



FARMER TO FARMER

podcast



EPISODE 158

Angie Raines and Miles Okal on Rice, Dried Beans, and Diversified Vegetables on a Small Farm

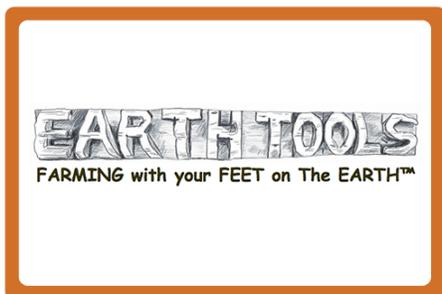
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Chris: It's the Farmer to Farmer podcast episode 158, and this is your host, Chris Blanchard. Angie Raines and Miles Okal raise diversified vegetables, rice, and dry beans at South Wind Produce in Rougemont, North Carolina. With sales at five weekly farmer's markets plus wholesale sales to restaurants, they have built a viable business in a short amount of time. Angie and Miles take us on a deep dive into their rice and dry bean production, as well as how they market these crops and how they fit into their farm economics and overall farm agro-ecosystem. We also explore how they stand out in the crowded marketplace in North Carolina's research triangle, how getting the business started on an incubator farm let them establish a business with less upfront risk, and how they manage the potential chaos of five farmer's markets a week on a small farm.

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- Chris: And by Vermont Compost Company founded by organic crop-growing professionals committed to meeting the need for high-quality compost and compost-based living soil mixes for certified organic plant production. VermontCompost.com.
- Chris: Angie Raines and Miles Okal, welcome to the Farmer to Farmer podcast.
- Angie Raines: Thank you.
- Miles Okal: Hey, Chris.
- Chris: So glad you guys could join us today. I'd like to start off by having one or both of you tell us about South Wind Produce, where you guys are located, what you're doing there and how you're selling it.
- Angie Raines: Yeah. So our farm is on ... It's a 47-acre farm in Rougemont, North Carolina, which is outside of Durham and Raleigh area and Chapel Hill. We have been on our land for three years. About half of it is woods. We've got about 20 cleared acres. But it's a little bit hilly, so we have 10 acres under cultivation. We sell at three farmer's markets in the triangle area. And that's the bulk of our sales. We also have started doing some wholesale business, mostly to restaurants. We grow maybe 40 different crops. And this is our third year of growing. We grow out about an acre of rice that we sell to markets and restaurants. And we grow about two acres of dry beans in addition to our mixed vegetables.
- Chris: And did you say ... About how many acres of vegetables, then? So an acre of rice, two acres of dry beans, and then how many of vegetables?
- Miles Okal: I think it was about five or six last year. It's kind of complicated how you measure it. We did some double-cropping, and then we're opening up some new land, and ...
- Chris: You said that you were kind of coming into your third year of farming on this piece of land. But you guys have been in business for longer than that, right?
- Miles Okal: That's right. So we started the business five years ago. It was actually just me had a Breeze incubator farm in Orange County. And they have a kind of a county-run farm out there where you have access to a tractor and cooler space, and you can rent per acre. There were a few farmers out there but ... So I kind of ... I've been working at other farms for a number of years. And I felt like it was kind of time to try to get out on my own there. And Angie ... We hadn't quite committed to farming together yet, but we were both in the area. And I went ahead and applied to some markets and signed a lease for the incubator farm and managed to convince Angie to join me over there later in that year. Yeah. We farmed together the second year, and I've relied on Angie's help plenty of Friday nights getting ready for Saturday market that first year as well. So thank you, Angie.



- Chris: Are you guys farming full-time? Is this something that you're making a living at here in your third year of operation here on your own farm, and you said your fifth year as a going concern?
- Angie Raines: Yeah. Yeah, it's working. Yeah. We're just kind of been slowly, slowly growing. But we're both doing it full-time. And I've actually kind of doubled our acreage of growing every year. And we've added a few more market since then. And so yeah. We go to five markets a week, and we are really doing a lot to get more restaurants. But it's working for us. We're both full time right now.
- Miles Okal: Yeah. This is the first year where it really felt like we were paying ourselves enough to feel okay. We weren't really scraping by this last year.
- Chris: So five farmer's markets is a lot of farmer's markets. I know a little bit about where you guys are located. But maybe you could flesh that out a little bit more. Because I think you guys are in the Research Triangle in North Carolina. Is that right?
- Angie Raines: It is, yeah. So it's three markets on Saturday. And then two of those markets have a mid-week that we go to. So one of them is in Durham, which is one of our big ones. And that market's been around for a while. And Durham is really kind of blowing up right now with the Research Triangle. It's a really well-attended market. The other one is Carrboro, which is one of the oldest markets around here. It's been around I think for about 30 years. And that one we've been in for a year now. And then Chapel Hill. And all of those have big universities, and they have people from all over. And so they're all pretty well-attended markets. And they do pretty good for us.
- Chris: You said three farmer's markets on Saturday? Did I hear that right?
- Angie Raines: That's right. Yeah. Miles goes to the Chapel Hill, and I go to Carrboro. And then we've had Miles's brother, who for a while was working on the farm, would go to Durham for us. And so I mean, it's kind of a complicated Friday where we are kind of doling things out and even trying to decide, "Oh, which market ... I can sell more radicchio in Carrboro, but I think that lettuce sells better at Durham." And so we ...
- Miles Okal: I'm like, "Give me all the red tomatoes for Chapel Hill."
- Angie Raines: Yeah. So we just kind of parse it all out and then send three trucks out early Saturday morning.
- Chris: Wow. That just ... Wow. I'll just leave it at that. I'm just a little stunned. Yeah. Three markets on Saturday.
- Miles Okal: It's an interesting area. So it's kind of small towns. And they're all about 20 minutes from each other. But there's no real big population center. I guess the closest thing would be Raleigh. And we don't really serve that market. We're more in the Chapel Hill, Durham area. And yeah. So they're smaller markets. If we had a bigger one, we could just go to one. But we have to make them all add up together to make it work.



