



The Solari Report

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Solari Food Series: Leading a Food Revolution with Pete Kennedy

The Food Series



with Pete Kennedy



Welcome to the Solari Food Series. This is Pete Kennedy. To give you a brief background on myself, I am an attorney for the Weston A. Price Foundation ([WAPF](#)) and the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund ([FTCLDF](#)), two nonprofits.

The Weston Price Foundation's mission is to restore nutrient-dense foods to the human diet through education, research, and activism. The Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund's mission is to protect the rights of farmers and consumers to engage in direct commerce and to create as favorable a regulatory climate as possible for small farmers and local artisan producers.

The Legal Defense Fund also supports your right to obtain the food of your choice from the source of your choice; one of the biggest challenges that we have right now in the food system is that there are basically two food systems. There is the industrial food system and the local food system.

The laws, way too often are one-size-fits-all, favoring the industrial food system where local food producers often don't have the economies of scale to comply with the law. So, the biggest obstacle to a food system producing healthy food is the regulatory climate. That is really the biggest obstacle to better health in this country – the regulatory climate for local food producers.

Last I checked, 17% of our gross national product comes from the healthcare sector. If we had the right food system now, that number would be significantly less. The pathway to healthier people, more food security and self-sufficiency in food production, more traceability in our food safety system, and keeping more of the food dollar in the communities is to deregulate local food commerce. To this point, the most success in passing legislation to deregulate local food commerce has been at the state level. At the federal level, Big Ag has too many lobbyists, and it is too difficult to get things done there. At the local level you get a lot of 'not in my backyard' kind of responses when you are trying to deregulate local food.

The state level is where the most progress has been made to this point, and it doesn't take as many people as you would think in many of the states to make progress. There is a quote that applies to our guests today, and that is, "Never doubt the ability of a few committed, thoughtful people to change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

My first two guests on this program are the mother/daughter team of Symbria and Sara Patterson who operate a nonprofit, Red Acre Center out of Cedar City, Utah. The mission of Red Acre Center is to work to promote and protect farmers, small rural and urban farms, and the right to choose what you eat. It's amazing what they have accomplished in a relatively short period of time. We are going to get into that in just a bit, but right now I would like to introduce Symbria and Sara Patterson to the program.

Significant edits deviating from the audio recording are italicized

Symbria and Sara, welcome.

Symbria Patterson: Thanks! Thanks for having us on!

Sara Patterson: Hello!

Kennedy: The first question is for Symbria. Symbria, you grew up in a bedroom community of Los Angeles that didn't exactly have a lot of agriculture in the area. How did you get started becoming interested in *farming*?

Symbria Patterson: With both of my parents, I spent my summers driving back to New York and Ohio, and my mom's farm interestingly enough was her grandmother's who moved out there during the Depression. It's a dairy farm and, when she left for California, her brother took it over. Today, my cousin, who is my age, and his son, who is my daughter's age, do very Big Ag and still run that farm. It's no longer a dairy; they do corn and soy. We are obviously on opposing sides there, but I saw that farm long ago, and I loved it. I'm not that old, but they still had an outhouse. That part did not appeal to me.

Anyway, my parents have an acre in the San Fernando Valley which, back then, was beautiful and known for farming and being a farming region. I saw it fill up with malls, and I saw the whole landscape change – everything. We lived on a dirt road, and it just became a housing track.

I always wanted out, and I bought a half acre when my husband and I got married, and it turned into a quarter acre because the back half was sold off. But we had big, big gardens, and Sara grew up with that until she was about ten. She can tell you whether that was magical or not.

I grew chard, but I never cooked it. I called it my Martha Stewart garden. Sara just absolutely loved everything about that. We, of course, were in a pretty dense housing tract, and we took off and drove seven hours north, and we ended up here.

I think that Sara should finish that story.

Kennedy: Yes. From what I understand, Sara, your interest in farming is really what lead to Red Acre Center.

Sara Patterson: I was a naïve, excited 14-year-old who loved the concept of farming and growing my own food. I was homeschooled. I call myself ‘a homeschool project gone bad’.

My parents encouraged me to do it, and I think that because I was 14; I didn’t think about laws or legalities or all of the things that you should or shouldn’t do while starting a business. So, I just did it.

I think that my parents, seeing their parents on a farm but not being in the farming world, didn’t realize either all of the legalities that go along with farming and raising your own food and selling it.

Then when I realized all of the barriers to starting a farm, and that literally everything that I did to start my farm was illegal, and that you couldn’t really do what I did, I wanted to change that and make it so that other kids and youth and adults could start and have a farm and have it be feasible and *profitable*, and not have to do it illegally.

Kennedy: What the Legal Defense Fund does is it represents farmers who had an enforcement action taken against them by a state or Federal agency. A number of these farmers are just raided without notice.

