now, the project is done and it didn't cover the shed. We had to pay for that. But it covered a portion of the well drilling, it covered the micro irrigation inside the tunnels. It didn't cover the groundwork.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:27:31](#)):

Right. Still beneficial.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:27:32](#)):

It was a huge undertaking, and that's why it took us two years after drilling the well to actually get it done, because there was a lot that fell on us. But because it's a pretty shallow well, because if it was 600-feet, they only reimbursed up to a certain depth, and we would have had to make a call about whether or not to keep going. So because that one was shallow, we were like, "Okay, that's helpful, but-"

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:28:04]

Katie Rose Seward ([00:28:03](#)):

You're like, okay, that's helpful.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:28:03](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:28:03](#)):

But all in all, I think we were probably on the hook for more than half of the project in the end.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:28:08](#)):

Yeah, yeah, yeah. But still, to have them cover drilling is huge.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:28:14](#)):

Yeah. Schlepping water around on wagons is not fun, and I'm ready to be done with that.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:28:24](#)):

I wonder if you got written into that due to a resource concern. That was like a buzzword that I learned.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:28:30](#)):

Yeah. It's all about how you phrase it. For sure, I think it was because we were so new. And...

Andy Chamberlain ([00:28:37](#)):

You don't have any other around here to pull from.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:28:39](#)):

... we didn't have any other water. Yeah. And Johan just knew where to go for it. Yeah, the challenge now, something we didn't do, which was a total stupid move on our end, was when we put the road in and we had our wetland permit for this culvert here, because this is like an intermittent stream. We should have sunk a water line and put risers on either side of the road, and we didn't do that. So I still am like filling a tank.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:29:15](#)):

So you have no water on this side?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:29:17](#)):

No, and this is like our prop house.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:29:18](#)):

Oh, jeez.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:29:18](#)):

We're watering out of a tank in there that we fill. We have a well down at the shop. We had an old one there and we put in a new one. But still it's limited, and this is going to be the annoying part now, is like we'll have water for everything down there. So I think that we'll actually start using that side and those fields down there so much more. Because here we don't have water, and watering these fields is like so much more of a chore. But these are our oldest fields and our most established and like-

Andy Chamberlain ([00:29:56](#)):

And the sandier, so they really need the water.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:29:59](#)):

And both of these areas down here are sandy.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:30:03](#)):

So, [inaudible 00:30:04].

Katie Rose Seward ([00:30:03](#)):

And we're kind of standing on the line. The first two tunnels are heavier than the newer two. Yeah, it keeps me on my toes.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:30:15](#)):

Well, it's wild. Like you said, there's a line between the heavy soils and the... And then it's just across that line, the well and water difference too.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:30:25](#)):

For sure.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:30:25](#)):

Vermont's wild like that.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:30:27](#)):

It is.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:30:28](#)):

It's so variable, a few hundred feet is a big difference.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:30:31](#)):

Some of these sandier fields are still really, really rocky, some of them aren't. This is a big field. We haven't even... We've been growing in these beds right here, but we've barely grown anything, because we're just trying to reestablish. The weeds are really bad. And in the middle, kind of where it kind of raises up, that is just always wet. It's almost like there's a channel that just dumps out in the middle of that field. And I'm like, okay, would this be a good place for a pond? It feels like we're never going to be able... I got lucky with cover crop this fall because it was so dry and I was able to get a pretty good stand. Half of it's peas and oats and half of it's rye, but when it's time to lay beds, that one area, it's just never good when the tractor is near it. So just don't ever see that being resolved. So yeah, I don't know. Our fields, they've been changing every year.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:31:38](#)):

So how much growing space are you utilizing now?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:31:42](#)):

I think we have like five in fields, but not all of that is in edge throughout the season. Maybe like three. Is in veg, and one to two is in cover or fallow.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:32:07](#)):

But then that other field, if the conditions are right, you could bring in... You said that was a 13 acre field?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:32:16](#)):

Where? So no, no. That field is probably like two acres.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:32:26](#)):

Oh.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:32:26](#)):

Past the prop house, it's like so heavy. I don't think we will be cultivating. There's also three big fields between the high tunnels and our house that you can't see. But they're... We have a [inaudible 00:32:41].

Andy Chamberlain ([00:32:40](#)):

You've got a lot of space.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:32:41](#)):

Yeah, we do. And...

Andy Chamberlain ([00:32:43](#)):

And space to grow if you want to, more.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:32:45](#)):

... now that we have water down there, that area is so dry. The soil's so nice, but nothing would have grown in there in this summer, because it was too dry.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:32:56](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:32:57](#)):

So this bigger field and the bigger fields between the tunnels in our house, they're probably just going to be in rotations of cover and maybe have our winter squash, like our bigger blocks. But most of what we do is quick greens, and just this soil is all so much better. So like this field and on the other side of the trees is definitely where we do most of our veg .and the tunnels, of course. But short beds, there's something about the bigger fields that also just are like, the beds are too long, intimidating.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:33:33](#)):

I really like the layout of your farm. I think it has character. It's big enough space. You can get a real nice series of beds and like you're not fragmented too bad, but you also have some diversity so you can... Just different opportunities to get in at different times, and Little winding road just is, like, yeah, that's nice.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:33:57](#)):

I like it too. I think we've done a good job of kind of laying it out. And I agree, diversity, it's a good thing, especially with how crazy the weather's getting.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:34:10](#)):

It can make planting a little trickier sometimes. It's like, "Oh, nothing ever goes good here." These crops don't like that, but...

Katie Rose Seward ([00:34:19](#)):

Yeah. I think water and being either delayed, getting into the fields, or the season finishing early because it gets too wet early. That's why we've invested in the tunnels, and so together, I think we're in good shape, but water is definitely access to it and then also like how to deal with it and where it wants to go, I think are our biggest challenges. Someday we need to fix up this building. It needs a new roof really bad. And it'd be nice to like be able to heat the whole place. The windows are all really old, single pane.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:35:09](#)):

What was this building before?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:35:11](#)):

The people that owned it prior to us, they weren't farmers, so they were just using it for storage. But before them, it was part of the Claflin dairy, this land and like it was 400 acres. That farm over there, which is now my friend Owen's, that road is called Claflin Farm Road. They were dairy and then this was like a case parts shop. So they did tractor work in here and all of the cubbies, those held the parts that we have in our farm stand. Yeah. I would have loved to see it back in the day. We had somebody come in once and he was like, "I remember coming here with my dad." But yeah, there's not that many photos that are like...