- Angie Raines: We're relatively new at these markets. And it kind of takes people a little while to get to know us and become regulars. Because I mean, a lot of these customers already have their favorites. And when someone new shows up, I'm finding it takes them a few years to come back and start being regulars. So with the few of these that we've only been to one or two years, we don't really know what we can do. And so we're kind of just trying them all out and making ourselves known. And then we may go down to fewer. But at this point, it really seems to make sense to just see who is interested in our stuff and which areas are really the good ones for us.
- Chris: I think it makes a lot of sense. And I remember having to do that early on with our farmer's market scene as well. Just kind of figuring out where it really made sense to put our effort. As well as like you said, getting that recognition at farmer's market I think is surprisingly important.
- Angie Raines: Mm- hmm (affirmative).
- Chris: Now Angie, you had experience with farmer's markets for a number of farmer's markets before you came to North Carolina, right?
- Angie Raines: That's right. Well, I was the market master at the Dupont Circle farmer's market in DC. And I actually did that before I ever considered being a farmer. I was kind of living up in DC and not really sure ... I started getting interested in agriculture. I didn't really know where I wanted to go. And I started ... I got the job at the Dupont Circle market. And from there, I got to know a lot of the farmers. I actually knew one of the farmers there, Heinz Thomet of Next Step Produce, was always really engaging and would talk to me after market every day. And we got to know each other well. I started volunteering out at his farm every once in a while, just to get out of the city and see what it was all like. And after a few months of that, I think he just really sold me. And I packed up and moved to his farm, decided that maybe being a farmer was something I should try. So then the next year, I was full time on his farm.
- Chris: And is that where you guys met?
- Angie Raines: It is.
- Miles Okal: Yeah, we met there. We had actually met at the farmer's market. Heinz usually kept separate staff for market and for on the farm. But I would ... A few times a year, he would run short and I would go up to market with him. And I met Angie there. And she came out a few days, and we got together after that.
- Angie Raines: Yeah. He may have been one of the reasons why I kept volunteering there regularly.
- Chris: Is that "may have" with finger quotes?
- Angie Raines: It is. Oh, I mean there were a lot of... It was fun. But it made it nice that I got to spend a little more time getting know Miles.
- Chris: And how long were you guys together at Next Step Produce?



- Angie Raines: So Miles had been there a year already when I started. So then we were there ... I worked there from March until the end of November. And then that's when we came down to North Carolina after that season ended. So were together there for about one main season.
- Chris: I'm always curious. For being in a position like a market master or a market manager at a farmer's market, did you feel like that prepared you to be a better vendor when you started selling on your own?
- Angie Raines: Oh, I think so. I mean, it's so ... it's interesting to ... I mean, my job there was really to just kind of ... I mean, I'd go there and set everything up. But a lot of it was walking around and monitoring and how many people are there. And trying to get a good sense of what's engaging people. And I had a lot of time to walk around to kind of see where people were stopping and why, and talk to the farmers. And yeah. It was interesting to spend so much time at a market, paying attention to the flow, paying attention to where people's attention goes. And it's something that I still look at a lot. But yeah. And those markets there, I mean there's some really wonderful farmers who have some really interesting setups. So I think I even took just scribbling notes of, oh, people really seem to like where you can pick out your own lettuce into a basket and bag it themselves. Or people didn't seem to notice things when they were further back in the corner. And I think we utilize a lot of that in our stands. I mean, I'm constantly moving things around to see what people are noticing. Which is surprisingly ... I'm always surprised when people don't see things ... I try to make a big sign. But markets are busy and it's hard to notice everything.
- Chris: You talked about signage. I've always laughed because signage is one of those things that I think is really important and for a lot of people simply doesn't matter. The people that need it, really need it. But it's really hard to get somebody to notice something through the signage.
- Miles Okal: It's not even there if there's no sign. It can be beautiful and people will just look right over it.
- Chris: Now you said five farmer's markets a week there. So you've got markets, you've got three of them on Saturday. What other days are you guys doing markets?
- Angie Raines: So on Wednesday afternoons, we go back to the Carrboro and the Durham markets. And that one is from 3 to 6 in the afternoon, so it's for kind of people picking up their kids from school, and it's kind of people coming home from work. But a big reason that we do those markets is our chefs come and pick out stuff. So we have a big harvest day where we've gotten all our chefs' pre-orders in. And those are stacked up behind our market booth. And then we'll have a few things there for the shoppers. But it ends up being a really good thing to be in town mid-week. Because a lot of the chefs like to come. And they'll buy a little extra, and they like to look at what's going on at the market. So they're not as well attended, but we find that with the restaurant orders, that they do well for us.
- Chris: So are all of your restaurant orders picked up at farmer's market? Or are you guys running a delivery route in addition to that?



- Angie Raines: We also run delivery. Now that the Wednesday market is over, we do pretty much an all-afternoon run on Wednesdays. And actually next year, we're kind of thinking about doing a pretty much mostly deliveries. Yeah. Not all the chefs like to come out. And parking is a little challenging.
- Chris: What kind of breakdown do you guys have between restaurants and farmer's market sales at this point?
- Angie Raines: Markets about 80% of sales, and restaurant is about 20% right now. And this past year was actually the first one that we really are looking for new restaurants and really trying to go that route. I think for a while, we were just too overwhelmed, just kind of getting our business started. I didn't feel comfortable sending out availability lists and promising these things. But this year was the first year we really went for it. And it just turned into a really good source of income for us. And I really enjoy it. I really like meeting the chefs and talking to them about the food. And so this year again, we're going to try and then really push for more chefs. We're kind of trying to get better lists. And we are planting a little bit less variety this year, and we're looking for more flow and more continuity in what we have to appeal to chefs. Because we think that that's a really good way to expand. Especially as part of the Triangle, we haven't even really been to Raleigh yet. But there's just restaurants opening all the time. And so we're going, yeah, a little hard on that this year.
- Chris: We're going to get to the beans and rice during this conversation. But I'm also curious because on your website, you talk about Italian and Japanese specialty varieties. And I'm curious what that looks like for you guys.
- Angie Raines: A big part of it was coming into these markets where people have been selling there for 20, 30 years, and we are the new people. And we can't just show up with a bunch of red tomatoes and bibb lettuce. And so we just kind of been scouring seed catalogs, looking for new varieties of things. And I think what we tend to look for are things that are sort of familiar to people. We don't want to go way out there. But that's also just a little different. Something new for then to experiment with. And we've found a lot of luck in radicchios and with just kind of new varieties of cucumbers and special peppers. And I just tend to look a lot to Italian cookbooks to what's going on with a lot of Asian restaurants that are opening up. And seeing what the chefs are serving and seeing what seems interesting and new.
- Chris: What have been some of your favorite discoveries in that department?
- Angie Raines: I think that ... I mean, we started growing a little bit of the spigarello. It's kind of a leaf broccoli that we cut ... We cut the stem and we bunch it. Because we've been finding that we just cannot sell kale that well at our markets. I mean, kale is everywhere. But it's a great thing to sell because it's so prolific. But we've found that the spigarello, we can kind of harvest and bunch it just as fast. We get about the same price for it. We get similar yields. But it's a little bit different for people. It tastes like broccoli. It's got these nice soft, kale-like leaves. And no one's really afraid of it. And no one is shying away from trying something new with that one, because it's familiar. So that has been a really fun one. And we're growing ... Yeah. We're doubling it again this year.