One of the most memorable raids that has happened since the Legal Defense Fund has been in existence took place at a farm over in Nevada. This was back in October of 2011. I understand that you were a patron, and you were at that dinner. Can you recount for us what happened?

Sara Patterson: That was definitely a big turning point for me. My mom grew up doing events and entertaining, so Laura Bledsoe, of *Quail Hollow Farm in Overton, Nevada*, was my mentor and one of the reasons why I started farming.

She hosted a farm-to-fork dinner because *she saw us doing* them and *having* great success, so she thought that she should do one.

We encouraged her and wanted her to do it. So, we were at this event. There was a fabulous chef and a legal food catering trailer. The chef was licensed. They got the correct event permits. It seemed like everything was on the up and up.

Before the *dinner began*, an *inspector from* the Clark County Health Department came and did an inspection. I was actually leading farm tours at the time. I believe I was 16 at this point. I went up to the house to change or get another tour group, and someone came running into the house. They said, “We need bleach! We need bleach!”

I said, “Let me get it for you.” So, I went and grabbed this gallon bottle of bleach out of the cupboard. I said, “Hey, how is everything going?”

They said, “It’s a mess.” I remember handing the bleach to the intern or somebody and then running *down the hill to the dinner*. I remember the chef was crying and my mom was talking to the health *inspector*. The chef was dumping all of this beautifully prepared food out into the trash can and pouring bleach on it.

I was like, “Oh my gosh!”

Pete Kennedy: From what I understand, the chef poured bleach on the meat, right?

Sara Patterson: He poured the bleach on a 50-gallon trash can of beautiful food, because *the health inspector* had declared it ‘not for consumption’ *not even allowing any of the food to be fed to the hogs*. You know more about the reasons, but that – to me – was all of this beautiful food as a young farmer who had raised the food and seen this chef prepare food, and the farmers working on the food. We had been talking about this dinner for months. We grew produce just for this dinner. I provided some of the food, and there were ranchers involved.

Everyone was there, and it was such a beautiful celebration. To watch this food be destroyed and know that it was within *the health department’s legal authority*. Yes, they were enforcing the utmost part of the law. They were doing the worst thing that they could have done; but knowing that that was in their legal *authority* changed my view forever. That is when I went home and said, “What are the laws in Utah? Are they able to do this to us? What can we do?”

I went up to the Salt Lake City capitol in Utah. I walked around, and we started looking at laws. A dear friend, *Paula Milby*, who is now our *policy* analyst at Red Acre Center looked *at the laws*. My mom turned to me and said, “Until you can vote, we are not going to bring a bill up here. We are going to wait until you are old enough to have a say. That is when you can get into politics.”

So, for the next two years, the three of us researched what *legislation* we would want to bring up. That is when we got into the herdshare as a property right, and that is when I started pushing at my farm stand selling raw milk in herdshares.

Pete Kennedy: Let’s back up a bit. I want to go back to the raid at Quail Hollow.

Sara Patterson: You can tell I’m passionate! Aren’t we all!

Pete Kennedy: I think if Laura Bledsoe had to do it all over again, she would have called the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund earlier that night.

Sara Patterson: If it wasn’t for the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund, it would have been an even bigger disaster. She [Laura] *eventually* called them, and that is what helped us *deal with an overreaching inspector*.

She called them, and he [*the attorney taking the call*] said, “They don’t have a search warrant. You need to ask them to leave the property.”

The other thing that I left out – and my mom can talk about this, too – is that in that situation none of us stopped for a second to say, “What are our rights? Can we ask this person to leave? Can she do this?”

All of us are freedom-loving farmers and ‘back to the land’ people, and not one of us for one second thought about the Constitution or our rights or any of that until we called Farm-to-Consumer. That is when they said, “You have more rights than you think, and you need to defend those.”

That was also something that made me realize how we are so easily led. Someone tells us to do something, and we just do it because of fear.

Pete Kennedy: What happened was *that attorney* Gary Cox asked if *the inspector* had a warrant, and Laura told him, “No, they didn’t.” At that point Gary told her *to tell the inspector* to leave the premises. *Once Laura did that, the inspector* stormed off the farm.

I know that lit a fire under Laura Bledsoe. A couple of years ago she was able to pass a bill *creating* a farm-to-fork law for *Nevada*.

Sara Patterson: Yes, she passed a law in Nevada.

Pete Kennedy: That lit a fire under you it sounds like.

Sara Patterson: Yes.

Pete Kennedy: Let's go forward a few years to 2014. You *were having some success with* the farm, and I believe you had a one-acre or two-acre farm in Cedar City, right?

Sara Patterson: We just have two acres; we are tiny.

Pete Kennedy: For the listeners, please tell us what you raise or grow on the farm.

