



# FARMER TO FARMER

podcast



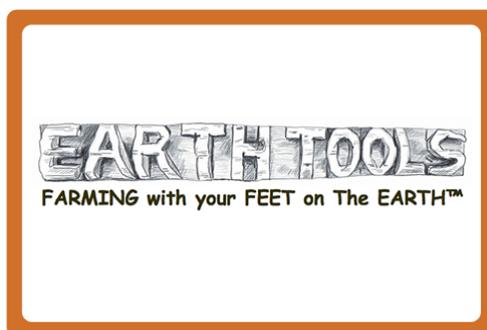
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## EPISODE 098

### Mike Nolan of Mountain Roots Produce on Growing Storage Crops in the High Desert and Staying Ahead of the Curve

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Chris Blanchard: It’s the Farmer to Farmer Podcast, Episode 98, and this is your host Chris Blanchard. Mike Nolan raises about five acres of vegetables at Mountain Roots Produce in Mancos, Colorado. With the focus on storage crops, Mike has patched together a market in his rural marketplace that includes restaurants, grocery stores, schools and CSA members in the four corners area of Colorado. Farming in Mancos for the last seven years, Mike has recently brought Mountain Roots Produce into profitability and no longer has to work off the farm to make ends meet.

We dig into the details of Mike’s operation including how he has structured his tractor scale farming operation for growing crops that are planted a limited number of times a year and why he decided to start farming with a business model based on these limited succession crops. Mike shares his challenges with weed control, how he’s used local resources to store his root crops with limited capital investment and the changes he is making to prepare for the new marketing realities that he expects to encounter as the food safety modernization act beings to take effect.

Mike also gives us an overview of water rights in the west and how that influences the structure of his farming operation. Plus, Mike and his girlfriend Mindy Perkovich of Early Bird Gardens recently joined forces in Mancos. Mike shares the details and realities of making the transition from a solo operator to being a part of a partnership. I had a lot of fun talking to Mike and I hope you enjoy this interview as much I enjoyed making it for you.

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Mike Nolan, welcome to the Farmer to Farmer Podcast.

Mike Nolan: Thank you so much for having me Chris.

Chris Blanchard: I’d like to start off by having you tell us about Mountain Roots Produce. How you got there, where you’re located, what you’re growing, and what you’re selling.



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Mike Nolan: Cool. That sounds great. Mountain Roots Produce - I started the business about seven years ago. The farm is located in southwest Colorado in a little town called Mancos. We're the valley right to the east of Mesa Verde National Park. We predominantly focus on storage crops, root vegetables, potatoes, storage cabbage, storage onion. We do some fresh market stuff. A little bit of salad greens, hothouse tomatoes and some other hot crops like zucchini and green beans in the summer time. We predominantly sell to mainly wholesale markets and a CSA. We sell to about half a dozen restaurants in the Telluride region and about 10 places in the Durango area. We do a 50 member CSA up in Telluride and another 30 member CSA here in the Mancos Valley.

Chris Blanchard: Those are your CSA members, right? Are you selling to a CSA?

Mike Nolan: Those are our CSA members. I farm with my girlfriend. She moved down here this year. We do all the work up in Telluride for CSA. Then I started another CSA with another farm just down the road. We do just a small 30 ... where I did 24 members this year. We're going to up it to 30 to 40 next year. That's an experimental model. My friend Kelly focuses on more leafy greens, more perishable items, high succession items. I focus on the storage crops, single plantings. We figure it to be an experiment instead of one farm doing all the work for CSA, if we meet in the middle. That model turned out to be surprisingly easy compared to just running a full blown CSA by ourselves.

Chris Blanchard: I like how you split that up not just crop by crop but thinking of it as almost a production model. That you do the storage crops or the limited succession crops and she's doing the ones that you're turning over all the time. That seems like a really smart division.

Mike Nolan: It seems to work. It was nice because neither of us wanted to dive into a CSA by ourselves. My girlfriend and I do one here now. She'd been running a CSA up in Ridgeway, Colorado for years. She moved down this past year about a year ago. We're still running that CSA together up in the Telluride area. This other one came out just kind of an experiment and it's worked out really well. It just means we don't have to go out of our growing comfort zone in order to make things happen.

Chris Blanchard: Mancos, Colorado is located down in the four corners area, right?

Mike Nolan: That is correct, yeah.

Chris Blanchard: I always get out Google Maps and look at where I'm doing my interview. There's not a lot of green where you are.

Mike Nolan: No, there's not. There's quite a bit of production out here. It's predominantly alfalfa hay, cattle. There is some corn. There's dry beans. Most of the land in our county and region is dry land. We do have some of the highest pinto bean



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production and winter wheat production in the state or in the country but that's all dry land. Irrigated land is relatively limited in this region.

Chris Blanchard: Obviously we're talking the kind of desert like region that you're in. You're on irrigated land, right?

Mike Nolan: Oh yeah. I could not do what I'm doing without irrigation. Out here you don't necessarily buy land, you buy water.

Chris Blanchard: How many acres are you farming?

Mike Nolan: We had just shy of five acres in production this year. I bought 13 acres three years ago this past August. Our weed pressure is phenomenal. What we decided to do this fall is we plowed up another three acres on the property and we're going to start rotating the whole farm within that. We can have portions of the farm that are in cover crop for a 12 to 16 month period. Working with cover crops can help us manage and suppress weeds without having to actually come in and weed it all season. We're going to drop down to about four acres of production next year but have about eight acres total that are plowed up. We'll have four in cover, four in production.

Chris Blanchard: You're also at a fairly high elevation.

Mike Nolan: Yeah. We're at 7,200 feet.

Chris Blanchard: A pretty short season?

Mike Nolan: It can be. Climate change has made it really weird. Traditionally, when I first moved here the rule of thumb was your frost free safe dates were June 1st to mid-September. You tend to get still late last frost sometime in late May. People have had frost July 4th. Then our frost dates in the Fall this year was pretty normal. We got a killing frost third week of September and then it warmed up again. We didn't really start freezing hard again until around Halloween or just after. We try to function on like a 100 to 120 days safe growing window which makes things a little bit wild.

When planting hot crops like winter squash, zucchini, green beans, those crops we have this 10 day window of when we need to get them in in order to get them to actually get into production at the right time and also to get them to finish off at the right times. Things like winter squash I mean. You might get frost out the last week in May you plant your winter squash right at the beginning of June. If you plant it 10 days after that, you might not get a crop out of it by the time Fall rolls around.

Chris Blanchard: Although that's one of the advantages of farming in a desert climate is you can pretty much pick the day that you want to plant and be in the field doing it.