Andy Chamberlain ([00:36:10](#)):

It's a garage. People don't take pictures of a garage very often.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:36:12](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. So this is where we wash, obviously. We put in this heater last year. There used to be like a giant furnace taking up so much space, so we upgraded that to propane and freed up a lot of space. We got this sink from [inaudible 00:36:34] from Burlington High School.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:36:36](#)):

That's huge.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:36:37](#)):

It is. Somehow we fit it in our van, but they were like, "Free sink," because the building was like condemned. "Has to go today." And Brian and I were like, "We're just getting in the car, we're going." I think this much of it was hanging out the back of the van. It was insane. And it's not without its issues. One or two of these seals doesn't always hook, they're not drained because our drain pipe is frozen. We discovered that early, at the end of last week.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:37:13](#)):

Oh, man.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:37:14](#)):

So that's why we have our bulk tanks in here. This is all like an outdoor wash station in the summer. So we usually just wash greens in here and we try not to wash things that are too dirty in here. So we do

carrots and spray table things out there, and bunches. Things that need to be like shaken off, we try to do outside. But the drain pipes are frozen, so we can't use the sink. So we're using these. And then we just like Put this-

Andy Chamberlain ([00:37:44](#)):

Ice in the driveway?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:37:46](#)):

Basically, yeah. Put this on the thing and drain it. I've been like destroying our rock on the driveway, but it's better than all of it flowing right back in here. There is a drain under the tractor, but we don't really know where it goes. And so it feels weird to be just knowingly using it for water, but I think we need to do some investigation. I want to get somebody with a camera out and try and figure out where it is going. And if it's-

Andy Chamberlain ([00:38:22](#)):

Yeah, you're dumping pretty clean water down it, so it's not too concerning, but yeah, you don't know where it's dumping.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:38:27](#)):

I was filling one of the tanks one day, and I didn't have the bottom sealed. And usually they fill like 275 gallons in like 23 minutes. I come down here at 23 minutes, the thing wasn't sealed, the water is like just starting to back up, but I turned it off and then it all went down the drain. So it was fine.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:38:52](#)):

It's a working drain.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:38:53](#)):

Yeah, but I don't-

Andy Chamberlain ([00:38:54](#)):

Some across the road or something, I don't know.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:38:58](#)):

Hopefully we'll find out eventually. And then there is an upstairs. The whole footprint of this building has a second floor, which we can only access by ladder. So that's like a big storage, missed opportunity. I mean, we have a bunch of shit up there, but getting things down, it's like a multi-person project, and you can't really store heavy stuff up there. But someday if and when we can replace... We can't invest in the building until we get a new roof. So that's kind of the limiting factor, but ultimately we'd love to be able to be in year round. Like have the farm stand kind of be open year round, we're doing self-serve via this shed, which is a walk-in cooler. That's going really well. But yeah, the building needs to be fixed up, the walls need to be fixed up. There's mice that live...

Andy Chamberlain ([00:39:59](#)):

Is the roof leaking?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:40:00](#)):

Yeah. There's like a bunch of buckets up there on these crazy storms. We even have... There's like stains on the wall in the farm stand where it comes through sometimes. It's that's awkward. And just like having mice get into like product that's on the shelf, that also sucks. And yeah, the building just needs to be fixed. But I don't know when we'll be able to do that. Maybe year 10, in five years.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:40:35](#)):

A lot can happen in five years.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:40:38](#)):

Yeah. I feel like we've kind of spent the last five years focused on really just growing the farm to a point where I am ready to stop growing the farm, and now I just want to master what we're doing and then hopefully in five years be able to like invest in this building.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:40:59](#)):

Yep. How'd you get started, farming?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:41:02](#)):

I studied animal behavior in college and environmental sciences, thinking I wanted to be a vet,. But after school I got into conservation on Long Island, specifically water quality, and my employer at the time was kind of always beating up on agriculture and just like all of agriculture. Farmers were polluters, and because we were protecting water quality, what they did was against what we did, and I hated that.

([00:41:45](#)):

As a young environmentalist, I was like, "This doesn't make sense. I can protect the environment and like appreciate good food at the same time. And everybody has to eat. We can't just beat up on the people that are growing our food." So that sort of motivated me to really learn about ag and sustainable ag. So I was working on the east end of Long Island, and there's a really rich ag and really old ag community out there. And so as my job with the nonprofit was coming to an end, I applied to every apprenticeship program out there and went to one at a place called Amber Waves Farm in Amagansett. And what's cool about their apprenticeship program is they're paying you instead of you paying them. And they teach you. There's an educational element. Every week you sit down and there's a topic and it kind of follows the flow of the season.

([00:42:50](#)):

And so I knew by July of that first summer that this was something I wanted to do more of. And I stayed there for three years before moving to Vermont. My husband is from here, grew up here, so we were just buying our time in New York until we were ready to move to Vermont. But we started looking for land kind of in 2015, that year I started farming, and we didn't close on this farm until 2021, but we moved to Vermont in 2018, and I managed a couple different farms around here between moving here and buying this place. But our first season here, we opened the farmstand in July of 2021, and yeah, I knew early on that first year that this was what I wanted to do. But I stumbled into farming kind of by way of environmental conservation, and really that experience.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:44:05](#)):

That's interesting.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:44:06](#)):

Yeah.

Andy Chamberlain (00:44:08):

And water quality is such a topic in Vermont right now.

Katie Rose Seward (00:44:14):

Yes. Yeah, and in Long Island, they get all their water from an aquifer. They don't get their water from where the New York City does or where Upstate does. They're literally sitting on top of their drinking water. And there are many super fun sites on Long Island. Suffolk County has some of the highest breast cancer rates in the country. These things are connected obviously. And so yeah, everything that you do on the surface is going to impact your drinking water if you're sitting on top of it. And yeah, it was really a really sensitive topic to be involved in. And everything's connected, and yeah, of course in Vermont we're talking about it a lot too, especially with being so close to the lake. And just there are a lot more like cases of farms and neighbors, and there's a dairy that's been in and out of litigation because of pollution and like... There's a real confrontation between agriculture and the environment.

(00:45:37):

And it's uneasy to talk about sometimes and it does feel awkward, but we're just out here trying to do it in the best way possible and do it in a way that like allows it to keep happening on this land in the future. One of the arguments of my previous employer about farmers was that nobody was even growing food anymore. Everybody was doing agritourism and the place that I was at in Long Island is unique. It is where like the Hamptons are, it is a big vacation town, but so much of that is also true of Vermont

(00:46:28):

And the similarities, it's just all connected. And I just think about that experience so much. And really that experience shaped like so much about how I view farmers, and just people that are doing this work. And it's funny to think about, because I feel like we are heading in the direction of like wanting to do more agritourism and like start to get more people on the land. Because ultimately that benefits our work of growing food, and it's just all about education, I guess.

Andy Chamberlain (00:47:05):

Right, right.

Katie Rose Seward (00:47:06):

But yeah, that's how I got into farming, and just think about that internal debate a lot.

Andy Chamberlain (00:47:11):

So do you find yourself battling with that, or were you always like, "No, farmers have the right intention," and you kind of wanted to prove that?

Katie Rose Seward (00:47:22):

Yeah. I don't know that all farmers have the right intention, but I think most of us do, and especially the people that have been in my circles and my community, Vermont as well, and New England, and the Northeast. I just think that there are so many of us that are doing right by it. And if we're not doing it right, we're talking pretty openly about the things that need to change. So I don't think anybody, organic or not, I don't think anybody would be like, "I'm doing everything 100% perfectly." It's not possible.