Sara Patterson: We have a full-diet CSA. So, we *have dairy* animals, we raise vegetables, and we have egg-laying chickens. So, we kind of do a full model. That is what we do on our two acres. We do have meat animals, but we don't raise them on our two acres. It's mainly produce.

Pete Kennedy: In 2014 there was a rural summit, and the Governor of Utah actually spotlighted Red Acre Farm. How did that come about?

Sara Patterson: Because I was young (and I still am young) when I started my farm, the Governor had heard about me. They were talking about young entrepreneurs *being* the hope of Utah and *wanted a good* story. So, he highlighted me, which was really cool. I got to go to this event with a few hundred people, and he talked a little bit about my story and what I was doing out on *our* farm.

It was a really high moment for me to be recognized, and it was really neat. I came home, and the following Monday I had two 'cease and desist' letters in my mailbox, which was interesting because they were both from the government – and I was just highlighted and told how fabulous I was and how everything that I was doing was amazing. I got two 'cease and desist' letters – one from our Ag department saying that I couldn't sell raw milk through herdshares, and one from our county saying that I couldn't operate.

Symbria Patterson: The ‘cease and desist’ letter that came from the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) – correct me if I’m wrong – we called Farm-to-Consumer when that inspector showed up. That whole thing was recorded, and I believe that it was you, Pete, who answered the phone and helped us through that whole situation.

Pete Kennedy: I think that when you called, *he [the UDAF inspector] was* still on your farm.

Sara Patterson: Yes. I don’t think that we had talked to them at all. We walked out to our farm stand, and he had *already* set up his ‘office’ in our farm stand.

Symbria Patterson: Compared to other states, we have never seen a raid like Nevada. I want to give our state some credit.

Sara Patterson: They are friendly.

Symbria Patterson: Even though he [*Randy, the inspector who came to our farm*] is kind of an oddball and, *considering* what could have happened, it is odd that he came in there and set up, and that he had a printer. It was actually my husband who said, “I think that Randy’s vehicle is out front.”

That is when Sara got the iPad and we called Farm-to-Consumer. Pete answered, and we told Randy, “Look, we have our lawyer on the phone, and this is all being recorded.”

Pete Kennedy: One thing that I will say is that the Fund attorneys have *been through* dozens of this type of situations, but we can get a little jaded from them. You really don’t know what it’s like unless it happens to you – to see that government car slowly *come* up the driveway.

Symbria Patterson: That changed us forever for sure, but your heart still stops. Just like Sara said, they were so heavy-handed. Instead of saying, “We have a situation here. We want to help you through it, but we can see that you have guests. We can see that you have done a lot right, but you have made some mistakes.”

They have *reacted* with that heavy-handedness of creating that complete fear that Sara is talking about.

We are ready every time now, and we have never had a situation obviously like the Bledsoes'. Like you said, in our culture, they work for us. It should be, "Hey, we're here to help you. We are here to make this smooth because when you make money, our community and our state make money."

That would be the greatest thing to turn around and have them come and say, "There are going to be things that may be off track and you are going to have to change *what* you are doing wrong," instead of that fear factor that they are the 'food police'. I would love to have that changed.

I just wanted to interject that *into what you were saying about these situations*.

Pete Kennedy: You are in a situation where you think you are doing the right thing by producing healthy food for the community. If they suspected you of producing adulterated food or food that had made somebody sick, that might be one thing, but just coming in with this approach that you are guilty until proven innocent is very different.

Symbria Patterson: Like you said, even if it was adulterated food or making people sick and you are a small business, even more so I think they should be saying, "Look, we are here to help you. This could shut your business down. You could be out of business. How could we approach this *in a way* not to scare the whole community?"

Just think about the way that they do it. They put shame on you, they *put you on public display* if you are a restaurant. That is those people's livelihood. They don't want to make people sick. It's terrifying to have that happen to you.

I feel like I interrupted Sara and you in the middle of the story, but I just wanted to interject the fact that having that back-up *from Farm-to-Consumer* gave us tremendous power that day. Being able to *call without having to pay* a \$500 an hour attorney – or whatever it costs Farm-to-Consumer – we were able to make that phone call and have that kind of back-up. For us, it was very empowering, and very different from the situation with Laura.

It didn't make it any less horrible to receive the cease and desist order after they had come – and Sara can chime in on that – but at least it was just a piece of paper in the mail.

Pete Kennedy: I would like to add that the Farm-to-Consumer’s job is to basically level the playing field so that you don’t have to pay a lawyer a couple of hundred dollars just to pick up the phone. It has always been that you pay a set *annual* fee, and there is unlimited consultation with attorneys on matters related to its mission statement, which it obviously was.