- Chris: All right. That's great. And then it seems like you are doing a lot with some different varieties of radicchio.
- Angie Raines: Yeah. That's all experimental right now. We kind of just realized that people were willing to buy it. I think for so long, farmers were saying, "Oh, no one will buy that. No. No one will buy that." And actually when we started growing we would say, "Oh, let's just plant a little bit and see how it goes." And we found that if you do only have six on your table that it is true, that no one will buy it. But this past winter I was like, "Let's just do a bunch of varieties. We'll just set out a whole section and we have to have these mountains of radicchio at our markets." And that's when people are all of a sudden saying, "Oh, this is so interesting," and willing to try it. I mean, people are coming back for it. There's also with these university towns, there's customers from all over the country and from all different walks of life. And so many people are even teaching me how to eat it. So that has become a new popular item for us, which is really exciting. Because I have a lot of fun growing it.
- Chris: I really like that idea that when you have a lot of radicchio all of a sudden people start buying it, whereas if you do have just six of it on your stand ... I mean, there is of course what I call the PhD of produce, right? Pile it higher and deeper. And people will be attracted to that. But I think it's also when you've got six of them on your stand, then it's a weird thing, right? Whereas if you have a pile, then people look at it and go, "Well, why am I not eating that?"
- Miles Okal: Yeah.
- Angie Raines: Yeah, it's funny how it works that way.
- Chris: Have you found a lot of interest in your restaurant customers about the different Italian varieties?
- Angie Raines: Oh, yeah. Definitely. I mean, I think that's why I felt comfortable planting so much. There are so many great Italian restaurants around here. And a lot of them have been open just five or so years, and some a lot longer. But they're just kind of hungry for new things. I mean, I have just emailing me saying, "What's weird? What's different? What's something new for me?" And so they have definitely been some of our big buyers for the radicchio. Which helps too, because then I get tips from the chefs that I could share with the market customers. I find that the way to sell some of these radicchios is to say, "Oh, at this restaurant, this is how they prepare it and it's really so ..." It's a lot of really simple preparations. And people love I think to try and do what the chefs are doing.
- Chris: And what about the Japanese specialty varieties? Because we've had a lot of people on the show talk about their radicchio production. But what about when you talk about the specialty varieties from Japan?
- Angie Raines: Yeah. I'm actually trying to pick ... We have cut a good bit of it out.
- Miles Okal: We were doing a lot of Asian greens in the first few years. But we've had a hard time with our climate down here. It gets so hot and they bolt so quickly. As well



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as trouble with flea beetles. They're not the easiest thing to farm down in this climate. We go very quickly from a cold winter to a very hot summer. But we do grow our daikon radishes and ...

Angie Raines: Yeah. I love the frying peppers.

Miles Okal: Oh yeah.

Angie Raines: We found a few of the bigger ... Everyone has shishitos now, and so we ... I mean, the Kitazawa seed catalog is something that we're going through a lot, to see what's new ... It's the same thing. It's like everyone knows shishitos, so we're just looking for something maybe a little bigger from a different region, and see how they prepare it. So we've had luck with some of the bigger frying peppers. And then I think with that then, it's also the rice. We have the original seed from the Kitazawa Seed Company for one of our heirloom rice varieties.

Chris: Okay. So there you go. Let's talk about rice. I mean, okay. So for me now ... And maybe this is just an ignorance issue. But to me, rice seems like a crop that comes from either California or the deep South, not something that comes from North Carolina. So am I just completely off base about that? Or are you guys doing something really weird and different?

Miles Okal: I mean, we're definitely doing something really weird and different for America. But I think rice is grown in most latitudes in Asia, and ...

Angie Raines: Well, it's grown all over the US. And it's in Louisiana and Texas and everything. I think I would ... I don't know. I think I would change that and say, it's different for our region.

Chris: But growing rice on an acre. Because that's the other thing that I think about rice. I think about Lundberg Family Farms, growing rice out in California. And they're not doing it on acres. They're doing it on hundreds or thousands of acres. And here you guys are doing it on this very small scale. Can you tell me more about how that works?

Miles Okal: So I mean our production system is fairly similar to vegetables. We plant it in three rows on a bed, similar to just growing any three-row vegetable crop. I think we stuck with one-foot spacing in the row for everything. We actually did it all in plastic mulch this year, with drip tape. And we grew out starts in the greenhouse, transplanted then with the water wheel. It took a whole week to get it in the ground. And I mean, we're trying to figure out better systems, more efficient systems to do that. But it's a shelf-stable crop that it's very high-yielding. 6,000 pounds an acre I think would be a really good yield. And we haven't quite hit that yet. But if you can get a good price per pound at the market and through your wholesale outlets, it's kind of ... It's great to have something in the cooler that you can just pull out and take to market. And people really like it. It's delicious rice. It tastes great. It's a little bit different. And we've found people are enjoying it.

Chris: So growing it just like you do the rest of the vegetables. But of course the harvest must be a little bit different.



Miles Okal: Uh-huh. So we combine it. I went and found an old International pull-type combine about 90 miles away on Craigslist. And I got lucky that it was still in service. The farmer had kept it around for in case his bigger combine broke down on him, he could just go in there and finish the day's harvest with that. So it was a well-maintained machine. And I just pulled it home nice and slow behind my pickup truck 90 miles. But it's served us well. It had a few mishaps with it. Just an old machine with a lot of moving parts. But it does a great job and it's really fascinating to work on. And it really just does an excellent job. I'm impressed with the grain that I've been able to harvest.

Miles Okal: And so with the combine ... I decided that if I had the combine on the ground and we had a few acres free, I could figure out other places to use it. So this last year, I actually harvested about five acres of different crops, mostly cover crop seed. So I don't plan on harvesting cover crops every year because I guess then they're not cover crops. But this year, I grew about an acre and a half of buckwheat and a little over two acres of cereal rye. My plan with that was originally to harvest the cover crop in two passes and maybe be able to get the red clover that was growing down below too. But it didn't quite work out with the timing on when each of those is ready. But it was nice to fill up our grain cooler with plenty of field seed just ... And I don't have to worry about ordering it up. Just got it in the cooler. And I think it'll last a couple years in there. And I can just go to grab it whenever I need to put a field in cover crop. I reseeded most of our vegetable land with the rye this year. And I thought that was pretty neat to be spreading and using the seed that I had combined off our own land.

Chris: Kind of a fun closing of the loop there.

Miles Okal: Yeah, exactly.

Chris: With the rice, so you're harvesting that with the combine. Is there a further cleaning step involved in getting that ready for sale?

Miles Okal: Yeah. So when you harvest rice, it's green. And so you need to basically dry it down, bring it down another 5 or 10% moisture. And I was able to do that just piling it on a big old hay wagon and putting a tarp down on the hay wagon and piling it high and putting it out in the sun during the day and turning it with a grading rake, and then moving it inside at night to get it ... move it into the barn at night to get it out of the dew. And was able to get it down to the 14% moisture. And then there's a hulling process. So each grain of rice has ... It's the grain inside. And then there's a little paper hull on the outside that needs to be removed. And then you can send it through a cleaning process. And all of this processing we're able to do through Heinz Thomet, Next Step up in Maryland. He's kind enough to allow us to bring some crops up there in the early winter to get cleaned. And he's invested in quite a bit of machinery up there. It's really impressive to see.