Andy Chamberlain (00:48:15):

There's a balance between idealism and practicality, and you got to draw the line someplace.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:48:23](#)):

Right. Right.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:48:26](#)):

And farming is inherently destructive. Like you were working with the land. Ideally land is untouched, that's the most ecological thing to do. But if you're trying to get something from it, like you have to work it at some point.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:48:42](#)):

For sure. You just can't dwell on the hard parts too much.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:48:51](#)):

Are there things that you see on your farm that are nagging you that you really want to change, but has been difficult from an ecological point of view?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:49:06](#)):

That's a good question. So we obviously have way more land than we need for our vegetable operation. The farm is 76 acres, and I have what, five in vegetable production. And then we have 30 acres of fenced in pasture, which we now have had our friend, Dylan has had his cows out there for the past couple years. Prior to that, animals hadn't been on the land for over five years, so that felt like a good step in the right direction, getting animals back on the land, even though we're not in a place or maybe we'll ever be in a place where we're ready to have that venture. Who knows?

([00:49:56](#)):

But the hay fields, they haven't been being hayed. And so that feels like a bummer or like the fields have been... We've had such wet years and the people that used to do it don't want to do it, nothing's being applied to the soil anymore, the soil's super wet, and it's just been driven on in bad conditions, and so now it's really bumpy, and it's like to find the right time to like invest in improving the fields, there's not enough out there for it to be worth it. So like the dairy farmer that used to do it, he just doesn't want to anymore.

([00:50:43](#)):

So the hay fields haven't been hayed in a few years. Last year we got, I don't know how many acres, but a portion of it cut, because we were having an event, and I don't know, I talked to the right people at the right time, and we got the raised areas around the snows and around our house done. So it looked nice, but then we'd be at the top of Philo and you'd see, it just didn't... It feels like something that like since we've owned the farm, the haying hasn't been happening, and like that doesn't feel good. And I feel like we don't know how to fix that right now, and what we're leaning towards is like putting more of it in fence, so that we...

([00:51:39](#)):

Dylan did put more fence around like the 10 acre hay field that was past the pasture. So the cows have been grazing that the past two summers, but I don't feel like we're going to be investing in haying equipment anytime soon. It just doesn't make sense for us. Brush hogging it seems silly and like a waste of fuel, maybe. Yeah, I don't know, that...

Andy Chamberlain ([00:52:11](#)):

That doesn't [inaudible 00:52:12].

Katie Rose Seward ([00:52:12](#)):

I guess I forget what your question was, but I feel like that is the part that we're letting slip, and it's because I'm not an animal.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:52:21](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:52:21](#)):

I'm not-

Andy Chamberlain ([00:52:22](#)):

Yeah, you're not utilizing the space, and therefore it's getting neglected, and the weeds will come up and the grass quality goes down and-

Katie Rose Seward ([00:52:29](#)):

Exactly.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:52:29](#)):

Right.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:52:30](#)):

So we just want to keep building this relationship with people that do want to have animals on the land, and just making sure that the majority of the farm is being used to regenerate the soil, I guess. And then fixing up the building before it gets any worse, feels like our next big project in a couple years.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:52:59](#)):

Are there things from a water quality perspective that you wish you were doing or trying to do more of?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:53:09](#)):

I think cover cropping, we're finally getting in a good spot with that. The first few years, because there was just so much earth moving happening, I felt like erosion, like we were not doing enough to mitigate erosion. And seeing my sandy soils running off the fields during those heavy rain events, it breaks your heart sometimes.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:53:38](#)):

"Stop."

Katie Rose Seward ([00:53:39](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. But I think we've gotten to a place now where we have enough room to work with, that our fields aren't sitting uncovered for too long. And in terms of... I don't feel like we're actively polluting the water. We just need to reorient our fields to make sure that we're reducing erosion of our best soils.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:54:13](#)):

What-

Katie Rose Seward ([00:54:13](#)):

It's so weird because our best soils and our most valuable soils are at the lowest part of our farm, where all the water has to go. And any sort of disruption, even if it's just like where we're driving, because we drive the same path every day, and now the places where we drive just almost look like there's no thing growing there. But yeah, I think we just need to like keep figuring out how to farm around where the water wants to go, instead of farming through.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:54:57](#)):

Are you primarily plastic culture?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:54:59](#)):

No, we didn't do any plastic this year.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:55:01](#)):

No, wow.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:55:02](#)):

Mostly all beer beds. Every once in a while we do onions and plastic. We did bear beds this year and the ones in this handy stuff, we had a pretty good crop, but the ones in the heavier soil, like nothing. [inaudible 00:55:23] size up at all. Got too weedy. Weeding the clay is just so annoying. You can't use hand tools, and even hand weeding, it's like you cannot always get the whole root out. It just, once it starts to dry... So yeah, learning what we can grow in certain fields is an active process as well. I won't be putting onions in our heavier soil again. Any root crops really. I think the carrots would do okay, I've had success with them in clay on other farms. But again...

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [00:56:04]

Katie Rose Seward ([00:56:03](#)):

I've had success with them in clay on other farms. But again, then you create more work for yourself when the harvest comes along. We have a plastic mulch layer. I use it to shape beds. We've done winter squash in plastic. I hate plastic. I don't want to be a plastic culture farmer, but I kind of feel like we have to use it for our winter squash and onions again this year. But we try to do majority of stuff without it.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:56:34](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:56:36](#)):

We use tarps to prep anything that we direct seed and also our lettuces, which we're just planting every two weeks.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:56:47](#)):

A lot of greens.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:56:49](#)):

Yeah.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:56:49](#)):

How much of your land we'll say is in short-term crops versus full season crops?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:57:00](#)):

Oh, that's a really good question. I have no idea.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:57:02](#)):

Like 50/50?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:57:03](#)):

Yeah, probably.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:57:05](#)):

That's a lot.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:57:09](#)):

We do a lot of lettuce, a lot of greens. And we don't really have irrigation, so all of that, we really kind of rely on rain for our direct seeded crops. So, this past season, we didn't have as much of that stuff in August, especially. Yeah, August and September was really annoying with watering and we didn't have usual things that we direct seed. But we grow a lot of short season crops. And for our longer stuff, we generally are only doing one succession. The exception would be cucurbits, which we do multiple successions of. Trying to get to the two successions with tomatoes, but we haven't really gotten there. But we only do one of winter squash, onions, eggplant peppers.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:58:18](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:58:21](#)):

But we are a primarily market, direct to consumer farm, so variety is really key to our success as a farm stand, I think.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:58:36](#)):

How much of your business is retail out of the farm stand versus your farmer's market? Do you do CSA too or no?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:58:46](#)):

I do CSA.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:58:46](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:58:47](#)):

I have three seasons, CSA, spring, summer, fall. Spring is now the most popular. We had 35 in the spring last year. That was the first year we did it for eight weeks. I'd love to be at 50. And then we're around the same number for summer and then small. The fall is always a little bit less. But I'd love to be at 50 for all

three of those seasons. I feel like CSA, it's not as popular as it once was. Maybe it was already trending that way even before we started our farm, but just...