The other thing is that for the people who think that deregulating locally-produced food means that there is no check or balance on the producer if that happens, that is not true at all. If you get sued by someone, if you get one person sick *as a farmer lacking* financial resources—which is the situation of most of these small farmers—that can put you out of business.

So, there is plenty of incentive to produce safe food. Unlike the industrial food, you are also feeding your food to your own family.

So that leads us to the 2015 legislative session. Sara, you were talking about that earlier. What was your response to this action by the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food?

Sara Patterson: Because we did have Farm-to-Consumer, we *weren’t stuck* just being afraid or not knowing what to do. There still is that fear factor; as much as you try to get rid of it, you are still nervous. Getting those two letters just made me think, “Am I done? What can they do? What are your rights?”

So, after getting that letter, because we had been talking to Farm-to-Consumer and because we had been talking to you, Pete, and we had Paula, our analyst on the team, we had an action plan. We put that ‘cease and desist’ letter to good use, and we went to the capitol and made herdshares legal. That is a whole, much longer story, but we were able to pass a bill and make it so that you can now have herdshares in Utah. That was really cool and empowering.

Pete Kennedy: For the listeners, a herdshare agreement is a contract between someone who wants raw milk and a dairy farmer where the individual wanting the milk purchases an ownership interest in the herd, and pays the farmer to board, care for, and milk the animal or animals. *With this ownership in dairy livestock, individuals can obtain raw milk produced by the animals from the farmer.*

Sara, I remember talking to you back then. This is one of the bigger ‘David and Goliath’ battles I’ve seen in the legislature. I’ll ask both of you about it, but Symbria first because she was the one who I mainly spoke with during that time. So Symbria, who was the opposition to you, and how did they treat you during that legislative session?

Symbria Patterson: Sara is now 19. Honestly, it was really David and Goliath.

Sara Patterson: We could write a book about this.

Symbria Patterson: We could write a book about this, and Pete knows because we were calling Farm-to-Consumer and we were calling Pete through the whole thing.

I’ll be honest. I didn’t really want to go up there *to the capitol*. I didn’t mind going up there, but Sara wanted to go up and really see *what it would be like*. We had taken the tour of the capitol, but we didn’t even know what a lobbyist was. Libertas Institute is another great organization that helped.

We went up there *to the capitol*, and previous to that, finding a representative [to sponsor legislation] was not easy *but we did find Rep. Marc Roberts*. The representative [Marc] called one day and said, “I have received an email from Farm Bureau.”

We didn’t know if that [Farm Bureau] was a government agency or if they sold insurance or what. But we met Farm Bureau when we got up there. They came up to Sara and told her to go home and come back next year. They said that the bill would never pass without them.

Then we found out that the dairy association opposed it, the department of agriculture, the health department and the food grocers all opposed it. The chair of the *House Agriculture Committee* carpooled with the commissioner of Ag back then, and he was not going to let this *bill pass*. So that was the opposition.

Pete Kennedy: This went down to the very end of the session. I know that people told you to just give it up, but I think that you just wanted to see what you could get out of it. If I remember right, it was a limited type of herdshare where if you had a couple of cows and maybe ten goats or sheep you could distribute raw dairy products to people who had purchased an ownership interest in your herd.

So what was it like around the end of the session? You basically waited these people out to get something done. The way that I describe you two is that you are respectful but persistent. So how were you able to outlast all of the opposition in that session?

Symbria Patterson: First of all, what makes it really different, Pete, and we should probably clarify this for listeners, is that every state has a different session. This could just go on and on in California *which has a year-round legislative session*. We have a hard start and a hard stop – a 45-day session – here in Utah. So, there is this looming deadline that you are up against.

I think that that introduction to Sara from Farm Bureau – and obviously that is why we started Red Acre Center – was, for lack of a better way to say it, was this cute girl and her mom, and we were truly innocent. It wasn't a *pretense*. We really were innocent, and from a 19-year-old's perspective, it was a very simple ask. It was an interesting argument up there.

Nobody really has a problem with herdshares. They don't care if families share milk or whatever, but they don't want somebody getting paid. They don't want somebody saying, "You can pay me to be the agister. You can pay me to board, feed, and milk your animal." They didn't want you making money off of it. It's the craziest thing to me because even bigger dairies, as you know, could benefit from having 50 or 100 herd in a herdshare.

That was really the discussion. They didn't want us making money on it. Sara was very clear about the fact that this could help these small farms make money.

Us never leaving *the capitol during the session* was one thing *that made an impact*. For them to see us up there every day, they would say, "Are you still here? Are you still here?"

I think that that persistence and that tenacity – especially from somebody young – was endearing. It wore them down. It *even became* strategic with our representative.