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Mike Nolan: Yeah pretty much. We don't deal with all that much issues of being walked out of the field due to moisture or anything like that. We do have Summer monsoon rains which can be a little bit tricky here and there. For the most part, no. It's like go time. May and June tend to be pretty high and dry and our monsoon season tends to start around July 4th-ish sometimes depends on the year though.

Chris Blanchard: When you say monsoon season, I always think of world geography class and they talked about the monsoons in India where it would rain for a month. You're not looking at that thing, are you?

Mike Nolan: It's been different all over the place. I've definitely had five, six years ago where it was raining about a tenth of an inch to two-tenths of an inch every other day in the afternoon. It functions pretty traditional. The clouds build up in the high country. They start to fall out from the high country down lower in the early afternoon. Then sometimes we get some moistures. Sometimes we don't. That last for about four weeks, six weeks, eight weeks. It's been interesting being at this elevation for the past six, seven years now and watching how the climate seems to be changing. It's not really that we're ... it's just more that it's getting weirder, it's getting more extreme.

Our rain events, the space in between them will be further apart but they'll be more extreme when we get them. We had weather come in two Mays ago and our annual precipitation is about 12 inches. We got almost 8 inches of rain three weeks in May. That type of moisture in our soil basically turns things to adobe brick. It made the season challenging for a lot of people for that whole year because of those rainstorms.

Chris Blanchard: You're doing a system that's dominated by these storage crops. How did you get into that? What prompted you to go that way as a market farmer instead of going in a different direction? Everybody now is focused on "Let's do salad greens. Let's maximize our gross dollars per acre." You don't tend to maximize your gross on potatoes and carrots.

Mike Nolan: No, not at all. I like to call it the salad mix burn out. For the most part, I'm curious to watch a lot of the new growers that are showing up doing the really high density greens on a small acreage, how their bodies feel and how they feel about doing it in five, six years. I did the salad mix thing for a few years and my body just couldn't handle it. I didn't feel like the profit margins were really there. I was farming about seven, eight years ago down in New Mexico with some friends. They had been doing the same thing. They've been growing basically farmer's market crops. It was lots of salad mix, lots of spinach, lots of bunch of carrots, bunches of beets. Pretty traditional farmer's market stands. Hundreds of pounds a week of salad mix and other things, hundreds of bunches a week of carrots and beets and the like.



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They just basically got burnt out on it. It was one of those things where those things became so labor intensive and so time consuming. It felt like they were making money. If they actually calculated in their seed cost, all their time in the fields, managing multiple successions at any given time, all the irrigation management, it didn't feel like they were ... just because they were getting \$8 to \$10 a pound at market, they didn't feel like they were actually seeing that \$8 to \$10 a pound.

The year I worked with them, they started to flip their model and they just went to single planting of an acre of carrot and a single planting of an acre of beets and a single planting of an acre of rutabaga and parsnip and purple top turnip and golden globe turnip. They upped their winter squash production. What I saw with them is that the amount of stress on the farm and the management, all that got simpler and less. It seemed like they actually were doing better financially because they weren't stretched so thin trying to manage all high succession crops.

Also watching them go to market with those crops, they were able to basically show up at the Santa Fe Farmer's Market with 400 bunches of carrot at a really reasonable price and really watch them move. Same with beets and they're bringing trailer loads of winter squash. Because their management was simpler, they didn't have to charge \$3, \$4, \$5 a bunch for some of these crops. They're able to move a lot more volume.

I took that model and adjusted it for some of the market demands here and started to focus on ... Two of the main crops I do is potatoes, a Yukon type potato and then red storage cabbage. I sold a lot to the school district around here. A lot of the cabbage goes to a Zia Taqueria over in Durango that has two stores. They run through about 400 pounds of cabbage a week. It's great. It's one of those things where it's like I do all my starch at once. I plant it once. I keep it irrigated, weeded a few times. It all gets harvested within like a couple day period. It all gets put in storage. Then all I need to do is go grab things out of storage.

As time goes on I do have to process them a little bit as outer leaves start to not look so pretty and then just deliver. I don't wash them. I don't really over handle them. It's nice because in this climate you only have that 100, 120 days. I'm not dealing with a ton of road cover. I'm not trying to fight the weather and fight the extremes that we have out here. I'm able to sell cabbage all the way from August until I think ... should be selling out I think in the next week or two. It brings me income on the farm when most of the farms in this region don't have any income coming in at all.

Chris Blanchard: Because at 7,200 feet, by this time in December it's pretty darn cold.

Mike Nolan: Yeah. We've had negatives. We're in the single digits here and there. We haven't had as much snow as we'd like but it's cold. We do have stuff in the greenhouse. Still going a little bit just for personal. We just finished a fall CSA up in Telluride



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two days ago or yesterday actually. We're pretty much locked out. The ground is relatively frozen. Everything is cover crops for the winter. You can't do anything outside. Even in the greenhouse right now, I mean unless you planted it in August or September, daylight is so short that you won't even be able to pull a crop out until March April.

Chris Blanchard: Tell me about your production system for the storage crops. Are you on a BCS scale? Have you tracted up? Walk us through how you're doing that.

Mike Nolan: We are at a tractor scale. I have a Farmall 140, 1964 I believe. I use that for bed shaping, hilling of potatoes, some field cultivation and I have a John Deere 730, 1959, that I use for soil prep. I run what they call a viber shank through the field. It's about ten feet wide and it's got all these shanks on there with little sweeps. What that allows me to do is I can come in with my cover crop in the spring which is usually rye or triticale with some sort of sometimes a mixed in there and sometimes purple hairy vetch mixed in there. Depending on the type of winter moisture we have, that could be eight inches tall when it gets turned in the ground or it could be two to three feet tall depending on the type of spring we have.

I come in and I mow that. I run the viber shank which goes below any pan I have and lifts up the roots. Then I run a disk through the field with that John Deere. Then I come in and I shape all the beds over the course of a day or two throughout the whole field. Then let all the cover crop break down for a couple of weeks and then we start planting.

We usually start planting onions and the like as early as we can get in in May. Onions and leeks, fava beans during that time as well. Then we do a lot of our brassica plantings mid-May. Then get in on our hot crops late May early June. Then the other thing I've learned is the things with carrots and beets. Even though the daytime temps are really good, it takes a while for our soil temps to get where they need to be for things to really germinate. We're going to start to wait a little bit longer to plant things like carrots, beets, parsnip, turnip, all that stuff because we can plant it in the middle of May.