Miles Okal: His first year growing rice and a lot of grains was my first year there. And so I was seeing him from the ground up, tinker and figure out what he needed for his systems. And we're able to keep in contact. And he visits down here and we go up there. And he's kind enough to help us out with cleaning for a reasonable, reasonable exchange.



- Chris: So it is something that requires some fairly specialized equipment to actually bring it to fruition.
- Miles Okal: It really does. I mean, it's not something to get into lightly. It's not something that we would be trying to do unless we had access to that de-hulling and grain-cleaning process. I think we may end up investing in a fanning mill or an air screen cleaner. But I think that's as far as we would like to take it. But there are other processes. And the more money and time you want to spend on it, the better your product. And Heinz is this German-Swiss guy, very exacting. So he's invested in a lot of really good equipment to get the grain cleaned.
- Chris: Are you making money on the rice? I mean, does it actually pan out on a per acre, per labor hour unit basis?
- Miles Okal: This is our third year growing, and this last year I feel like ... Our harvest that we took this last fall I think will pay some return. Where our first few years, we had some crop failures and there was a lot of getting to learn our equipment and our systems. But I think if we can charge what we need to charge, we can make money on it. It's nice to have income coming in in January. Does it add up? If I could grow an acre of tomatoes in July and sell them, I think we would do that. But we don't have the markets for that at the price we want for tomatoes.
- Angie Raines: I think that this year ... This year's the first year that it seems to ... We've yielded enough, and we sell it at markets for \$8 a pound, same for wholesale. And I think this year was the first time when we were wondering if it would all sell. We harvested enough that it was ... We were wondering if after the novelty if people would want to pay \$8 a pound for rice. But I'm finding in my markets that there are few people that are eating it every week, and they're coming back for a new bag. And there are so many people who just love that it's there and it's local. And people are being really supportive of that. So it's definitely something that's making us money. Especially here in the winter when we've got a lot ... we don't have a lot coming out of the ground yet. It's doing well.
- Chris: You said \$8 a pound.
- Angie Raines: Yes. It's really good rice. I mean, I've never sold it to someone who came back and said, "Oh, it was just okay." I mean, you can really taste the freshness. And I think it's something to do with the varieties too. Mostly I think because it's brown rice, we have not removed the outer layer to make it white rice. But it doesn't ... Those oils haven't had time to spoil. And so the flavor is just something totally new and fresh. And yeah. Everyone is noticing that. So it's going all right.
- Chris: So when you said that, I'm actually remember reading ... This has been 20 years ago. But in the macrobiotic cookbook actually recommending that people eat white rice instead of brown rice because the oils in the brown rice got rancid that were left in that outer layer. That's what you're talking about here right, with the flavor.
- Angie Raines: It is. And I think that's why people will say, "Oh," I've had a lot of people say, "Oh, I don't like brown rice." And that's the flavor. It's kind of that ... You



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associate it with this just kind of earthy, healthy thing that you have to eat. But when it's fresh like this, I don't think a lot of people tell the difference white rice. And even a lot of our chefs have been using it for risottos, which is normally something that I don't think any chef would say is okay to do with brown rice. But because it's so fresh and light, it still works really well.

Chris: Wow. Okay, okay. And is that something you find yourself having to explain to every customer that comes along? Or is this something where people are looking at it going, "Oh, fresh brown rice. We know what to expect from this."

Angie Raines: Yeah. No one really seems to know how good it's going to be. Or I don't think new crop rice... It's popular in Japan I think, but not so much here. But people are definitely curious just for the fact that it's grown here. And so we start a lot of conversations just saying, "What is this? What is this all about?" And I find that customers seem to all kind of gather around. And now that we have enough people that are really on board with it, I find some people are selling it to this person standing next to them like, "I had this last week and you won't believe how good it is." And the word spreads. So yeah. It's not something people expect. But they're willing to give it a go once. And then we get them hooked.

Chris: Isn't that the best, when you've got a customer at farmer's market who turns to the stranger next to them and says, "You have to try this."

Angie Raines: I think it works every time. Yeah. It's wonderful.

Chris: Is it just one kind of rice that you're growing? Or do you have ... I think that Miles mentioned a couple of different varieties.

Angie Raines: Yeah. So we in starting out kind of had a hard time finding the seeds for these different crops. But we've scoured and found from the Kitazawa catalog, there's one called Koshihikari. That's a Japanese heirloom sushi rice that's actually pretty well known in Japan. And then just kind of looking through seed catalogs. So we have a variety called Blue Bonnet that we found at Baker Creek. And that is actually a long-grain rice that from my research I found it was grown a lot in Texas in the '70s. And then from Southern Exposure we have one called Hmong Sticky. It's a sticky rice that is one of the sweetest and best flavored ones. And so when we first grew out, we started on about a quarter acre. And we had to buy all those seeds. But since then, we've been saving our own seeds. And we found that these three varieties do really well for us. It's nice to have the variety at market. And some of them yield better than others. But it's good to have something to talk about and for different people to try different types.

Chris: How much talking do you have to do to sell the rice?

Angie Raines: I've found that ... I mean, it's one of those things where it's familiar, but it's not exactly something you know. And I think those are always my favorite crops. And so someone's looking at a bag of rice. They're not so confused. We put on there the ratio of water to rice, and the cook time. And I think people want to know most about why it's \$8. But we really explain that we're trying to do this nearby, we really want to provide local grains, and that we think that the quality and flavor is really worth trying. And I find that most people are willing to try it



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once. And then I find that a lot of those people have been coming back. So it's nice that it's not something so crazy that they've never tried before.

Chris: And is this something that you see an expanding acreage in your future with this crop? Or is this something that you think is an acre and that's just where you're going to ... you're just going to keep going at that level?

Miles Okal: I think an acre is a good amount of rice to grow. So we have 10 acres that we can grow on. And it gets challenging when you're growing large acreages of one thing to figure out the rotations and where to move things around. I think one acre of rice, especially unless we can figure out a more efficient system that fits in our production scale.

Angie Raines: We did do it on plastic this year, just as kind of ... to keep the moisture in and to make sure it worked well. But it's something that we don't want to continue doing. I mean, that's a lot of plastic. So as we kind of work on our systems, we're trying to eliminate that as well.

Chris: And so let's talk about dry beans. Because I feel like that's ... Am I right that that's in the same kind of growing category and marketing category as the fresh rice?