Sara Patterson: The only reason why we were able to do it is because people do want the choice to eat what they want to eat. If it wasn't for Farm-to-Consumer and the Weston A. Price Foundation sending out emails [*action alerts*] to their groups and people in Utah saying, "We want this. This isn't just two girls up there; this is hundreds and hundreds of people," and support from people out of state, we couldn't have done this.

We had people emailing and saying, “Hey, if you make this legal in Utah, then there is more of a chance to have it legal in my state, too.”

If it wasn't for those organizations supporting us and sending email alerts out and saying, “Write your representative,” and, “Write your senator,” we never could have gotten this passed.

Yes, being there was a huge thing. Being in their face was huge, but they literally on the floor of the senate said, “Can we hear this bill because we want to stop getting these emails. Stop the emails and the phone calls.”

People cared, and they supported us. Because of that, we were able to do what we did. That, I think, is the biggest thing. If those two organizations hadn't gotten behind us and supported us, we couldn't have gotten the word out there and let people know what we were doing. That was a huge, huge thing.

Pete Kennedy: There are a couple of things that I would say about that. I think that the national organizations can help, but from what I have seen with this local food legislation, it is always going to be the ‘boots on the ground’ that make the difference. They are the ones who get it done.

The other thing is that I'm glad that you brought up the interest from other states because when you are approaching a state legislator with some legislation, the first thing that they ask is, “Has this been done anywhere else?”

As we are going to see a little later, Red Acre Center has paved new ground in so many different areas of the food system. This brings me to the next year, where I guess it was kind of a rude awakening for you.

Maybe you can let the listeners know what happened next. The way I see it, there are basically five different areas to local food legislation: there is raw milk, which you hit in 2015. There is passing legislation to legalize the sale or distribution of raw dairy products. Some of our listeners might not know that there is actually an interstate ban against raw milk and any raw dairy product (other than aged raw cheese) [making it] illegal in interstate commerce thanks to a 30-year-old FDA rule where Congress basically had no input. The people's branch [of government] had no input in *creating* the ban. There was a court decision ordering the FDA to ban raw milk in interstate commerce.

The second area is poultry. That is regulated by the federal government for the most part, but there is an exemption where people slaughtering and processing on the farm 1,000 birds or less a year are not regulated by the federal government. So that is an income opportunity for small farmers.

Then there is meat, which is completely regulated by the federal government. I mean, there are some types of animals that, when you slaughter them, you have to have an inspector present. There are others where you do not [have to have an inspector present].

These federal regulations are one of the biggest obstacles to a prosperous local food system. They have really hurt the local slaughterhouse infrastructure that existed. It was in good shape 50 years ago, and *now* it's a fraction of what it used to be.

After that, the next category would be cottage foods which are, in most states, just foods that aren't subject to time and temperature control. You don't have to refrigerate them. Mainly these are baked goods, jams, and jellies.

The fifth and final group is what I call the 'Food Freedom Act' bills where you try to get unregulated sales of all of those foods except for meat, which you can't because of the federal laws. So, the next year, in 2016, you went back to try to pass a Food Freedom Act.

From what I remember, some really unusual things happened with this hearing that you were supposed to have. It was kind of an awakening for you after your success the year before. Symbria, could you speak to that?

Symbria Patterson: After Quail Hollow Farm, Sara really wanted to go to the capitol and say, "You can sell and buy anything you want, and you can do whatever you want because it's my choice to do what I want."

Fortunately, the wiser mentor, Paula, who I know you have talked to a lot, came up with the idea of having to have a win. She said, "Herds shares will take us a couple of years, but we are not going to talk about food, and we are not talking about raw milk; we are just talking about property rights." She compared it to a condo. You have a timeshare, and you can all share the condo; there is no limit.

So, she was very surprised – we were all surprised, and I think you were as well – that that *herdshares* went through so quickly. Now being up there six years, it's a complete joke. If somebody said something to me, I would never say, "You can come up one session and pass a bill. That does not happen. We wouldn't even try it."

We don't even think that way anymore. The things that we have done, we would never try now.

So, all of a sudden, Sara wanted to go for the Food Freedom Act. Interestingly enough, Representative Roberts, who took our bill, had been watching Wyoming. He was interested in this because he is a freedom-loving kind of guy even though he has never had a sip of raw milk. You should have him on the show sometime.

We all got this idea to come back with this sweeping Food Freedom bill, and I think that the entities that opposed this bill and were against us had decided that this was never going to happen again. It was a little shameful that two young women with no money and no backing came up there *to the legislature*. I hate to look at it this way, but the truth is that we beat them, right? I like to look at this as we are all compromising, but we beat them.

We didn't march up there [on our own]; someone else who had helped us a little bit, who had been working on poultry with the department, Danny McDowell—who is also a member of Farm-to-Consumer and has been on Joel Salatin's farm—took the lead up there in the beginning. He called us and said that they were talking about how we were practicing illegal herdshares. That set my daughter on fire again.