Andy Chamberlain ([00:59:29](#)):

Has your numbers gone down?

Katie Rose Seward ([00:59:30](#)):

I feel like COVID, it kind of blew up again, but then it's not. People, I don't know.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:59:41](#)):

Went back to the grocery store.

Katie Rose Seward ([00:59:42](#)):

Yeah. Or they just like... They want more flexibility than the box gives them, I think. It's like people still come and shop with us, but they'd rather do that than get the box every week that we pick out for them.

Andy Chamberlain ([00:59:56](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:00:00](#)):

Yeah. I think I'd like to eventually not do the CSA.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:00:02](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:00:06](#)):

But also, I think conceptually, I just really appreciate what it is. And because we are very much diversified and kind of throwing a lot into the fields every year and just seeing what works and what doesn't, the CSA really is the one outlet that gives us so much more room in terms of dispersal-

Andy Chamberlain ([01:00:32](#)):

Ah, that's true.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:00:34](#)):

... than the other things do, like than wholesale does and/or retail. People want what they want. So, when you have a bumper crop of something random like kohlrabi, it's really nice to have the CSA for that.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:00:53](#)):

Great. Six kohlrabis this week.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:00:55](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:01:00](#)):

No, that's a good point though. It's true that the different customer base has different desires or needs or opportunities to move material.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:01:10](#)):

Yeah.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:01:11](#)):

Goods.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:01:13](#)):

But I've also gotten good at knowing what we're not going to grow because somebody else does a really good job at it. I was duped into trying potatoes and sweet potatoes the first couple of years because of how sandy our soil is. And without irrigation, potatoes were robust. Even though the plants looked so good and we had success filling them and sweet potatoes, same thing. It was like the plants looked really good. We had success, but the labor, we're just not set up for that with labor and/or water. So, we don't do those anymore because we can get them from people that are really, really good at growing them. And so we do that with potatoes and sweet potatoes. And we don't really mess around with too many of the brassicas like cauliflower and broccoli because we're just not great at growing them, but we do everything else. We do a little bit of most other things.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:02:33](#)):

Is where your business is at now, is it what you were imagining when you started?

Katie Rose Seward ([01:02:41](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. I feel like I had a very clear plan and we've been like deliberately making decisions based on what that plan was. So, part of the reason why we pursued this farm was because of this building and this retail location. I wanted to be a direct to consumer farmer. I wanted people to come here, to come to the farm, and I saw the potential in this building as that space. And then, in order for that to be a sustainable market, I feel like seasonality kind of gets in the way of that. So, being year round, like if we want people to shop with us for their groceries, we can't just disappear for half the year.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:03:36](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:03:37](#)):

So, now last winter was the first winter that we did the self-serve shed and it went super well and we're doing that again and again, it's going really well. And the next step in my master plan is having this space be able to actually welcome people year round. And then the third... I had three pillars of my business plan. It was the market garden, the farm stand, and a kitchen. And the kitchen is like the third piece that will never happen until we're able to fix up the building. Because again, we can't invest in a kitchen in here until it's protected and it won't be until we had like heat and a proper roof and proper walls. So, that's now like the final piece that I feel like I'm now starting to chase.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:04:46](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:04:47](#)):

I don't think that we have mastered the growing side of things, so that's very much like an ongoing...

Andy Chamberlain ([01:04:53](#)):

Yeah, but that's established and the ball's rolling.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:04:56](#)):

But we're set up now.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:04:57](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:04:57](#)):

Yeah. We're set up. We've got the fields, we've got the tunnels, we've got better water. So, I feel like that is in motion and it's working and it's just getting better at it. But this like next stage for our business is where I'm like starting to think about now.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:05:23](#)):

What is your hope with the kitchen? Are you wanting to do value-added stuff or like serve sandwiches?

Katie Rose Seward ([01:05:30](#)):

I think a combination.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:05:32](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:05:33](#)):

I think that's the beauty of it. It's like it opens both of those doors possibly. I don't think I want it for specifically value added, though I can see that happening as a natural...

Andy Chamberlain ([01:05:54](#)):

Once you've got the space, why not do a batch of whatever? Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:05:57](#)):

Yeah. Especially when you have way too many tomatoes or like whatever it is. We've borrowed the kitchen at Adam's Berry Farm and done... We did pestos and we froze a bunch of pestos and we got like two years out of it. I didn't take them to the farmer's market, but we sold them here and we sold the last one like this summer. And I remember people were super bummed. That was really popular. So, yeah, I think there'd be certain things that I'd want to do value added, but I'm not trying to have a whole line of tomato sauces or things like that. Pestos for sure.

([01:06:45](#)):

But no, I think like the ready to eat is what's exciting. A, because this stretch of Route 7, I just think is kind of underserved in terms of like what's available. But then also I think that I kind of see my job as a farmer and a grocer, as like taking the next step and showing people how easy it is to enjoy food when you have good ingredients or... Yeah, there's an educational element to the preparation of the food that I feel like closes the loop on what-

Andy Chamberlain ([01:07:45](#)):

So, do you think you'd want to do like workshops and demonstrations and like on-farm event sort of stuff or just providing quality local real food?

Katie Rose Seward ([01:07:56](#)):

I think all of the above.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:07:57](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:07:57](#)):

Yeah.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:07:59](#)):

Eventually. It's in some form.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:08:01](#)):

Yeah. All of the above. Yeah. I think that the events and the workshops, I hope will just kind of be a natural progression of what happens as this place and the resources that we have grows. There's something about like gathering around a meal... Like this is already becoming a community space, but people come and do their shopping and then they go. There's something about sharing a meal with people, breaking bread with people that changes the conversation. And yes, it'd still be like providing a service, but it's like more than that. It's...

Andy Chamberlain ([01:08:51](#)):

Providing a connection.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:08:52](#)):

Yes.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:08:53](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:08:53](#)):

It builds community when you're actually like sharing a meal versus just shopping for ingredients. You know what I mean?

Andy Chamberlain ([01:09:04](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:09:04](#)):

Yeah.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:09:07](#)):

Yeah. I have a guess in what you'll say, but what are you looking forward to most this next season?

Katie Rose Seward ([01:09:17](#)):

I don't know. I think I would have answered that differently a few months ago because I thought that we were going to stop doing the farmer's market and I was really looking forward to that, but I don't know that we're going to stop doing the farmer's market because another farm is leaving and them leaving could make it a really good market. Not that it isn't already a good market. I'm going to go off on a tangent, but my plan was to stop doing the farmer's market and then transition to being open seven days a week here because right now we're only open five days a week in the summer. But if we're going to drop the market, we need to make up that income. And so I was like, "Okay, well, we'll just be open seven days a week and hopefully it'll shake out." Nobody's open on Monday.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:10:15](#)):

Yeah. What days are you closed?