Something like a carrot might have a 14 day, 16, 18 day germination as opposed to if I wait until sometime in June they'll be starting to tail within five, six days and be up within 10 to 12. Kind of run things like that. It's just all big plantings. This year we planted about 4,000 head of cabbage. We did about 1,800 pounds of sweet potatoes. We pulled out 3,000 or 4,000 pounds of carrot and beet throughout the whole season. We still have a few thousand pound of rutabaga in the walking. If you want me to mail you any, I can.

Chris Blanchard: Are you using fairly specialized equipment for doing things like the seeding and the transplanting?



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Mike Nolan: Yeah specialized equipment. No, not really. All the direct seeding is done with a Planet Jr. that I bought on Craigslist about eight years ago. We've tried with the gang seeder. Either I don't know how to use it properly or I don't like it. I can't really tell. To be honest, what I don't like is all the plastic parts. I don't trust them. The Planet Jr., it's not a precision seeder but it's weighted well. It's all metal. There's a little bit of plastic on the hopper. I know that when I run that, I'm going to get a full stand of germinated direct seeded crops.

That Jang, we trialed it a little bit. I think there's just a different learning curve on it. It's really light. I don't necessarily like that. I've never used an Earthway for direct seeded crops. I don't find that to be as clean as the Planet Jr. Then for transplanting, we are going to invest in just a wheel punches just to mark everything out so we can then transplant. This year we just did everything by hand. Just Hori Hori and someone dropping and someone dropping and someone transplanting. We get pretty fast on that.

We're trying to figure out a couple of those things every year that we can purchase or do to make things a little bit more efficient. Something like the transplanting for example. We do almost 10,000 transplants over the course of three, four, five days in the spring. Something like a water wheel transplanter. Our soil is a little bit too clay, a little bit too tight. I don't think it would work as well. If we can just run just dry punches, dry wheel punches through just to mark it out that would help us with more precise spacing for cultivation and weeding later. Then just give us something to mark out so we can speed drop and transplant in. If we can cut time on that, that would be great. We're trying to pick a couple of things every year to make this system move a little bit more efficiently and cut our time down to be able to up our profit a little bit more.

Chris Blanchard: Potatoes go in by hand as well?

Mike Nolan: Potatoes go in by hand, yeah. My girlfriend, Mindy and I, we planted that about 1,800 pounds of potatoes in about I think it was like about 10 hours over two days. Just dropping them with five gallon buckets. That's another thing that we'd want to improve on. We're all in that four to five acre scale where I could buy a potato planter. I could buy some of this equipment. It's pretty expensive for some of those things and it's pretty specialized. Especially like you know what I consider like commodity growing equipment. Something that's so specific to potatoes or so specific to garlic or so specific to onions. That might not be something we deal with for a few years to purchase. We do a lot of stuff by hand plantings.

Chris Blanchard: What are you doing for weed control?

Mike Nolan: Quite honestly we're still trying to figure that out. Last year was a little bit of a nightmare to be completely honest. Our predominant weed is Canada thistle. Not only is it terrible to weed out but it's rhizomatous. It's underground. The minute I put the piece of steel into the ground whether that be a disk or a cultivator, I make the problem worse. A lot of it is cultivation of furrows and shoulders with



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mechanical equipment on the Farmall. We're going to run some small spider wheels and sweeps and that stuff to do the shoulders and the actual furrow itself for next year.

We do run little cultivators through the tops of the beds but it got away from us so fast this spring we ended up just running hula hoes for a lot of the summer. The thing with the Canada thistle is if we didn't have Canada thistle we really wouldn't have any weed pressure on the farm. Canada thistle is one of those things where on the garlic, we probably weeded that garlic three or four times and the fourth weeding we came in, the Canada thistle over the course of two weeks just was as tall as the garlic again. You're not really getting rid of it. You're trying to starve it out as best you can, not let it go to seed.

That brings us to the point of where we decided to start opening up full fields to be able to rotate the whole farm on. There are some cover crops out there like the main thing we're going to experiment is with sorghum-sudan. There's been studies out of Colorado state, Ohio state, Nebraska that are showing that ... I wish I could remember the name of the chemical sorghum-sudan releases. Basically when sorghum-sudan gets mowed, gets water stressed, heat stressed or frost stressed, it can release a chemical in the ground that is shown to reduce populations of Canada thistle.

We're hoping with planting like a triticale or rye in the fall, letting that go through the spring, incorporating that, planting the sorghum-sudan, mowing that, letting it grow back, mowing it again then planting rye again, we're hoping we can reduce the population of Canada thistle in our field. Even if we're doing it by 50% every two years, that will give us a big jump on that weed pressure. I've been looking at a lot of these ... we're thinking about getting a finger weeder. We're thinking about all these things but I'm curious about how some of these mechanical weeding tools will work on a basically a perennial weed pressure.

I know they'll work well on annuals like your lamb's quarter] and your amaranth and things that are small and weak that start coming up that I wonder how they would do on mallow, on Canada thistle, on some of these things that are really held in the ground pretty tight.

Chris Blanchard: Especially for something like the Canada thistle where those rhizomes are actually feet underground not inches. It's really hard to get in and disrupt the way it's actually storing its energy. Really you're looking at the only option being to starve them out.

Mike Nolan: Yeah. That's the sorghum-sudan. I wished I remember the name of the chemical. The chemical it's released does have a negative effect on the thistle reproduction but also if you can grow up a canopy, a cover crop that's tall enough, you can actually ... The other good thing to do with thistle is to starve out its carbohydrate build up. It's a one two punch. You're both like killing it in the soil and starving it from actually being able to store any carbohydrates to then



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further put those back into the root system. We're hoping it can work. It's pretty gnarly.

Chris Blanchard: Good luck with that. I know that I had good luck. I didn't use the sorghum-sudan. I used winter rye and hairy vetch mix to starve out thistles. I had very good luck with that. I certainly heard good things about sudangrass. I guess this is another thing that's nice about the model that you got ... obviously having a field full of weeds is problematic but having a field full of salad greens and weeds is a disaster.

Mike Nolan: Yeah. I think that was almost a polite way of saying that. Dealing with those high succession crops with weed pressure like this is it's a nightmare to say the least for sure.

Chris Blanchard: You said you're selling your produce into telluride and into Durango. Telluride is a tourist community. Durango is not a very big town. What kinds of outlets are you moving your produce through?

Mike Nolan: Durango's population I think is about 18,000. Still pretty heavily tourist economy. Not to the extremity that Telluride is or say Aspen or Vail or someone else like that. We sell at the Taqueria I mentioned earlier, Zia Taqueria. We sell to a few other restaurants in the region that are more midscale fine dining. I sell to the Durango Natural Food Coop and another place called nature's oasis which is just another grocery store, a little bit larger. Then we also sell to the school district. Predominantly its restaurant sales with a little bit of frontend retail. The school district comprises only about 5%, 10% of my sales annually.