We rented a car, and we were up there in less than three hours. We called the Ag department, and we walked up to the representative who was spreading this rumor. I think that their idea was to villainize us and to make us into something that we weren't because we weren't there [refute it]. So, then we ended up staying *for the session*.

We cleared that air. We basically dispelled the rumor by the fact that we just took it head-on and said, "What are you talking about? We have two cows; we have complied *with the new herdshare law*." And so, we dispelled that rumor.

We pushed forward, and the pushback was tremendous. That [food freedom] bill was not going to go anywhere. It was that same Ag chair. I don't know how much you want me to talk about that, Pete.

Pete Kennedy: Just talk about that one meeting – the one hearing that you were supposed to have. As a little background, Utah legislature is bigger on civility than probably most other states. The food freedom bill looked like it was going to have a hearing. I guess Marc had someone who wanted to testify for the bill, and he wasn't able to make it. So, you can take it from there.

Symbria Patterson: Remember that herdshares bill turned out to be *supported by* hundreds of people, like Sara said, on the floor. There was a senator asking to hear the bill just to call the dogs off.

There was a press conference *scheduled for the food freedom bill* in the capitol that day. There were some higher profile people coming. There were literally hundreds of people coming for this bill.

There was a representative in leadership who told Rep. Roberts, “Don't have your bill heard.”

He [*Marc*] was literally going back and forth. We were hours away from this huge press release and all of these people coming, and this representative took off. It was a personal thing – a funeral – so he left. We were having some help from Farm-to-Consumer, and at that point there was also a lobbyist involved.

Representative Roberts told the chair, “I don't want my bill presented.” That is very common. It happens all the time even though you are on the agenda.

So, he [*Marc*] was going ahead with the press conference, and he was downstairs explaining that he has decided to not have this bill presented. His intern walked up to him and said, “They have announced that your bill is being presented.” No one has ever seen this *kind of disrespect in the Utah Legislature*. They are presenting the representative's bill, and the representative is not even in the room.

This is all recorded. What went on from there was total chaos. Representative Roberts told me to run up to the room, and they presented his bill without him. Basically, he [*Marc*] painted him [*the Ag chair*] as ‘shenanigans’ and it was a dark moment. Representative Roberts chose to leave Capitol Hill. So, he wasn't there; he was in the car listening to it live.

This isn't a career. Our representatives all have jobs. But he felt like his dignity and himself personally were being attacked. He was very hurt by all of this.

He was on with leadership that night, and the rest is history. That was a terrible, dark moment. It was just horrible what happened. As you said, the civility up there in the end was that that chair was released from his position – not during the session, but he was not put back the next year. That year he had to make a public apology the next time that the committee was held, and the bill was presented again. It was obviously more as a token because it was dead at that point.

The following year leadership took the bill out of committee and ran it in a completely different committee just to show Marc how supportive they were of it. Then the next year, it passed.

Pete Kennedy: That is what I would like to get to. In 2017, I think you were more low-key. You still got things set up for future sessions, but then in 2018 you came back with this food freedom bill that was for the unregulated sale – producer to consumer – of everything except meat and raw milk and raw milk products.

You had already covered the raw milk somewhat in 2015. What I remember about that session is that the bill [*food freedom bill, House Bill 181*] first got out of committee by one vote, but as time went along, there was more and more support for the bill. You just had an easier role.

At that time, you were either the second or the third state in the country that had passed a bill like that. To your credit, and credit to all the other states, but the other states that had something like that (Wyoming and Maine) had much smaller populations. Metro Salt Lake is something like 1 million or 1.25 million population.

What was your strategy getting that through? The reason why the population matters is that the bigger the population, the stronger the health department is, and the more likely they are to lobby against *something* like that. We'll get into that later *about* the health departments—one of the biggest opponents out there for these *unregulated* food bills.

How did the 2018 session unfold, and how were you able to get it passed by such a big margin at the end when it was 'nip and tuck' in the beginning?

Symbria Patterson: It's those relationships that we had developed in 2015, 2016, and 2017. We had been up there for a few years, and those who show up make a difference. Our presence made a difference. Talking makes a difference. It's really those relationships, and Representative Roberts had built some bridges.

The biggest pushback was still Farm Bureau, and it actually worked to our benefit. They only did one state-wide alert that session, and when it was in the House they asked their members to plead with the representatives to not vote for this bill. The response *from the Farm Bureau members* was, “Farm Bureau doesn’t support me on this one,” and representatives were getting emails and texts that said, “Farm Bureau sent out an alert opposing this bill. We want you to know that we are in support of the bill.”

So, they [*Farm Bureau*] had to back down. That did not go well in their favor.

Fast forward, and that has all changed with Farm Bureau. That is no longer the situation, and we actually worked on bills hand in hand *with Farm Bureau* this year. That whole climate has changed. So even they changed in the end.