Katie Rose Seward ([01:10:16](#)):

We're closed Monday, Tuesday usually.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:10:18](#)):

Okay.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:10:18](#)):

But like nobody's open on Monday. So there's like opportunity there already.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:10:27](#)):

Our Mondays are almost as good as like, they're a Friday for us, which is weird.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:10:31](#)):

I think it would be good because it's Monday. People are getting back into their routine. Anyway, then I found out that this other farm who's probably the biggest farm at the market isn't doing it. And so then it's like, "Oh, wow, now there's more money to be made in theory if we do it." I don't know. What am I most looking forward to this season? Not having to build anything. It's just been non-stop projects. We just celebrated, I guess today is the 15th yesterday, was like 13 months of actually living here. So, this past season was like so different in terms of like my mental head space and I'm just really looking forward to like more of that, like feeling settled and not feeling... It just feels so nice to like be here all the time. And I'm just starting to really appreciate that aspect of this phase of the farm.

([01:11:52](#)):

The first year was really lovely. Years like two started to be really hard. Year three and four were like really, really, really hard. Didn't know if I was going to make it through. And then this past year, like finally living here, everything changed and I'm finally back on like, "Okay, we got this. We're good at this. We can do this." So, I'm just excited for more of that.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:12:18](#)):

What made years three and four so difficult just because you had so much infrastructure going up?

Katie Rose Seward ([01:12:25](#)):

Everything was happening so fast. I needed so much help and going from having like one and a half employees in year two to having six in year three was like, "What? What is happening? Can I even do this? How do I do this?"

Andy Chamberlain ([01:12:48](#)):

Your role changed.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:12:49](#)):

I'm learning on the job and I just kind of stopped taking care of myself because that just... Yeah. So, it was like dark for a couple of years, just like not feeling like me, but things get easier. I wish-

Andy Chamberlain ([01:13:13](#)):

Growing pains.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:13:15](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. No, things do get easier. And Brian and I left the country for two weeks in December and we would never have been able to do that. So, things are changing. Our life is getting a little bit more back to normal if that is even possible owning a farm. I don't know that it is. The word normal will never mean the same thing, but the growing pains are easier to process and also we're through the hardest part of it, which was just creating it, but it's created now and it's getting easier.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:14:01](#)):

Yeah. Every step you're building upon.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:14:03](#)):

Yeah.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:14:04](#)):

With the crew, with the farm stand, with the tunnels, knowing your soils, you have a house here now, you're not commuting.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:14:11](#)):

For sure.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:14:12](#)):

That's a lot to learn and absorb and build.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:14:16](#)):

And people are wanting to be... Like young people are wanting to be a part of it more. I haven't posted jobs for this year, but obviously we're hiring like everybody else and last year there was just like a noticeable difference in like the amount of people that were interested. And the first few years, I didn't have a record, so I didn't feel like people were like... It was as easy to find help as I needed help.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:14:48](#)):

It was not as easy?

Katie Rose Seward ([01:14:51](#)):

But it wasn't. It's getting easier. It feels like people are... I don't know. We have a record now. People can see what we're about. And I have people that are coming back year after year and like that.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:15:04](#)):

How many people were on your crew last season?

Katie Rose Seward ([01:15:07](#)):

The height of this past year, we had six on the payroll again. Maybe seven at one point, but that was like four people full time in the field and then two-ish people that were part-time in the farm stand probably have around a similar number this year.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:15:30](#)):

What does sustainable agriculture mean to you and what are you doing to achieve it?

Katie Rose Seward ([01:15:37](#)):

I think when I first started, the word sustainability had everything to do with the environment and a farm's impact on the environment that like you were either really sustainable or like not so sustainable based on what your impact was on the environment. But now I don't think that that is the primary. I think it's so much more about like the farmer as well and like mental health and the ability to adapt and evolve. I no longer see like... I don't know what the future holds, but I no longer feel like we have to be X, Y, and Z. I think starting my business as COVID was actually unfolding was really beneficial to see everybody pivot and see farms totally change their markets and being a diversified farm allows you to absorb those things so much easier. So, when I think about sustainability, I feel like it's being able to absorb the unpredictable and keep going.

([01:16:59](#)):

It doesn't mean you can't change. And so, I just look at the farm and I see opportunity, even talking about the hay fields and the pasture, things that are not necessary for my business right now as a vegetable farmer, but we have so many resources that are available to us to keep this place a farm and that's sustainability. Like how do we keep it a farm and make sure that it stays a farm, even if our kids aren't the ones that want it.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:17:40](#)):

Has there been any mentors or major influences for you in your farm growth trajectory?

Katie Rose Seward ([01:17:50](#)):

Yeah, definitely. The place where I did my apprenticeship, Amber Waves, was just life changing experience. But the women that started the farm were in their late 20s, early 30s at the time. And most of my co-workers were women. And so, that it was just really special place to learn about agriculture, which is a male dominated field, but be surrounded by people that looked like you and experienced the same challenges as you, and that were creating opportunities for people like you. When I then moved to Vermont, I had a hard time finding a job or like established farms that wanted to take a chance on me or give me responsibility because I only had three years of experience. Even though the farm I was coming from, I was one of their primary tractor operators. I was managing their 150 member CSA. I was managing the whole wash, pack and all distribution of food.

([01:19:14](#)):

I just feel like people didn't believe me that that was my skill set. And fortunately, I did find a woman to hire me as her manager and that is the year that I knew I actually had what it takes to do it on my own. But yeah, Katie and Amanda from Amber Waves were just amazing mentors and what they've created at Amber is really, really special. And I'm super excited. One of my employees this summer, Gracie, who just graduated from UVM is going to be an apprentice down there. So, I'm like super stoked for her. They are just actually training the next generation of farmers actively. And so many people that have gone through Amber have started their own businesses and what they're doing just is really working and altering the landscape of food in the Northeast. So, they inspire me all the time and are amazing mentors if I ever need help or advice, they're always there.

(01:20:24):

And then Jon and Karin of Bear Roots and the Roots Farm Market, I actually, Jon is from Long Island and they started their first farm on Long Island. So, the year I started at Amber was the year they left Long Island and moved to Vermont, but we, me and other Ambers would come up and help them with their Root harvest every summer. And I watched them go from like their farm in Barre to their farm in Williamstown to now owning the Roots and expanding that over the past year. Jon is always there whenever I need advice for anything and he's also checking up on me actively, which I really appreciate. It's not easy to do that since we're all farmers. Yeah, I would say that they would be mentors as well. It's nice to have somebody to go to in Vermont as well.

Andy Chamberlain (01:21:28):

Right. They're not far away.

Katie Rose Seward (01:21:29):

No. No. We see each other enough during the year and we do a lot of business with him too. So, it's just really nice to have that relationship.

Andy Chamberlain (01:21:42):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward (01:21:42):

Have a friendship, but then also be able to support their farm.