Miles Okal: So the beans have been ... They've actually impressed me. Everyone loves the beans. If we could grow more, I would grow the beans. And the problem comes in that they really yield much less than the rice does. And without specialized equipment, it's really challenging and almost disheartening. I go out there with the combine and combine these beautiful beans that I've taken care of all season. And there are so many that get left on the ground. They'll shatter. If I can't get to them in the right day, they'll shatter. There was a time this season where I was able to get out there in the morning and did a bunch of beans. And then I had to take care of some other stuff. I left it till the next day and just overnight with some warm winds, it had dried the pods more. And the beans started falling out ahead of the combine.

Miles Okal: But everyone loves them. We even did some fresh beans, which is something that I would like to do more of. Kind of a limited-time thing. We'll do one or two picks of the beans when they're still moist and fresh and go out there and bring those to market. Everyone was really excited about those. They taste delicious.

Chris: Is that a shell pea where you sell it in the shell? Or is that something where you guys are actually taking them out of the shell before you sell those fresh beans to the customers?

Miles Okal: Yeah. We'll go ahead and shell them. We like how it looks and kind of that value added quality of that. If we're charging ... To charge what we need, I feel like we should go ahead and shell them for people. We have a small shelling machine that we got Roto Fingers Pea Bean Sheller back when we were planning to do more acreage of shelling peas in the spring. But our soils ... We have a hard time with legumes in the spring. Our soils are a little wet and cold. But so they're an interesting crop because I was able to do a double crop. So we did our ... I was able to grow them on the same ground that we did our spring cabbages and lettuce. So it was kind of the nice, almost a cover crop for the late summer, for



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that land. So it felt like even though they didn't yield a lot, I was still actively farming that land, managing it, keeping the weeds out, growing a crop. And hopefully returning some organic matter to the soil and maybe nitrogen because they're legumes. It seemed to fit the schedule well there.

- Chris: You mentioned having some challenges at the harvest time. Are you growing those beans on bare ground, or are those on plastic like the rice is?
- Miles Okal: Yeah, those are on bare ground. Few rows to the bed. And I cultivate them with our G tractor.
- Chris: So pretty much just again, a standard vegetable crop style of growing and maintaining.
- Miles Okal: Yeah. Exactly. Yup.
- Chris: So you go through and combine those. And then again, you must have some cleaning that you have to do after the combining to actually get them ready to put in a bag and sell as food at farmer's market.
- Miles Okal: Yup. And again, we're lucky to be able to rely on Heinz to clean some of those. We're able to take them up there and he's got a few different machines. The air screen is really great. They'll get a lot of the broken and large and small beans out. And other trash. And then he actually has a really interesting machine, a color sorter which actually has a little camera eye and an air jet that will kind of blow out any split beans. A pretty incredible piece of equipment.
- Chris: Really wonderful to have access to that.
- Miles Okal: Yeah. It's been great.
- Chris: And then for packaging these, I see on your Instagram feed that you've got these in relatively small bags. How are you guys getting those into the bags and getting the bags weighed out?
- Angie Raines: Yeah. We sell them in one-pound bags. And it's still pretty much all kind of done by hand. It's something that I might like to mechanize later a little better. But just as we're experimenting with all of this, we just got some poly bags from Uline. We scoop them in the one-pound bags. I've made some labels that we're putting on there. And then we have an impulse peeler from Uline as well, that makes a nice little crimp. It maybe takes a little longer than it should. We've been looking at other ways of maybe putting a band on them. But it's a really nice look at market. And I really like the clear packaging so people can see the different beans. And they're just so beautiful. I feel like we kind of look to Rancho Gordo and other companies and see how they're selling theirs and what works. And so we're doing all that by hand now. But it doesn't take too long. We get a little line going and it works all right.
- Chris: With the dry beans ... I mean okay. So the rice ... When I think in North Carolina, I'm hot and humid and sticky. So I go like, "Okay, rice." Then I think about beans and I go hot and humid and sticky, and that doesn't strike me as being dry bean climate.



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- Angie Raines: Yeah. We've been trialing so many different varieties, just to see what works for us. I mean, a lot of what's often grown around here is sort of the field peas like black-eyed peas and lima beans. And that's what's been grown around here for so long. But we really wanted something that's more specialty. And so ...
- Chris: So you're just really experimenting your way through the varieties to find things that are going to work for you guys.
- Miles Okal: Yeah, we are. So we found that growing a white bean isn't a great idea. We'll get kind of this rust color on it. So we've been going more toward the black beans and the speckled beans because of that. But I think I really like growing them. I think on our scale, it's possible to get away with these more finicky crops than ... I wouldn't go and plant out 30 acres of dry beans because it might be difficult to get everything done in the windows you need. But on one or two acre scale, you can watch carefully and get things done at the appropriate time. We've had pretty good success with the beans, keeping a careful eye on everything.
- Angie Raines: And one of the other things with these beans because we are harvesting with a combine is we're looking for varieties that grow really straight and tall and kind of have their beans sitting up high. And so that's something else. As we're testing different varieties, we want some things that the combine can catch, because we're not really looking to any specialized equipment. So we've found about three varieties right now. And I keep doing little test plots to hopefully find a few more that'll work with our system.
- Chris: And as you guys are saving your own seeds from the rice and the beans, are you doing really intentional selections with that? Or are you just taking seed out of the crop that you're harvesting?
- Miles Okal: We're just taking seed out of the crop. We're not doing any selection at all. With the rice, sometimes we can look at the seed, kind of go through it before we plant again to make sure we don't have any cross-contamination. Do the same thing with the beans. But we're not selecting for traits or anything.
- Chris: Okay. All right. With that, we're going to stop here, take a quick break, get a word from a couple of sponsors. And then we'll be right back with Angie Raines and Miles Okal from South Wind Produce in Rougemont, North Carolina.
- Chris: The Farmer to Farmer podcast is brought to you by BCS America. BCS two-wheel tractors are often mistaken for just a rototiller, but it is truly a superior piece of farming equipment. Engineered and built in Italy where small farms are a way of life, BCS tractors are built to standards of quality and durability expected of real agricultural equipment. The kind of dependability that every farm needs. I have worked with BCS Tractors for over 20 years, and I wouldn't consider anything else for my small tractor needs. And I am not the only fan. More than 1.5 million people in 50 countries have discovered the advantages of owning Europe's most popular two-wheel tractor. And these really are small tractors with the kinds of features found on their four-wheel cousins and a wide array of equipment. Power harrows, rotary plows, [inaudible 00:46:53] mowers, [inaudible 00:46:54] and sickle-bar mowers, chippers, log splitters, water pumps and more. Check



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Chris: All right, and we're back with Angie Raines and Miles Okal from South Wind Produce in Rougemont, North Carolina. So you guys started off at this Breeze incubator farm. And tell me a little bit more about how that worked and how or if that was helpful when you guys started farming out on your own land with your own equipment.