It was those relationships and that constant conversation. We don’t just show up for the legislative session anymore. We never missed a Food Advisory Council. We never missed an Ag Board *meeting*. We never missed an interim session *held* every month. So, it was just our presence.

They know that there is a voice for small Ag and people who want to choose what they eat.

Pete Kennedy: I think that is one of your greatest accomplishments – yours and Sara’s and Paula Milby, who is the *policy* analyst for Red Acre Center. It’s just getting that seat at the table and being accepted by an equal, even though you’ve got a one-acre or two-acre *farm that’s* 250 miles away *from the capitol*. You run your *Red Acre Center* operation on a shoestring budget. You don’t have anywhere near the funds that some of these other players have, but you and Sara just make it a point to stay up there for most of the legislative session – if not all of it – to get things done.

Big picture legislation for local food is the Food Freedom Bill. Once you get that passed, you can fill in the gaps.

Talk about the 2019 session and the other areas that you filled in. I mean, there is actually *another* raw milk bill that you *also* passed in 2018 which was a big year. And talk about what you have worked on so far in 2020. What are some of the other areas where you can take some of the regulatory pressure off small farmers and local artisans and increase the amount of market share that the local food system is getting – the amount to the local farmer and local producer and commerce [direct] to consumers?

Symbria Patterson: From the smallest, from micro to macro, no matter who you are there is so much help out there with the Weston A. Price *Foundation* and Farm-to-Consumer. If you just keep looking, a lot of people don't even know that we [*Red Acre Center*] exist. But we talked to Slow Food California, and Texas has been an inspiration to us. Most of these people are very grassroots. We talked to the Institute for Justice ([IJ](http://ij.org), ij.org) and you just keep talking to those people.

I'm going to switch gears for a minute because I can't help but bring up what is happening right now. I mean, we are in uncharted waters now. How will this all look when this is over? I don't know, but either way it is going to be more important than ever. Either it is going to be easier, or it is going to be harder.

Even though we were able to pass that huge win [*food freedom bill*], I don't know if the message is that it doesn't matter that you are just one person or you are a huge organization, but we chose to start the organization [*Red Acre Center*] because we wanted to keep it going forward.

I just want to interject this: That bill that started out with some pushback, Pete, when it got to the Senate—I don't know how many people think of things like this, but—a local food purveyor in Salt Lake donated these cookies. We chose to use cookies that were made legally *under the cottage food law* because HB 181 hadn't been passed *yet*. We had [put] one cookie in every senator's box. Even the senator who had taken [sponsored] the bill in the senate said as he got on the floor, "I thought that this was going to be more of a food fight."

There was no opposition. Nothing. I think that the fact that we had these cookies that said, "Vote for HB 181," and we took a different approach to it, that is memorable. Those guys remembered that, and we got it from a purveyor that everybody knows and who everybody loves to go to for lunch. They were talking about the Caputo cookies.

Then you pass that sweeping *food freedom* bill, but there are still holes in it, like you said. So raw milk could be *obtained from dairy animal* sold as herdshares, but how could it be moved from the farm if you didn't want to [*operate a herdshare*? So, we came back with *a bill legalizing limited raw milk sales up to 120 gallons on farm*, hoping.

You just take little increments, and that is so hard when you are up there because you have to look at this: Sara's quote is, "This place will change one funeral at a time."

Pete Kennedy: The quote that I heard was, “This place will change one retirement at a time.” Okay.

Symbria Patterson: She took it a little farther.

Sara Patterson: That makes me sound bad. I just said that I am younger than all of you, so I’ll be here way longer. I’m in here for the long game.

Symbria Patterson: She isn’t going away.

Pete Kennedy: On the raw milk bill, only a licensed dairy could sell raw milk, and it was only on the farm. So, part of the bill that you passed was allowing unlicensed dairies to sell up to 120 gallons a month. Then you provisioned *that* licensed dairies could sell through delivery like a food truck so long as they had a ‘mobile refrigerated unit’. I think that was the language in it.

Symbria Patterson: That came from the opposition. That was a dairy that actually opposed us vehemently, and then ended up being our partner on that bill. That passed unanimously with no opposition the same year as what you call the ‘food freedom bill’.

Pete Kennedy: That was also known as the ‘Homemade Food Act’ in Utah.

Symbria Patterson: ”Food Freedom” was pushing a lot of buttons. Like I said, it was all of those cookies. There is so much strategy, and you spend so much time thinking about this. We took the word ‘freedom’ out, and everybody seemed to calm down. We called it [‘Homemade Food and Home Consumption Act’](#).

Pete Kennedy: I think that the two of you are just masters at figuring out what you can pass, how to strategize, how to massage your message, and how to change the message around to make it more [palatable] to people who are on the fence.