Chris Blanchard: When you talk wholesale versus retail sales, how is that dividing up on your farm?

Mike Nolan: We dropped out of market this year which was one of the most nerve-wracking and also one of the most awesome things I think I've ever decided in my life farming-wise. It was a big risk because you don't get that cash flow that you get Saturday or every Wednesday. You don't get to interact with the other farmers and growers. There's a lot of things you miss. We found that we're able to spend a ton more time on the farm and just not be so stressed out. I think there's a perception from the consumer that we all show up to market on a Saturday and we're all caffeinated and happy. Then we leave and go home.

I think that people miss that it took a ton of work on that Thursday and Friday to get there. We had to wake up earlier than we even usually do to get there and then by the time we come home Saturday afternoon, we were off the farm for 12 to 24 hours and we have to basically play catch up all the way through Saturday and Sunday and then its Monday again. Everything starts up all over again. We drop that true retail of your name on the stand and your face at the market sales.



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A lot of the restaurants now it almost feels like a little bit retail. Our names are on the menus.

Our names and logos are on the produce. Produce being sold at both the grocery stores we sell to. We still have some recognition. Our prices are pretty much the same for that it's just a standard wholesale price across the board for the restaurants and for the two grocery stores we sell to in Durango. We can and do fetch a little bit higher dollar in Telluride but it's really not too much different. You're talking like 5% to 10% markup. That more has to do with the fact that that market is about 180 miles round trip and Durango is only 60 miles roundtrip.

Chris Blanchard: Quite a bit of difference for you guys.

Mike Nolan: Quite a bit. Especially coming this time of year where we have to go over a pass to get to Telluride. Even with CSA and stuff, we'll actually change that to a certain day in the week just in case if there's going to be a foot of snow and it's going to take us five hours to get up there, we'll change that.

Chris Blanchard: I suppose one of the advantages being the mountains and dealing with small towns is that everybody is used to that. They know that there are times when your stuff is just not moving.

Mike Nolan: Oh yeah totally. They totally understand that especially for all the restaurants and people that work here and live here. I did the same thing with Durango. If the weather is going to be totally crappy, I'm going to be like, "I'm either going to come in a day earlier or a day late." They're usually fine with that because when the weather is doing things that it affects who's coming into their restaurants and help their shopping habits and those towns as well.

Chris Blanchard: How many times a week are you delivering a product?

Mike Nolan: We are delivering the peak of summer I go to Durango Tuesdays and Fridays. My girlfriend, Mindy, goes to Telluride every Wednesday. Now in the fall once all the hot crops are done and everything is in storage, we still go to Telluride on the Wednesday and then I go once a week in Durango on a Friday mainly because I'm not dealing with anything perishable. The zucchini is done. All the things that wouldn't necessarily hold or people would be running through really fast and need two deliveries twice a week.

When I'm dropping off just potatoes, garlic, onion, winter squash, restaurants can usually bulk up for those items. After thanksgiving it usually goes big thanksgiving delivery and then one or two deliveries before the holidays. Then come in January, it's kind of can be pretty hit or miss but I still try to come in once a week on a Friday.



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Chris Blanchard: You're still going to keep delivering those rutabaga until you sell them all?

Mike Nolan: I hope so. We'll still be selling potatoes, rutabaga and winter squash all the way through the month of January.

Chris Blanchard: Oh really? Even the winter squash because that's a hard crop to store.

Mike Nolan: I grew kind of a really weird and unique winter squash. When I was down in New Mexico ... in northern New Mexico there's a traditional squash down there, people call it a Hubbard. It was grown on the pueblos down there. It was grown by the Spanish when they were there hundreds of years ago. Puebloans and also Hispanos who still live in those regions still raise this winter squash. I've been saving seed on it for about seven years. It looks like a blue Hubbard. It's got a lot of different other colors and genetics in it. I pulled some seeds, saved some seed out of ones from the 2015 season last week. They were still holding.

Yeah, they've just adapted over hundreds of years and kind of this drier high elevation minimal water climate. The skins on them are really thick. The meat on it is really thick and the seeds are really big. They take longer to cure. I sun cure them outside for about six to eight weeks with heavy tarps there for night so they don't freeze. They'll store really well. We'll sell out every year and we'll be selling all the way through sometimes March and April with this winter squash. We have very minimal loss on this crop.

Chris Blanchard: Tell me about the storage facilities that you have.

Mike Nolan: One of them is my house. We store the winter squash and the onions in a spot in my house because we don't ... we haven't gotten to the point where we have built all the infrastructure for proper storage. We have an 8 by 12 walk-in cooler that's run on a CoolBot that keeps all the root veggies in there. I lease a root cellar space at the old fort in Hesperus which is about 15 miles away to store all the potatoes. We put about 16,000 pounds potatoes over there a few months ago. I rent that storage facility for about \$75 a month. It costs me \$300 to \$400 to keep stuff over there.

I basically have that time so when I go do my deliveries in Durango once a week on my back I pick up potatoes from that storage facility. Bring them back to sort, grade and wash then sell the next week so I'm not making an extra trip. I rent another walk-in cooler about a mile down the road for all the cabbage. I just recently purchased another 10 by 12 walk-in cooler that we're going to build out for next year. We have big plans for next year regarding postharvest and storage facility if you don't mind hearing those.

Chris Blanchard: Love to.

Mike Nolan: I know there's a lot of talks these days about all the Food Safety Modernization Acts, all the GAP protocols and standards that are coming into play. Been working



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on some of the food safety stuff in our region. What we decided to do this fall is we're working with our loan officer to pull out some equity to basically build a 30 by 40 foot steel structure that will hold walk-in cooler root cellar space and then build a postharvest wash station and packing shed that we can then get our GAP certification on. We're trying to get multiple birds with one stone with this idea.

With a lot of these GAP things coming down the pike, I know that a lot of people are saying, "I only grow a third of an acre or I'm underneath the quarter million dollar exemptions or the half million dollar exemptions." What I've been hearing from working with National Young Farmers Coalition and Rocky Mountain Farmers Union is that though a lot of us might be exempt from a lot of this GAP and FISMA standards that they're putting in place, the rumor on the street is that they think they might be putting them on the buyer.

Basically I know buyers in my area that have in their liability contracts and their insurance policies for their restaurants that they should be purchasing off farms that abide by good agricultural practices. We're trying to beat that to the punch. Even though we'd be exempt technically, I worry that in three to four years that unless we have our GAP certification, we won't be able to sell on the wholesale market. The wholesale market outside of our CSA is basically what we do.