Andy Chamberlain (01:21:45):

Right, right. It goes both ways.

Katie Rose Seward (01:21:48):

Yeah.

Andy Chamberlain (01:21:48):

And when he texts you and say, "How are you doing?" You know it's a serious question.

Katie Rose Seward (01:21:51):

Yeah. He was the one that scared me in December, but I need to reach back out to him and see how his plants are doing. I'm sure everything was fine because everything was fine for us, but he was like, "How are you doing? Everything's going to die."

Andy Chamberlain ([01:22:11](#)):

"Well, what do you mean? I wasn't stressed. Now I'm stressed."

Andy Chamberlain ([01:22:16](#)):

You talked about some challenges, but tell me about a time when you felt really successful farming.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:22:22](#)):

This summer we nailed our summer squash successions, which we haven't been doing in the past few years. And what was cool about this year was we tried a bunch of different stuff too with multiple rounds. So, our first round was like bare beds. We planted the second week in May and it got really cold again and I thought everything was going to die, but it didn't. And we cultivated with the tractor and I love growing things in bare beds and being able to cultivate with the tractor. We don't have the proper tools, but we can do it with a single row crop like summer squash. We nailed the timing.

([01:23:13](#)):

And so, yeah, the first round was gorgeous. Second round, we straw mulched and wasn't that great. We had a lot more weeds, but then the third round, we smothered a cover crop of rye with a tarp and then planted directly into that. And that was the first time we had tried that no-till method. And I was really blown away by how well the plants did and we ended up not getting cover crop into that field. It's the one right behind the shop. I think I just didn't see it when I was on the tractor because it's the one facing the other way. And then when all of our last round of rye started germinating, I was like, "Can we seriously seed it late?" We-

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Katie Rose Seward ([01:24:03](#)):

... started germinating. I was like, can we seriously seed it late? We pushed it till the last minute and it wasn't coming up in that field. I was like, oh my God, I forgot. But this soil is being held in place because we had matted the rye-

Andy Chamberlain ([01:24:17](#)):

Nice.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:24:17](#)):

... that we had over wintered.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:24:18](#)):

Whew.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:24:20](#)):

And I was just really impressed by that technique, and it working really well in our system with that crop. So yeah, I mean, looking back, I think that we just nailed the summer squash and zucchini this past year.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:24:35](#)):

That's cool. No-tills are really hard for-

Katie Rose Seward ([01:24:37](#)):

Something about the cold spring also killing the first round of cucumber beetles. I don't know. We didn't really deal with them this summer, or this past summer. I like it. I feel like cucurbits used to feel easy, and since moving to Vermont, they don't. I don't know why. The cucumber beetle is just so bad. When I was successful with a crop that it feels like everybody wants all the time, that feels really good.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:25:12](#)):

If you could restart now knowing what you know, would you do anything differently?

Katie Rose Seward ([01:25:19](#)):

Yeah, I probably wouldn't mess around with certain crops, like the potatoes and the sweet potatoes. Because we have such great relationships with so many other producers, we're really able to find the stuff that I'm not good at growing. And I want to probably cut some more things from our crop list because we don't need to be growing them, because we can get them from other people because other people are better at it than us. And it's okay to do less because of the way our business is. We're doing so much more of other things.

([01:26:06](#)):

So yeah, I think I would just try to not grow as much. Even though I feel like... I'm trying to think of a good example of a crop that we should be dropping, but one really isn't coming to mind. Maybe celeriac. Not sure why that was on our list last year, but it ended up being in the tunnels and just we didn't get it in in time. It didn't get big enough, and then we didn't get it out in time before they froze in December.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:26:42](#)):

Do you have any advice for another beginning grower or key lessons that you may have learned?

Katie Rose Seward ([01:26:51](#)):

I think just knowing how water moves through your farm is something I wish I had studied earlier or just I wish I had learned it faster. I mean, I'm still learning it, and every storm is different, but the way that water moves through our farm is shaping a lot of decisions that we make. So the sooner that you can learn where water goes, even if you don't have a creek, or when we get these storms, it all is coming down.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:27:30](#)):

It's going someplace.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:27:30](#)):

It's going somewhere, know where it goes. Yeah. Something that my mentors told me was pick three things and that's it. When you're starting, have your three main goals and focus on those things and make your decisions with those goals in mind. And my business plan was the market garden, the farm stand, and ultimately, the kitchen. And I think I've been very intentional about working towards those goals.

([01:28:17](#)):

I remember having such a hard time writing a business plan because I felt like I couldn't. With farming, it's like you can't predict anything. Overcoming that mental roadblock of it doesn't matter if you have a plan, the plan... What's going to happen is going to happen. But the plan is also so important and informs every decision that you make. And I'm not sure how I ended up finally writing a plan, but maybe I did the NOFA Farm Beginnings. I don't know. But I think back to that plan, and my goals haven't changed a lot, and everything that we're doing is helping us go in that direction.

([01:29:12](#)):

And I've seen other farms start up, and it feels like they're changing something every year. They're constantly pivoting. And I don't think we've been doing that. I think we've been working just very specifically towards what it was that I said we were going to do. And the better that you can set your goals and keep yourself grounded in what it is that you're working towards, the easier the day to day will be because ultimately nothing's ever going to go according to plan.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:29:51](#)):

Right. Right. The details and the numbers that you sketch out may not come through, but you got to have that central vision of where you're headed.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:30:05](#)):

It takes time to learn how to be comfortable with being uncomfortable, but once you're comfortable being... When you can get to that point where you let the stuff fly by and you're really able to be like, "Well, I can't control that. I'm working on it every day, but it's something"... The sooner that you can get comfortable being uncomfortable, and I think just having that central goal or knowing what it is that grounds you in the work and what it is that you're working towards, those things are helpful.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:30:41](#)):

Yeah, for sure.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:30:42](#)):

Because you can get lost otherwise. It's interesting how farming, it's some days everything you do it feels so tangible, and the work you've accomplished, it's so obvious on some days. And then the next day, the absolute opposite can be true and it can feel like zero progress happens.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:31:05](#)):

On top of the world, and then the world's coming down on top of you.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:31:09](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. I've learned a lot about my own mental health. If you can afford a therapist or get a therapist, do it. That's another piece of advice.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:31:22](#)):

Yeah. Is there anything that you've really picked up or learned on to help manage your brain?

Katie Rose Seward ([01:31:28](#)):

I mean, I started therapy as a necessity after year three, I think, or year two.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:31:41](#)):

Was it hard to find somebody you could talk to?

Katie Rose Seward ([01:31:43](#)):

Yes, yeah. I'm now on my third. I took a break because I wasn't happy with my first two experiences, and I just found this new person in August of this year and went back to therapy when I was in a good place and was actively choosing. Prior, I was like, I need therapy because I'm struggling. But this summer it

was like, no, I'm ready to go back because I know what it's offering me, and I'm actively seeking it out when I'm in a good place.