Miles Okal: I mean, it was a great benefit. Orange County, the county where we are now, puts it on. And the idea is that they're trying to incubate new farm businesses. Orange County has more populated Chapel Hill in the south, and up north there are all these old tobacco farms. And that's becoming less profitable. The area will most likely remain in farm land because a lot of the soils out there don't perk for septic systems. So there's a lot of land out there. And I guess they just want people to do something with it. But it was great in that it provided access to land. A little bit of mentorship, but it was more a peer mentorship. So there were two other farmers out there in a similar situation starting, one person was doing a mixed flower and vegetable operation. The other one just a vegetable and a few flowers. But we're all kind of out there, each renting an acre or two and a sharing prep area and a well and use of a tractor.

Miles Okal: The thing that was really great about it was it allowed us to start our business with minimal investment and kind of test the market. We're entering a crowded market. There are a lot of small farms in the area, and we weren't sure if there was room for one more. And through the incubator farm, we could get moving, get product and start going to market. And also just see if we liked it. I mean, I'd worked on other farms, a season on a CSA farm, the few summers in college. And then a few years in Maryland, and then down in North Carolina. And I didn't know how it would go working for myself, being the decision maker. And I got to try that out and see if I'd like going to Saturday market every week. And it was kind of a low-risk way to start and see if we liked it.

Angie Raines: Yeah. I mean, Miles actually started it and I was still unsure too. So I was working on area farms that first year and still trying to learn as much as I can. And then me joining him, it was the same thing. It was just like how do we work together? What makes sense for our business? Should we both be out there farming together? Should we kind of split what we do? And it's just been a good



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way for us to, yeah. Definitely test the market, see who's interested in our product, and work together and see how that goes. Because it's hard. I mean after we bought our land, we learned even more. It's really hard to have so many decisions to make together. And so having that market and having product already as we transitioned into our new land was just kind of this nice little bit of safety net that made us feel more comfortable taking those risks.

Chris: When you talk about learning to work together, was it different on the incubator farm than it was when you guys started your own farm? Did things change for the two of you?

Angie Raines: Once we started building our infrastructure and kind of making decisions on kind of big projects, I think we really learned at that point that it's really better of us to kind of divide up and just kind of let Miles take his projects and I'll take my projects. And I think it was hard for us to kind of ... We don't like to sit down together and make sure we're both on the same page with each thing. I would say, "I trust you to figure out where the well's going to go and get all that handled. And I'll go back and start doing our crop planning." And yeah. I think making these bigger decisions really left us to kind of get good at our own things. And I think we've been doing pretty well that way.

Chris: You agree, Miles?

Miles Okal: I think we're doing great. Better and better.

Chris: But that time on the incubator farm. So what I'm hearing is that that was important for just kind of getting your toe in the water without taking huge amounts of risk.

Miles Okal: Yeah, exactly.

Chris: So Angie, you just mentioned where the well's going to go. And I noticed on your Instagram feed that you guys have dug an irrigation pond recently. And so did you guys buy blank land? Or did you guys buy an existing farm?

Angie Raines: Yeah. We bought ... This farm had been a tobacco farm for generations. And then for about the past ten years, it's been on a wheat-soy rotation, all done very conventionally. But there was no infrastructure. There was no well. There were no buildings. A few old run-down tobacco farms was about all there was. And that's kind of what we wanted. I mean, we had looked for a while for a farm with maybe a nice little house on it. But in this area, there just wasn't something that fit all of our needs. So we kind of said, "Hey, let's just start from scratch." And so that second year on our incubator farm, we went ahead and got that land. And in between farming, we would do things like yeah, pick out a well site. We put up a greenhouse. And tried to get some irrigation going. The problem was our well, they dug 550 feet down and it was still just a four gallon a minute well. Which is not great for ten acres of produce.

Angie Raines: And so it took us a while to really get all of the proper infrastructure. It was about another year before we were able to dig this pond. But now we've got about a ten acre-foot pond, which really meets our needs. And it has allowed us



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to grow so much more this year. And we're just slowly building every winter. I mean, we're adding more and more.

Chris: So have you guys put up a house? Do you guys live on the farm?

Angie Raines: We've got a little cabin that Miles and a friend built about two years ago. And so we're situated there and still hoping to grow a little more and get a little more space in the future.

Chris: And then you had mentioned having a specific grain cooler. Is that something different than having a vegetable cooler?

Miles Okal: So it's pretty similar. We just got these finished this fall. We went ahead and put in three coolers, three walk-ins. One for vegetables, one for warmer vegetables, and then one just to keep seed in. We can cool it down nice and low or we can raise it up higher if we have something else we want to put in there. We just wanted flexibility. And we kept finding we would have another crop that we would need to put at a different temperature somewhere else. So we went ahead and did a three-door cooler. Yeah, the grain cooler ... So we're kind of doubling that as a tomato cooler in the summer right now.

Chris: You've talked about selling the rice and the beans in the wintertime at market. Are you guys also selling vegetables in the wintertime at market?

Angie Raines: Well, we're selling what we've got. This winter has been pretty unusual for North Carolina. We do have one high tunnel up. But we had planned to save that for kind of late spring crops. So it's got some baby arugula and lettuces in there now. But we had planted about two acres of things to harvest throughout the winter. And then I mean, we've gotten temperatures down to negative 2, which is really unusual around here this year. And we have had about 10 inches of snow, which is really unusual around here. And so this year has kind of really tested the things that we can do outside, the things that are worthwhile. But we've got a few things that are hanging on there. Especially the radicchio has just powered us through. It's just so nice to have something fresh and green. And luckily, I kind of overdid it this year on those. So right now, we've got kale and radicchio. And the rest is kind of smushed under the covers.

Chris: And you said a high tunnel. Now you guys have a fairly large high tunnel, don't you?

Miles Okal: We do. It's 30 by 200. When we were working at Next Step, he had rather large tunnels as well. And I kind of just ... I guess I got used to having a full 200-foot row in the tunnel. And we just decided to go ahead and put one of those up. I think with the thermal mass, it'll stay warmer in the winter. And we also wanted it tall enough to be able to drive the tractor in through the end wall, all the way up against the side wall. So but I mean, I guess it's large. I mean, I really like it. I can use all the same tools and production methods that I use outside as inside. And it kind of fits our system pretty well.

Chris: I know in a recent interview, we were talking to somebody who has actually two or three different production systems on their farm. One portion of the farm that's managed with a two-wheel BCS tractor, and another portion of the farm



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that's managed with completely different-size beds and completely different tooling with four-wheel tractors. And I think it's interesting. Because I feel like both of those things have some advantages. But man is it nice to be able to use the same system both inside and outside, and everywhere on your farm.

Miles Okal: Yeah. It works for us. We use the same standard 200-foot bed on most of the farm.