Chris Blanchard: It's one thing to deal with the regulations but it's another thing to deal with the marketplace. That's really what you have to pay attention to.

Mike Nolan: Yeah. We're hoping to build this facility and move some of the storage out of the house and make things a little bit more streamlined. We're also going to work towards our organic certification next year as well.

Chris Blanchard: You guys have been getting by without the organic certification to date?

Mike Nolan: Yes we have.

Chris Blanchard: Are you basically growing organically?

Mike Nolan: Yeah I believe I don't think we do anything. We sometimes use not organic seeds especially if the organic ones are cost prohibitive. We don't use any chemicals or pesticides. We do spray BT but that's on the OMRI list. All of our soil mixes we use are on the OMRI list. We've been here three years so the certification process shouldn't be too much of a hassle. We pretty much use organic practices.

I think what our motivation is that we don't think our customers care. Quite honestly it's such a small community but getting our GAP and getting our organic cert basically means that we can sell anywhere to whoever we want and not have any restrictions. If I wanted to raise three acres of cabbage down the line and get that into the City Market/King Soopers in our region, I can. If I wanted to sell certified organic stuff to the natural grocer that only buys stuff that's certified



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organic, I can. Then I won't have any trouble down the line selling to the school district if I feel like they're going to be some of the first ones to really require good agricultural practices. It's more of a thing. Remove any barrier that could be there even though our business model is fine right now.

Chris Blanchard: Staying ahead of the curve.

Mike Nolan: Yeah totally which is not something I've really pondered until purchasing this property and really everything settling in. The marketing has gotten easy. The growing has gotten a little bit easier. We're at a point where the farm and the business are profitable and relatively easy to manage. Now instead of scrambling to make changes, we're just making adjustments in the business model and in the practices to make things a little bit more streamlined or a little bit more easy. We're not worried about, "Can we make money or will we make money?" If that makes sense.

Chris Blanchard: Totally make sense. I'd actually like to ask you some more questions about that when we come back from our break.

Mike Nolan: Sounds great.

Chris Blanchard: All right. We're going to take this moment to go get a word from our sponsors and then we'll be right back with Mike Nolan from Mountain Roots Produce in Mancos, Colorado.

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We're back with Mike Nolan from Mountain Roots Produce in Mancos, Colorado. Mike, before we went our break I said I wanted to come back and talk about profitability because you said you're running a profitable operation. Tell us a little bit about the finances at Mountain Roots Produce.

Mike Nolan: What would you like to know exactly?

Chris Blanchard: Let's start with your gross sales. How many vegetables are you selling?

Mike Nolan: Diversity wise we're probably selling pretty high diversity about 30 plus different varieties or different crops. The sheer majority of the farm is potatoes, cabbage, onions and then some root veg rutabaga, turnip, carrot, beet.

Chris Blanchard: Yeah. If you put that into a dollar figure, how much you guys are selling in a year?

Mike Nolan: I think this year we're still crunching our numbers because we're still making sales right now. I think we're going to be sitting at about \$80,000 to \$90,000 gross. I think we're walking away with about 40% to 50% of that. We're in this mode of spending quite a bit of money on infrastructure and equipment right now. It's just in the last couple of years. Buying this property really helps. Actually paying a mortgage instead of a land lease.

Starting to have ownership for some of the equipment and really just the big thing that change for me a couple of years ago was being ... there seems to be an aversion to debt amongst a lot of growers especially like with a lot of things we have to purchase which is why I think the Jean-Martin model is reasonable because it's not asking you to make a \$20,000 purchase. It's \$350,000 BCS which is a lot different.



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I feel like I've become comfortable with going into smart debt. Basically working with my loan company which is American AgCredit which is treating me really well and being able to be like, "Okay I can buy a \$12,000 primary tillage John Deere tractor. I can buy a \$2000 flail mower. I can make these purchases and be able to look at projected income and all that stuff and make it easier." Also knowing that with some of these purchases and some of this what I call smart debt it's going to actually cut my labor down which allows me to instead of doing 20 things at 90%, I'm now doing 14 things at their full capacity if that makes sense. I'm not as frazzled.

That's part of the reason why I love the storage crop model because we'll plant out the sheer majority of the farm in a couple of week period and it's done. It's planted. It just needs water, to weed it and harvest. Harvest usually just comes in at one time and one big harvest. We're at five acres that there's only about three quarter acre to an acre that we're actually really managing on the day to day when it comes to weed pressure and harvest and the like.

Chris Blanchard: The profitability thing is always hard to measure especially when you're in a rapid growth phase, when you're making those investments and cash can be tight. Are you working off the farm or are you making your entire living here?

Mike Nolan: As of last year I'm not working off the farm anymore. It took me nine years to be able to do that. I still do a lot of other smaller things on the side. I help run a farm incubator training program about 20 miles away that I teach classes for. I teach classes with Colorado State and the La Plata County extension office for master gardener programs and the like. With all that, those sort of classes that I teach and the payments I get have just become bonus in the last 18 months as opposed to a necessary source of income.

I used to work at a bakery. I used to prune trees. I used to shovel snow. I used to do anything I could to be able to make it through the winter. It's only in the last 18 months where it's gotten comfortable enough to do that. Having my girlfriend, Mindy move down here and us joining forces has also been a great benefit. It's accelerated the process of being economically viable.

Chris Blanchard: When you talk about joining forces with Mindy tell me a little bit about that. Do you own the business together? How does that work?

Mike Nolan: We did a trial period to basically make sure that we could do this and still love each other at the end of the year because we were merging relationships, running businesses, living together, everything. It's a lot right off the bat. I think we did great. We had a really great season. This year what we did is that Mindy ran all of her stuff up in Telluride under her farm which was Early Bird Gardens and I ran everything over in Durango under my farm name Mountain Roots Produce.



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We had two different businesses running off the operation. What we did was anything that was going to benefit both the businesses, finishing the NRCS greenhouse we got last year. Irrigation stuff, any of those kind of things we split the cost on. Anything that seemed to be more ... something was more personal or that I really wanted that wasn't really needed, we would take those on personally as our personal businesses. Right now we're in the process of merging the business. We think that will simplify things a lot further for both of us because we're about to take on a lot more debt in building up some of these structures and building the wildlife fence around the property and making all these big adjustments and big changes. We're going to merge businesses for next year and just keep on chugging along.