(01:32:23):

Anyway, I'm still navigating it, but I think it's helping, and it's nice to just have somebody else that's outside the world to go to because... yeah.

Andy Chamberlain (01:32:42):

You got to get out of your bubble sometimes.

Katie Rose Seward (01:32:43):

You got to get out of the bubble. As I said that, I'm like, actually it sucks also though because people don't understand what it's like and that is one of the challenges also in being a farmer is nobody really gets it unless they also do it.

Andy Chamberlain (01:33:01):

And you're talking to the therapist like, "No, you don't understand how difficult this was."

Katie Rose Seward (01:33:07):

Yes.

Andy Chamberlain (01:33:10):

"It quit raining in the end of July."

Katie Rose Seward (01:33:14):

Yeah.

Andy Chamberlain (01:33:14):

Yeah. They don't get it either.

Katie Rose Seward (01:33:16):

No, no, no.

Andy Chamberlain (01:33:17):

But just having somebody else to talk to that's out of it, I think is helpful too.

Katie Rose Seward (01:33:21):

Yeah, yeah.

Andy Chamberlain (01:33:23):

Or another farmer friend.

Katie Rose Seward (01:33:25):

Yeah, totally. There are a network of farmers that are also helping, peer support that I've been connected with as well to... When you do need somebody who gets it to just commiserate with or to cheer you on. Vermont is great. Those resources do exist here within the farming community as well.

Andy Chamberlain (01:33:54):

One thing that I've been trying to ask is what's something you wish the general public knew about farming or maybe something that you want to tell your customers or... You interface with the general public a lot, so.

Katie Rose Seward (01:34:13):

I think that I want people to know that what we do is highly skilled labor. Something about being the retailer, and on the days where I'm behind the register and just checking people out, people don't make the connection. And a lot of the people that work here at Head Over Fields, we have a lot of overlap. So a lot of times you'll come into the farm stand and the person who's checking you out in the farm stand is also spending time in the field picking those tomatoes or whatever it is. That's something I love because if I can put farmers in the farm stand, everybody's having a better experience. My customer's questions are getting answered because they're the ones in the field too. The connection isn't always made. And so many people garden and... yeah. I just don't even know where to begin.

(01:35:16):

But I think just I want people to know that it's really highly, highly skilled work that we do. I-

Andy Chamberlain (01:35:22):

It's so complex they can't comprehend everything that you need to do and plan and execute and-

Katie Rose Seward (01:35:29):

Right. It seems so simple sometimes. You just need to go pick that crop and bring it down here, but it's so much more than that. And a lot of times people will offer to help or they want to volunteer. They want to be a part of it because they think they can do it, and it's not that they can't or couldn't, but it's not that simple. And-

Andy Chamberlain (01:36:00):

There's some training involved.

Katie Rose Seward (01:36:00):

They're-

Andy Chamberlain (01:36:01):

Even to the "basics"-

Katie Rose Seward (01:36:01):

Exactly.

Andy Chamberlain (01:36:03):

... stuff of picking it.

Katie Rose Seward (01:36:05):

Exactly. And even the most experienced people still have a million questions anytime you have to go back out there because conditions are constantly changing and the bigger... Something that's just any business owner can relate to is, as your business grows, you get further away from the work that got you into it in the first place. I'm doing so much less of the majority of the harvesting, you know?

Andy Chamberlain ([01:36:42](#)):

Mm-hmm.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:36:43](#)):

And I'm doing so much more people management. And it's I didn't want to be a farmer because I wanted to manage people. Not that I want people to know this, but just, it's just so complex.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:36:56](#)):

And most farmers don't get into farming to manage people.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:36:59](#)):

No.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:37:00](#)):

That's not what draws us to-

Katie Rose Seward ([01:37:01](#)):

It's the opposite. Yeah. It's the ability to not spend time with people.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:37:07](#)):

But we quickly realize we can't do it by ourselves.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:37:10](#)):

Yeah.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:37:10](#)):

That's not sustainable-

Katie Rose Seward ([01:37:12](#)):

No, no, it's not.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:37:13](#)):

... if you want to make any decent money at it.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:37:15](#)):

I think just people keeping an open mind and being open to having conversations with the people producing your food is really meaningful. It goes a long way to ask your farmer how they're doing, I think.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:37:32](#)):

I saw a reel on Instagram the other day. It was an entrepreneur. They're like, when somebody asks how you're doing or what have you been up to, you're like, well, do you just say, "Same old, same old. Things are going well"? Or do you just spew on them because there's so much actually happening?

Katie Rose Seward ([01:37:48](#)):

Oh my gosh, yeah. I don't even know. I feel like the default is the weather. Whenever somebody's like, "How are you doing?" Or, "What have you been up to?" As a farmer, I just feel like the best direction to go is the weather because everyone can relate a little bit, but things have been so crazy the past few years with the flooding and then the drought that also everybody's just really defeated by the weather that now it's like I'm trying to actively avoid that as a topic.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:38:23](#)):

Because it's a downer.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:38:28](#)):

I feel like I am a pessimist in general, so I feel like I'm always like, "Eh." And then some people are like, "Okay, no, tell me what's actually going on." I try to share the truth, especially with our customers. I think I've been trying to be more open about sharing the realities because I think it's important to talk about them, but it can definitely... It's like that SNL skit where the Debbie Downer... Have you seen this?

Andy Chamberlain ([01:39:08](#)):

No.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:39:08](#)):

Oh, you should Google that when you get home. But yeah, it does feel like you're always being a little bit of a downer if you are telling the truth because it's never all rainbows and flowers.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:39:25](#)):

Right, right.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:39:26](#)):

Most days are stressful.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:39:28](#)):

There's a lot going on and a lot hinges on a lot of things.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:39:34](#)):

I feel like the next five years we're going to learn a lot more.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:39:36](#)):

Yep.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:39:38](#)):

But it gets easier.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:39:41](#)):

Yeah. You got your boots on now.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:39:43](#)):

Yeah. I wish that more people who had been doing it for longer talk about how it does get easier. I feel like, at least when I was trying, there were a lot of older farmers that were like, "Why would you want to start your own farm?" A, because everybody's already struggling and there aren't enough people to help the people already doing it. And B, there was people that thought like, "Why would you want to start something new?" There are so many farms that need help. There are so many farms sitting... which isn't really the case anymore. COVID blew all that up. But there are so many farms that are in disrepair that need people, instead of taking ... This was a farm, but we also turned it into a veggie farm, and so there wasn't really anything.

(01:40:52):

But I felt like people were either like, "Why would you start something new? There are too many people struggling who need help. It's silly to add to the competition." And then also be like, "Why would you try and start something from scratch when there are these other farms available or waiting for the next person," or whatever. And I had very specific things that I wanted to do and not every farm was going to let me do that.

Andy Chamberlain (01:41:30):

As you found, it was hard to just get a management role.

Katie Rose Seward (01:41:35):

Yeah. Yeah.