Chris: I mean, you mentioned having the G for weed control. What are you guys doing for cultivating the edges of the plastic? I mean, you talk about an acre of plastic on your rice and I assume on some of the other vegetables as well. That becomes a pretty important undertaking on the farm.

Miles Okal: We've had mixed success of a few different things. Last year, it did rain a bunch. And I kind of got behind on our early melon planting. But I've had good success with just kind of clearing the pathways with I guess it's like a shovel, behind our big tractor on a three-point hitch on a toolbar. And that throws a little bit of soil and kind of cracks it up. And if you get it at the right time, that will disturb the whole area. And then if that doesn't quite work, I can go back in with the G and get kind of close to the edge, get a knife under the plastic bed, and one of Bezzeries wheel and put that right on the edge. And I have to do that row by row. I haven't figured out a good way to get both sides of the edge at once. But it's still a lot faster than going at it with a hoe.

Chris: Well yeah. And I think even if you have to go up one side and turn around and come back down the other like you said, it still beats all that hand weeding.

Miles Okal: Exactly. It still works pretty well. As I think more and more about cultivation, I would like a system that I could get both sides of that. And I'm also doing all my bare-ground stuff. I'm usually just doing the outside row and then half the inside row. I haven't quite gotten able to get it to my liking where I can get both sides at once and do a whole bed. So I'm still doing a half a bed at a time for cultivation.

Angie Raines: Yeah, that's something we're really looking at this year, this spring. We have our dream list of equipment, and we're kind of going through what might work for us. We're trying to eliminate a lot of the plastic. I feel like we took it on just because we felt there were so many challenges with starting the farm and getting everything exactly how we want it. So now that we've got a little more infrastructure and we feel like we've got a little more of a flow going, we are ready to kind of figure out some more cultivation and really dial that in.

Chris: I want to pivot back just a little bit to the chicories. But while we're talking about infrastructure because my memory is that radicchio is basically deer candy. And you guys are surrounded by woods.

Angie Raines: Yeah.

Miles Okal: So the last few years, we've put up a temporary deer fence, just a electric ... We put in the tall T-posts to make an eight-foot fence and just strung some of that electric twine. I think it was five strands for that height. And we had decent control of that, as long as we could send someone around with the



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weed-whacker and keep the fence hot. But eventually they will get in. And once they get in, it's pretty hard to get them back out again. And we have some serious deer pressure where we are. I've pulled in the driveway and counted 22 deer at once. And once a herd like that gets in, they'll eat everything. And what's even worse is they'll go and chomp at every other melon. And then they'll sit down the street and sell all the melons too. And that's something that I just can't stand.

Miles Okal: But so we're putting in a big deer fence this year. Yeah. We're putting in a hard deer fence. We're doing an eight-foot woven wire. And we're going to get basically all the cleared land, all of our cropping acreage inside that hard fence. And it's a big more of an expense, but I can do all the work myself, me and my hired guy for the winter. And so let's see. The material would cost, but it'll just be great to not have to manage week by week running a weed-whacker and is the fence hot? Did I forget to plug it in? Did it get unplugged? I think it'll really aid our management. It'll be nice. And it's a 30-year fence. So I feel, let's get it right and get it done. And we'll be able to not worry as much about our vegetable crop.

Angie Raines: I'm excited about that too there. I think there's more than one night when I've saw that the deer had gotten into our fence and just camped out in the field with our dog, just to protect the chicories right as they're ready for harvest. But they've gotten a few.

Chris: I always did feel like that would be the ultimate solution, is just to sleep in the vegetables. Which never really seemed like that bad of an idea to me, really. You get a nice soft, tilled bed. You could really work with that. So Miles, you mentioned having a hired hand this winter. What does your employment situation look like at South Wind Produce?

Miles Okal: So we've been able to rely on my brother the last few years, which has been great. He doesn't exactly have a farming passion, but he's a great guy and a good worker. And we've also kind of been stepping it up year to year, hiring more people. Last year, our plan was to have three full-time employees. We ended up having two and a part-time. Things happen. But so in this next year, we'd like to add another person as well. I really like the work. But managing a whole farm is ... I don't know. It's pretty difficult to get everything done if I'm the one out there picking all of the tomatoes.

Miles Okal: And so yeah. That's how it's going to look I think, for this year. I like to keep one person on, or offer employment to one person for the winter. And then that way, you kind of get the pick of who's around for the wintertime and try to incentivize them to stay on for the next year. And usually, I've got plenty of farm work for people to do in the wintertime. It kind of takes some of the pressure off. And we have time to get all our planning done and maybe even take a few days off here and there.

Chris: Right. And still get the deer fence built.

Miles Okal: Still get the deer fence built or the high tunnel or yeah, the barn or what have you.



- Angie Raines: Yeah. I also have a part-time person who comes and helps me with the vegetable stuff throughout the winter. There's a really good pool of applicants around here. There's so many small farms. And there's so many interested people. It's been really fun, kind of showing people how we're starting our farm. And a lot of the people that are working for us are interested in starting their own too. So yeah. We've been really lucky and had some really great people come through.
- Chris: I think it's something that I hadn't realized before I started doing the podcast, but that has just sort of incidentally become apparent to me. Because of the number of people that I ended up interviewing from the Research Triangle area of North Carolina, you guys really are a hotspot for small farms out there.
- Angie Raines: It's incredible. Actually when we moved here, I came down to North Carolina from Maryland because my family is from North Carolina and I wanted to be nearby. But I was telling Miles, "Oh, I don't think we should come to the Triangle. There's too many farms. I just don't think we can get a good spot there." So our goal for the first year was we would learn from these great farms, and then maybe go over to Charlotte or maybe go west a little to where it was less served for small farms. But we just met so many great people and we had such a fun community, that I just ... we couldn't leave. I just didn't want to go out ... It's hard to live in the middle of the country if you don't have like-minded people that you can kind of talk to and do this with. And so it's been really nice to be here. And that was another thing with the incubator farm. It was like, can we get into these good markets? They're really competitive. And so working on the incubator farm, that's when we got into our first kind of big market. And we thought, "All right. I think it's safe to say that we can do it here." So we stayed.
- Chris: So I think it's such an interesting dynamic for small vegetable farms. And I think this is true for other businesses as well. You would think that being in a crowded market means there's no room. But in fact, a lot of times it means that you've got a growing, happening marketplace where you actually have an opportunity to find niche. So what's your niche? What have you guys done to stand out in this crowded marketplace in the Research Triangle in North Carolina?
- Angie Raines: Yeah. Yeah. It's been definitely something we thought about from the minute we started our farm, really how to compete with the people around us and how to also carry something that the market doesn't have. So in addition to the rice and the beans and the grains we're sort of starting on, we've really just put a big emphasis on the quality of our crops and the way that our display looks. We kind of go through a little more painstaking time during prep to really make sure that everything's looking as great as it can and that we're not sending damaged goods. Just trying to make sure that we're really looking all right next to our neighbors.
- Miles Okal: We're also going for abundance. A lot of the time, we aim to have a full stand at the end of market as well as the beginning of market. And while we might be bringing some product home at the end of the day, it's still nice to have a full stand to kind of wow people. Even if they show up at 11:30 instead of just at 8:30. And it's not always easy to do that or possible. But that's one of our goals.