We thought it really smart thing to do is run our own separate businesses. If I recall correctly I think that was the first question her dad asked her and the first question my dad asked me when we told them that was going on last winter which its smart advice. Merging everything right off the bat it's not simple. We're going to meet with an accountant. Mindy has some lawyer friends up in Telluride that are going to give us advice as well. it's not simple to dissolve one business, merge in another business. We have all these assets. We have multiple things each company is depreciating. We're about to be building out a bunch of infrastructure.

Chris Blanchard: I'm curious. You and Mindy joining forces. Mindy from her farm, you've got your farm. You guys mash it all up together. How is that going?

Mike Nolan: It's really interesting you asked that because we've had friends jokingly request that we do a presentation at a conference about it. To be honest it was really challenging. It wasn't just like we were a couple moving in together and we both have nine to five jobs. We were out of the house five days or a week or doing that kind of stuff or had schedules where we would each have alone time during the day. It was really challenging. I think we survived it and did really well. We really had to work on our communication, being transparent about what we need.

I think we both had to work on letting go because what you had here it's like I know a lot of the farmers around here we're all alphas for the most part. We're to a certain degree also ego driven just in the sense of it takes a lot to be able to run a farm, do your marketing, take financial risk, lease property, own property. The job of being a farmer is so multifaceted but it takes a pretty strong personality to be successful. We were both successful before we met each other but we figured we'd give it a shot. There's rough patches. There's great patches. I think we're figuring out ways to move forward that will make things better regarding how we run the businesses.

Merging the businesses first off. Realizing that having an employee is going to be beneficial not just to the farm and not just to our mental health and physical health but to our relationship as well because it will take some burden off of the farm. Yeah, I think it went really well. It was I think a risk for both of us, an



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experiment for both of us. I think at the end of the day we learned a lot. We love each other dearly.

Chris Blanchard: Mike I'm curious if there's anything that you guys have done, any systems that you've put in place I mean any formal or informal or specific changes in approach that you've made based on those rough spots or based on the good spots but things where you've gone like, "Okay, we're going to do this differently with some intention."?

Mike Nolan: I think two of the big things for me have been basically figuring out a space to being open to having somebody help you and being able to like, "Okay I need help on this." Which is a big deal because both of us had been doing stuff by ourselves for so long. That was a big thing of just being open for ... both of us being able to be open to be like, "Okay I need help on this. I can plug in on this." There's a big thing of just letting each other find each other specialties and letting those individuals run with it.

Like irrigation for example and greenhouse management are two great things. I didn't pick a single tomato and I don't know if I'll ever pick a tomato on this farm ever. That's what Mindy does and she'll do it better than I ever will. I don't really go near that even though the business reaps the benefit off of it. Then irrigation wise, I run a lot of the irrigation on the farm. There's a little bit of drift that Mindy runs as well but I move the sprinklers. I move the side rolls. I run the irrigation. I deal with the water issues and do that stuff.

I think one of the things we realize this year is to mitigate any miscommunications or anything and also to work on the good things is to really find those specialties. We both don't need to be doing everything the same all the time. We really need to divide and conquer. I think as the years go by, those specialties will figure themselves out a little bit more. That's been a really big help is like, "I'm on irrigation and I'm just dealing with irrigation for the whole day." Then you'll be like, "I'm in the greenhouse. I'm going to go tomatoes."

We'll be on the same farm but we won't see each other for most of the morning or most of the day which having personal space is super beneficial because we live together and work together. Finding those moments where we can be alone and still be productive is stellar and really great.

Chris Blanchard: How do guys plan out your weeks and days together?

Mike Nolan: It just turns into a blur. I feel you wake up and there's snow on the ground.

Chris Blanchard: Fair enough.

Mike Nolan: Really the delivery schedule is a thing that defines the rest of the week. As we get into the real time of picking crops, there's certain things like the green beans, the



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zucchini which we need to be after every 36 hours, 48 hours. Then I'm making phone calls on Mondays, delivering on Tuesdays Mindy is making phone calls on Monday s, delivering Wednesdays. I'm making phone calls on Thursdays and delivering Fridays. We work the harvest around that and work all of the weeding and weed management around that.

That's one of the awesome benefits about not going to work is that we get our weekends back to prepare ourselves properly for the week. When we had market going before, that regular delivery schedule didn't change. We were just going to market on the Saturday. Dropping that this year made us so everything opened up. Instead of Sunday turning into this burn out day for market where you still need to get stuff done and Saturday afternoon being absolutely shot, we're able to stay on top of irrigation which I think we did a lot better than I have done in years.

Staying on top of weeding which I think we did better that we have done in years. Just generally being able to hang out a little bit more. Sunday didn't feel as much of a crazy day. We could go out in the bakery in the morning and have breakfast and still get a lot done and not be burnt out for market and go into Monday with that schedule just running through. Our season is so short and so compacted. It just all of a sudden it's like I feel like you go from first gear to fifth gear really fast and then all of a sudden it freezes and it'll start snowing. You downshift really fast as well.

Chris Blanchard: Life in the mountains.

Mike Nolan: Yeah which is great. Our main properties this winter are to go cross-country skiing and cook a lot of food and prep for next year. Just sell through the food we have left.

Chris Blanchard: That was something I wanted to ask you about was your labor situation but it sounds like you and Mindy have been doing all the work.

Mike Nolan: We do a lot of it. We definitely had help this summer. We had some couple of friends in Durango that are one is a nurse. One works at the college and they have free time this summer. They came and helped us out with some weeding and other things like that. I see it all the time in a lot of the farms around here and when I meet other farmers from across the country. Having that leap of just having help when you need it to the benefit of having we're going to have somebody here from mid-April through mid to late October 40 hours a week W-2ed employee that's going to be able to be here from when some of the first transplants are going in to when some of the last crops are coming out.

Just having someone that's going to be able to see everything is really invaluable. When you have people coming in and out throughout the summer, I feel like it sometimes it turns into too many cooks in the kitchen. If I have to train somebody on doing something, Mindy and I are going to be faster than almost



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anyone we bring on. If I have actually decreased my productivity because there's two people here not really getting the full benefit of it. I see a lot of farms contemplating how do that thing where it's like you've got slim profit margins.

Can you afford to pay somebody \$10,000, \$12,000 for a full season to be able to come in and work with you? Will that make your business more profitable? Will it make your quality of life better? We've come to that conclusion this year is that we don't want to work ourselves into the ground. We want to work hard. We don't mind working 12, 14 hours a day but we want to work smart. We don't want to do silly stupid things all day and burn ourselves out. We want to maintain a quality of life where we're happy and healthy physically but also emotionally.