Andy Chamberlain (01:41:35):

From being trained.

Katie Rose Seward (01:41:37):

Yeah. And like-

Andy Chamberlain (01:41:39):

So maybe if an opportunity like that arose, that might have changed your trajectory.

Katie Rose Seward (01:41:45):

For sure. But just in pursuing this farm, in order for us to be able to afford it, it needed to be conserved. And pursuing the conservation, we came to the table with the previous owners and so we were working on the conservation together in tandem. And there were reasons why this farm worked for us that other already conserved properties didn't.

(01:42:16):

And yeah, I think it's just important to know what you need and don't settle just because something is available that might work or checks a few of your boxes or... I mean, things are getting harder. It's not as easy to find land and good soil and infrastructure, but it was really hard. I felt like a lot of established farmers tried to talk us out of it for various reasons.

Andy Chamberlain (01:42:48):

But here you are.

Katie Rose Seward (01:42:49):

Here I am. Probably wish I listened. No, I'm just kidding.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:42:59](#)):

Can we talk about the Deere in the room? Did you-

Katie Rose Seward ([01:43:02](#)):

This tractor?

Andy Chamberlain ([01:43:03](#)):

Yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:43:04](#)):

Oh my God, yeah. Well, so I learned on a Kubota, and I thought I was going to buy a Kubota. When we were ready to buy, the market hadn't really rebounded after COVID. And so we had actually got on a list with a dealer for a Kubota and we were just waiting for the right one. And then a hemp farmer was going out of business, and they weren't going to be able to make their payments, and they were a couple of weeks away from their credit really getting messed up, and they needed somebody to get them out of the contract. And they threw in the tiller, a disc, the backhoe attachment.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:43:59](#)):

Oh, fun.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:44:00](#)):

And we got an insane deal on all of it. And so we ended up going with it. And honestly, everybody, not everybody, but most of the farmers in Charlotte, who have been here for a long time, come from generational farming families, they're green people.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:44:24](#)):

So you made friends because of it.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:44:25](#)):

Oh my gosh. We got so much respect, and I was like, "I'm so happy I don't have an orange tractor right now." And I do love it.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:44:34](#)):

You'd be shunned by the neighbors.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:44:35](#)):

I do love it. It's hydrostatic, which I didn't want, but in practice it really makes doing certain things a lot easier and a lot smoother. I love it. We finally, actually, used the backhoe this summer when we insulated the shed. I wish I had a smaller tractor, and I wish I had a bigger one, but I think it was the right size for what we needed when we needed it.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:45:06](#)):

It seems like a good size for a market farm.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:45:09](#)):

Yeah. I can pull a 3 bottom plow, which is nice. I was using my neighbor, John's, and he has the homeowner one, the 23 horsepower. And there was a lot of stuff that his was actually really nice for, but just the sheer size of the bucket, how much smaller it was, and he didn't have ag tires.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:45:38](#)):

Oh yeah.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:45:41](#)):

Yeah. I'm glad we did it. They had emailed the LISTSERV multiple times and we had just gotten so sick of waiting.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:45:52](#)):

Moving pallets of stuff, can you move a pallet of Vermont Compost?

Katie Rose Seward ([01:45:56](#)):

My tires have ballast, and I can, yes. It helps to have an implement on the back.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:46:03](#)):

Yeah. Yeah, of course.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:46:05](#)):

But I can do it without. You can't turn too fast.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:46:12](#)):

Yeah, right. You've always got to be careful, but-

Katie Rose Seward ([01:46:12](#)):

I'm always like, wow, the front tire is eh. But yes, I can move a full tow of Vermont Compost without anything on. I debated ballast in the tires. We weren't going to get the ballast in the tire when we were ordering the tractor because I was like, compaction, I don't want it.

Andy Chamberlain ([01:46:34](#)):

Yeah, right.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:46:35](#)):

But after talking with more people, I even think John might have been like, "Just get the ballast. You're going to want it. You're going to be using the loader more than you think."

Andy Chamberlain ([01:46:48](#)):

Yeah, if you're doing any loader work, you want it.

Katie Rose Seward ([01:46:48](#)):

"If you're going to want that weight, you're not always going to want to have to put something on the back." So there are times, though, where, because of the way our clay soil is, there are times where I'm

like, if I didn't have ballast in the tractor, I could probably get away with doing tractor work, but I can't because the tractor is too heavy.

Andy Chamberlain (01:47:14):

And that was The Farmer's Share. I hope you enjoyed this episode with Katie Rose of Head Over Fields. The Farmer's Share is supported by a grant offered by the USDA Specialty Crop Block Program from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets. This funding helps to cover some of my time and travel in order to produce this podcast until March of 2026. The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service supports projects that address the needs of US specialty crop growers and strengthens local and regional food systems. I have no doubt that this podcast will meet those needs and help educate growers to support the industry. If you enjoy this show and want to help support its programming, you can make a one-time or reoccurring donation on our website by visiting thefarmersshare.com/support.

(01:48:09):

We also receive funding from the Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association. The VVBGA is a nonprofit organization funded in 1976 to promote the economic, environmental, and social sustainability of vegetable and berry farming in Vermont. Their membership includes over 400 farms across Vermont and beyond, as well as about 50 businesses and organizations that provide products and services of all types to their members. Benefits to members include access to the VVBGA LISTSERV to buy/sell plants and equipment, share farming information, and tap the vast experience of our growers.

(01:48:48):

Access the Community Accreditation for Produce Safety, also known as CAPS. This program is designed for growers by growers to help you easily meet market and regulatory food safety expectations.

(01:49:03):

You can access the VVBGA's soil health platform, where you can organize all the soil tests and create and store your soil amendment plans and records, access to webinars for growers in the VVBGA annual meeting, an email subscription to the Vermont Vegetable and Berry newsletter. Camaraderie, enhanced communication, and fellowship among commercial growers.

(01:49:26):

Memberships are on a per farm, per calendar year basis, and annual dues this year are \$80. These funds pay for the organization's operating costs and support educational programs and research projects. These funds also support projects that address grower needs around ag engineering, high tunnel production, pest management, pollinators, produce safety, and soil health. Become a member today to be a part of and further support the veg and berry industry.

(01:49:57):

You can visit thefarmersshare.com to listen to previous interviews or see photos, videos, or links discussed from the conversation. If you don't want to miss the next episode, enter your email address on our website and you'll get a note in your inbox when the next one comes out.

(01:50:14):

The Farmers Share has a YouTube channel with videos from several of the farm visits. We're also on Instagram and that's where you can be reminded about the latest episode or see photos from the visit.

(01:50:25):

Lastly, if you're enjoying the show, I'd love it if you could write a review. In Apple Podcasts, just click on the show, scroll down to the bottom, and there you can leave five stars in a comment to help encourage new listeners to tune in. I'd also encourage you to share this episode with other grower friends or crew who you think would be inspiring for them. Thanks for listening.

This transcript was exported on Apr 07, 2026 - view latest version [here](#).

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