Chris: How do you make sure that you're bringing enough product to market? I mean, are you guys tracking your sales? How does that actually manifest on the ground for you guys?

Miles Okal: This year was our first year we tried to kind of get good at tracking what we send and what we bring back from market. Before this year, we were just kind of doing it by feel. But this year, we were making up a sheet every week that would have the items on it and how much we were taking, and then a little spot to write how much we brought back or what time we sold out. But we try to keep up with that. And I think we did an okay job all year, making sure we did do that. But there is still some feel to it. Just kind of knowing your market and trying to do your best to bring what should go to each market.

Chris: That what time you sold out piece was ... When we added that to our record keeping for farmer's market, that was something that really jumped our sales. Because if all you know is took 20 bunches of carrots to market and I sold 20 bunches of carrots, but you don't know whether you sold out at 8:00 in the morning or at 11:59 when the market was ending. You don't really have any basis for deciding how much stuff you should bring next week or for that same week, the next year.

Miles Okal: Yeah, exactly.

Angie Raines: Absolutely. Yeah. The timestamps on our sheets have really been helpful with learning, especially with all the different markets. Because the way shoppers act at each of those is so different. Sometimes it's really hard to map. And it's definitely not something I can do from memory.

Chris: All right. That's great. With that, we're going to turn to our lightning round here. First, we're going to get a quick word from one more sponsor.

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Chris: Angie, what's your favorite tool on the farm?



- Angie Raines: Yeah. I've been thinking about this a lot. And at least right now, I think my favorite tool is our cold storage. Something that I've been thinking a lot about this winter, just with it being so hard to farm with all the temperature fluctuations and not really knowing what's coming at us, that we have a lot of potential just with our storage, to do more grains and to do more storage crops. And to really think about new income streams from things that we can go ahead and get out of the ground before the winter and kind of sell through the winter when the weather's not really cooperating.
- Chris: Well and I don't know what you guys have found. But I remember one of the big things when we got our cold storage, which was about halfway through our first year at Rock Spring Farm, was that all of a sudden it gave us the ability with those farmer's market sales to not be so dependent on the weather. If it was going to rain on Friday, we could harvest for Saturday farmer's market suddenly on Thursday or Wednesday or even Tuesday if we could get that stuff in and take good care of it.
- Angie Raines: Absolutely, yeah.
- Chris: Miles, what's your favorite tool on the farm?
- Miles Okal: So this is a hard one for me because I really like tools. And I guess it'd be the best tool for the job. But right now, I think it's my little pull-type combine. It's just been a really fun experience learning how this machine works. And I've had my trouble with it. But it's been a ... it does such a great job of what it does. It's a pleasure to use when it's running well.
- Chris: Angie, what's Miles's farming superpower?
- Angie Raines: Yeah. With buying this farm as it was, just kind of a blank slate, I found that something he's really incredible is just seeing the big picture and seeing things five or six steps in advance. I find that it's something I really struggle with is seeing past step two because I'm so involved in what's going on. But he's done an amazing job of just building things in the right place that three years later, they work really great. And creating systems that we've really been able to grow into. Yeah. My mind doesn't work like that, so I'm really impressed by it.
- Chris: And Miles, same question to you. What's Angie's farming superpower?
- Miles Okal: She's an amazing cook. The highlight of the day around the farm is eating lunch. She cooks work lunch for the crew and myself. And it's always delicious. And when you're out there working hard and you get to think about, "Oh, in another hour I get to go in and sit down and eat this great meal of all this food we grew ourselves on our farm," it's a highlight of the day. She's a great cook.
- Chris: And Angie if you could go back in time and tell your beginning farmer self one thing, what would it be?
- Angie Raines: Yeah. Well, I definitely am still my beginning farmer self.
- Chris: Your beginning beginning farmer self.



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- Angie Raines: Yeah. And it's still something I try and tell myself regularly I think is to just go easy on yourself. I think that both physically and mentally, I mean, your back is always something to be paying attention to. Because it's talking to you sometimes when it's potato season and you're just trying to get things done. But also then just kind of being easy on yourself with mistakes you make. And just learning and understanding that it's part of the process and that every mistake I guess is another chance to do better next time. And that everyone does it.
- Chris: Miles, how about you? If you could go back in time and tell your beginning beginning farmer self one thing, what would it be?
- Miles Okal: Something that I try to focus on is having an idea of the end goal. And it's a lot easier if you get a good idea of where you want to be or what exactly you're trying to do. You don't get bogged down in your little decisions you have to make or get frustrated by small problems. So try to take a step back and look at the bigger picture. And take some time to think about what the bigger picture is, like where you're going. Does this fit for where I want to be? Or just to think of everything more, I don't know if it's holistically. But for a longer term. We're getting into this for the long haul. And you don't want to set yourself up for failure or just have to redo everything a thousand times. I think that's it. Try to take the long view of things, would be what I would say.
- Angie Raines: It's his superpower.
- Chris: Angie and Miles, thank you so much for being part of the Farmer to Farmer podcast today.
- Angie Raines: Thanks, Chris.
- Miles Okal: Thank you, Chris.
- Chris: All right. So wrapping things up here. I will say again that this is episode 158 of the Farmer to Farmer podcast. You can find the notes for this show at FarmertoFarmerPodcast.com by looking on the episodes page, or just searching for South Wind, that's S-O-U-T-H, W-I-N-D. The transcript of this episode is brought to you by Earth Tools, offering the most complete selection of walk behind farming equipment and high-quality garden tools in North America. And by Osborne Quality Seeds, a dedicated partner for growers. Visit OsborneSeed.com for high-quality seed, industry-leading customer service, and fast order fulfillment. Additional funding for transcripts is provided by North Central SARE, providing grants and education to advance innovations and sustainable agriculture.
- Chris: You can get the show notes for every Farmer to Farmer podcast right in your inbox by signing up for my email newsletter at FarmertoFarmerPodcast.com. If you like the show, please head on over to iTunes and leave us a review. You can also talk to us in the show notes. You can tell your friends about the podcast on Facebook. We're Purple Pitchfork on Facebook. And hey, when you talk to our sponsors, please let them know how much you appreciate their support of a resource you value. It really does make a difference.



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Chris:

Finally, please let me know who you would like to have on the show through the suggestions form at FarmertoFarmerPodcast.com, and I will do my best to get them on the show. Thank you for listening! Be safe out there and keep the tractor running.