I think getting to that point part of that was becoming financially stable on the farm first and then now that we've got that in check and we know we can do it. Now it's like, "Okay, taking time off or making sure that we stop work every evening to make dinner before 10:30 at night. Making sure we're eating the food we're growing which I know a lot of farms that you'll have a couple of acres of produce in the summer and you're eating DiGiorno pizza which I've done many of times.

Chris Blanchard: I've been there, done that, too.

Mike Nolan: It's amazing, isn't it? It's like you spend all this time working stuff and selling this beautiful product but your quality of life is failing because you're not able to cook and find time to take care of yourself, which we really want to make a big change in that this year.

Chris Blanchard: What are you doing to get ready for having an employee next year?

Mike Nolan: Quite honestly not much right now. We had her come out last year and work for us for a couple of days. She worked at the farm incubator site down the road. With regards to preparations, our main preparation is working with an accountant to figure out all the worker's comp, all the rigmarole of actually hiring an employee is what we're trying to do. We don't want to 1099 individual. We want them to be an employee and it's a motivation for us to also put ourselves on the payroll for the first time and actually start paying ourselves even if it's very minimally. Start having that transfer from the business to our personal. That's the main preparation.

Then I think it's going to be a little bit of working it out with her throughout the season as she comes in. She really wants to learn which is great. We're going to be able to bring her in when we start the tomatoes in February March and have her help out here and there. Have her help out with the starch and that stuff. Then we'll just hit the ground running in mid-April. I think she knows that this is our first time going around with this. This is her first time as well working on a farm like this. I think we're pretty comfortable with each other to work it out together. Right now she's figuring out how does it work legally and on paper. Like



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what do we need to do at the state of Colorado and the Feds to be able to hire an employee which is all new to us right now.

Chris Blanchard: When we started out for conversation we did talk about how you're basically growing stuff in the desert. Can you tell us a little bit about your irrigation system?

Mike Nolan: Yeah, definitely. I would love to even just do a whole other podcast on talking about water in the west. I think that would be really fun.

Chris Blanchard: I'll tell you water in the west it's a crazy thing. I farmed on the California Nevada Stateline and that was one thing. I worked on a farm in Santa Barbara. That was crazy water wise. By the time it became time to settle, it was one of the reasons why I settled on a farm in the Midwest was because water in the west is just nuts.

Mike Nolan: It's crazy. Can I talk about it for a second?

Chris Blanchard: Yeah talk about it.

Mike Nolan: Give a little bit of history. Our water right in the Mancos valley are some of the oldest in the state of Colorado. When I bought my property, I have basically a little deed that comes along with it. My water rights date back to the 1880's. The system is so amazingly convoluted and complicated. I'm still learning about it to this day about how it all works. It's not like we just have a well. We can pull out of it. It's not like I just have water I can just turn off and on. Basically we have two different sources of water. We have the Mancos River which runs on a priority system.

Every single property in the Mancos Valley has a priority number attached to that. One being the highest and 62 or 64 being the lowest. Those numbers are adjusted everyday if not multiple times a day. Our priority number is 14. I might drive to town in the morning to go get a burrito or a cup of coffee and the priority would be a 17 meaning I have water. I'll come back an hour later and the priority will be 12 which means my water is being cut off right now. That's system was set into place in the 1880's and that's how a lot of the irrigation systems in Colorado work. It's basically a priority water system based on just the river flows and the snow pack runoff that's coming into the river systems.

We then have a secondary source of water which is Jackson Lake. That is basically an acre foot of water for every acre you own on your property. A lot of these pooled with other properties adjoining your property. We have a pipeline and just to go to what our system is. We have high pressure underground pipeline that has risers about every 90 to 100 feet on one edge of the property. I have high pressure water that's running at about 60 to 80 psi when I have water. We pool all that with all of our neighbors so that when we get cut off of the river, we can just call for say a third of a cfs and that all should get us through most of the season.



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When we call for that small amount of water which we have to communicate which with the main ditch rider on another ditch who then communicates that with the lake operator twice a week, we can then tease that water by coordinating with all of the other farms and properties on our pipeline so that all this get all our water needs met. That's not enough water for everyone on this pipeline to run everything at any time but we basically be like, "I'm going to be running water at night which I traditionally run water at night." I don't run it during the day.

A lot of the hay people will be running it off and on. Maybe running six hours during the day and six hours at night. Some people just use the irrigation water for lawns and for watering animals. It just takes out years. Just takes a lot of coordination. The really big thing that we're dealing with every year is that I don't know what my water situation is going to look like until May 1st or May 10th every year.

Chris Blanchard: When you say your water situation, what does that mean? Are you talking like how much you're going to have to grow with over the course of the summer?

Mike Nolan: Correct. Yeah. We don't really know where we're going to be sitting until early May. That's basically when they tell you how much of your allotment is going to come out of the lake because if you don't have a good snow year, the lake is not going to fill. If the lake doesn't fill, then you will only get a percentage of your total allotment. Say hypothetically we have 100 acre feet of water on this pipeline but the board that runs Jackson Lake if they say, "We're in a drought year. You're only getting 50% of your allotment." It means we only get 50 acre feed out of that 100 for this season.

Then we monitor ... I can tell through monitoring SNOTEL data which gives us moisture content in the snow pack up in the high country. I tell what's going on with how the river is going to run but we won't know about our lake water or reservoir water until sometime in early May. Sometimes it can be hard. We're definitely making purchases and starting starts and doing a lot of work with the possibility of our water might run out in mid-August. Our water might get shut off sometime in late July and then we just have to pray for monsoons to carry us over. It's really tricky and a lot of growers in the mountain west deal with that.

The thing is, is the way the priority systems work change from watershed to watershed and from irrigation district to irrigation district. I know you had the Zephyros Farm a few podcast ago, a few months ago. The way their water comes down is the same thing. It can be kind of a crapshoot but the way their system runs is completely different than our system. It doesn't necessarily translate from valley to valley. It's still the same issue of whether or not you'll have water and how much and when. That's a little bit of background on what we deal with water wise out here.



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To answer your first, your main question of what our water system looks like, we use drip irrigation on all of our what we consider high risk crops. That would be all of our salad mixes and spinaches and stuff that we just sell to the CSA's. Then for the most part, we run overhead irrigation on pretty much the whole entire rest of the farm.

Chris Blanchard: When you say your high risk crops, you're talking about from the food safety standpoint because all of your surface water

Mike Nolan: Correct. All of our water is surface water. We don't really want to apply that surface water onto what the FDA and FSMA considers extremely high risk crops. That's not anything we are required to do. It's just something like we're talking about earlier about building this packing shed and going through the whole GAP rigmarole. It's more like it's just a preventive measure right now. We don't really even want to mess with it. We actually don't think there's too much of an issue with the volume of water that's coming through our system. It's just one of those things where we might as well put the protocol in place now.

Chris Blanchard: Yeah again staying ahead of the curve. That seems to be the theme for you guys.

Mike Nolan: Yeah. We're doing our best for sure.

Chris Blanchard: Mike, you mentioned earlier that you were involved the National Young Farmers Coalition. Could you talk a little bit about what you're doing with them?

Mike Nolan: Yeah definitely. I'm the president of the Four Corners Farmers and Ranchers Coalition here which is a joint chapter between Rocky Mountain Farmers Union and National Young Farmers Coalition. We do basically a lot of policy work and a lot of education work. Some of that stuff is around through safety modernization act and GAP, good agricultural practices. It's coordinating meetings with our local representatives. It's doing work in DC on state policy our Cottage Food Act and that stuff. In the future we're going to be doing a lot of stuff on the farm bill.

We're going to be going to DC doing lobbying and doing workshops regionally about what the farm bill is and how it affects you. I put it out there. I know there's a lot of folks in a lot of different regions in this country but accessing things like your farmer's union, National Young Farmers Coalition, your conservation districts, anything like that, I just highly recommend young beginning growers to plug in to those things because there's awesome opportunities to advocate for yourself beyond your own farm and policy that can and will affect you on your farm.

It's been really beneficial for me. It's what my winter work has turned into is a lot of meetings and a lot of conference calls and that stuff. It's really enjoyable. I feel like I'm not just having an effect on my local food system with the way I grow products around here. I feel like I'm having a voice further out of my region both in Denver and in DC.



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- Chris Blanchard: Mike I agree absolutely. I know it was a hugely important part of my farm especially the early years was being an activist just because it got me in contact with other people and help me know the rest of the industry. That in it of itself regardless of anything that I accomplish or that the groups that I was involved with accomplished, that was worth it right there. Just getting the names and the faces and having those contacts that went really widely in the community was fantastic.
- Mike Nolan: I totally agree. Just getting out there and getting to know everybody. Some of your best resources are your neighbors and the old time ranchers and farmers out there. Even if they're raising something completely different than you, they have equipment and skills and storage that we can learn from so we don't have to reinvent the wheel on so much stuff.
- Chris Blanchard: Mike with that, I'd like to start our lightning round. What's your favorite tool on the farm?
- Mike Nolan: Oh goodness! You emailed me this earlier and I count about 10 tools in my head. Okay, lightning round I'll go fast. My favorite tool I'm in love with right now is a 1930's John Deere B single disk opener grain drill.
- Chris Blanchard: That's awfully specific. What do you love about it?
- Mike Nolan: What I love about it is that so much of the new technology out there is so sparkly and new and hi tech. This thing is from the 1930's. It actually when you open up the hopper on the top, it gives you all the seeding rates for rye and triticale and oats. It actually has hemp on there. It just works wonderfully. It's a beautiful tool to plant cover crop with. It doesn't have any moving parts except for some gears. There's no hydraulic power to it. It's just really simple and gets the job done really well. I borrow it off the neighbor. I'm looking to purchase one. I'm just in love with the simplicity and just how well made things were 60, 70, 80, 90 years ago.
- Chris Blanchard: If you could choose a farmer superpower, what would it be?
- Mike Nolan: The ability to weed things with my mind. Blast the Canada thistle out. Yeah, definitely.
- Chris Blanchard: Your favorite crop to grow?
- Mike Nolan: I really love raising potatoes. I just fall in love with that crop in the past few years. My learning curve has been really big on it. I have really good mentors. Brendon and Sheldon Rockey out of Center Colorado that had taught me a lot on it. I just think it's a beautiful crop. It's adapted to our elevation and our climate. When pulled off right, there's nothing like a fresh potato out of the ground.
- Chris Blanchard: What made you decide to become a farmer?



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Mike Nolan: I was doing a lot of work, a lot of social justice activism, a lot of direct action trainings nonviolence workshops during the early Bush administration. I basically got really disheartened and didn't feel like I had a voice. I got burnt out on a lot of stuff. We were doing activism around the first Iraq war and stuff like that. a friend asked me if I would come help her on a farm for a summer outside of Davis, California and I said yes.

I realized that farming is the one thing no matter your race, color, gender identity, political anything is everyone eats. The food system is one of the few things out there that touches everybody. I felt like it was a good way to channel a lot of the work I wanted to do in the world and also be able to work for myself and run a business and really make good change even though it's slow. You farm for 10 years. You only do it 10 times. It's a lot different than other professions.

Chris Blanchard: Yeah and especially the way you're doing it when you're growing the storage process instead of microgreens. You just don't get to plant potatoes very often.

Mike Nolan: Nope. I do it once a year.

Chris Blanchard: Finally, if you could go back in time and tell your beginning farmer self one thing, what would it be?

Mike Nolan: If I could go back in time, I think I would tell myself not to look at agriculture and the food system as so black and white. Not to look at it as conventional versus organic. GMO versus non GMO or anything like that. what I've learned in the past 10 years is that some of the best farmers I know and some of the most innovation is coming out of people that are just riding that middle ground cost. Not being walked out of a whole set of ideas just because they lie on one side of the agricultural spectrum.

We've gained so many things from ... large scale agriculture has brought us strip till, no till, drip irrigation so many things that we now utilize on a small scale. I think my younger self has really opposed to really having anything to do with anything on scaled up production. Basically I look back myself not being necessarily so close minded to really hearing all sides and hearing what the cost and benefits of everything in agriculture because I think we can all learn from everything on both sides.

Chris Blanchard: Mike, thanks so much for being part of the show today.

Mike Nolan: Thank you so much for having me. I really appreciated it.

Chris Blanchard: All right, so wrapping things up here. I'll say again that this is episode 98 of the Farmer to Farmer Podcast. You can find the notes for the show at



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[farmertofarmerpodcast.com](http://farmertofarmerpodcast.com) by looking on the episodes page or just searching for Nolan. That's N-O-L-A-N.

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Isabel Blanchard: If you think the show is worth a dollar, my dad would love to have it. You can support the show by going to [farmertofarmerpodcast.com/donate](http://farmertofarmerpodcast.com/donate). He's working to make the best farming podcast in the world and you can help. A buck a show is all we ask.

Chris Blanchard: Finally, please let me know who you would like to hear from on the show through the suggestions form at [farmertofarmerpodcast.com](http://farmertofarmerpodcast.com). I'll do my best to get them on the show. Thank you for listening. Be safe out there and keep the tractor running.