Symbria Patterson: That comes with conversations like talking to you. I mean, it’s not just us sitting in a room isolated; it is all that support and reaching out to those people. I mean, how many times have we talked through and asked you to brainstorm, “What should we call it? How can we fix it?”

Support is a big thing.

Pete Kennedy: Like I was saying, I kind of named the five different categories. You expanded on raw milk in this latest session, even though it wasn't officially a Red Acre Center bill, but it was something that you had worked on for a couple of years.

Now in addition to raw milk, a licensed dairy can sell butter and cream *thanks to a bill passed in this latest session*. One of the things we know is that value-added *food products* is where the money is at. These farmers are going to stay in business with the ability to sell value-added products like butter and cream *thanks to you* making that happen.

Symbria Patterson: That was this year, right?

Pete Kennedy: Right.

Symbria Patterson: It starts to all blur together. I literally have to look at a piece of paper now because—what are we going on now? nine, ten, or eleven bills? You seem to keep track better than I do sometimes.

Pete Kennedy: Let's hit another area. In 2019 you passed a bill allowing slaughter of what the federal government calls 'non-amenable species', which *includes* bison *and* elk—species unlike cattle, hogs, goats, and sheep *that are covered by federal law* where you have to have an inspector present. You kind of opened things up for some of these people who just wanted to sell meat from these non-amenable species. So, what exactly did that bill do?

Symbria Patterson: Like I said, from super-simple herdshares we have become much more complex. That bill was very technical. As you know, Paula worked with you a lot on that *bill*. I feel like we were kind of the 'face' of that *bill* because we were the ones up there *at the capitol*, and we developed all of these relationships, but the technicalities behind that *bill* are very detailed. The bottom line was that it wasn't just bison, but it made it possible for a larger state like us with bison that were being raised as domestic but still wild. You can't load them in trailers. That used to be the requirement, that they [*ranchers*] would have to move them live. This bill took that part out.

You know some of the nuances in that bill. Processors and people who are doing this know what that bill can do for them. Obviously on two acres, Sara and I aren't doing anything like that.

The first bill benefitted us. After that, these bills aren't necessary for us.

Pete Kennedy: I think what that bill did was *that*—until that time, if you wanted to sell direct to consumer and you were selling something like bison—you had to have an inspector there. There aren't a lot of inspectors in Utah, just like most other states. So, it is a lot more difficult from a business standpoint to be able to plan and get an inspector. So, if you were selling direct to consumer, you could get bison slaughtered at a custom house and not have to have an inspector there. It just made it easier for some of the producers in your state who sell meat from the non-amenable species.

In addition to helping the direct-to-consumer trade, you also helped the local producers. Not everyone can get all of their business direct to consumer. A lot of people need the restaurant business, maybe selling to institutions. You also just deregulated some of the laws on sales of eggs to restaurants and even schools and hospitals and institutions like that. *Under federal law, producers with less than 3,000 hens aren't subject to a number of federal requirements.*

Symbria Patterson: Like I said, Pete, these start to blur together. I'm trying to think what happened in 2019.

Pete Kennedy: It was the small [producers] with less than 3,000 eggs could sell *to restaurants and institutions without a permit.*

Symbria Patterson: Yes, we brought it back this year. Right. *We tried to expand that bill this year to allow unlicensed sales to retail stores.*

I just feel like with the federal government, this country was set up. There was farming, and what did you do when you were an immigrant? You had food.

I hate to pick *at* the Chinese because that is a *hot* button word right now, but during the Gold Rush, you could kill a Chinaman in San Francisco and it was legal. So, they came up with this idea that if they made food, people loved their food, and that was a bridge builder. Then we had Chinese restaurants. If you look at any old ghost town, they had Chinese restaurants.

Then who came? We had our Hispanic immigrants, so we have all of this great Mexican food.

I think that the federal government made all of these exemptions because they wanted people to prosper *even if* you didn't have money *to start big*. You couldn't put that kind of infrastructure in. Who has a half million or a million dollars to get into business *now*? We used to be more owners than we were workers.

All we ever seem to do is find the federal exemption that the states have chosen to make an exemption to the exemption, and we are saying, "Take the exemption away."

Did you follow that? *States have taken these federal exemptions and we want to change that for small food producers to be able to benefit from the federal exemptions by removing the state 'exemptions' that bar them instead.*

With the egg bill, that is what we did. We took the exemption to the exemption away, and we said, "Look, the Feds saw that this wasn't unsafe. I think that we are seeing right now that local and small is the safest. We have always said that. "Local and small is the safest."

We just asked for the exemption to the exemption to be taken away, and it was the same thing with the poultry. That's what we did this year. That is how Joel Salatin has made his mark, and we have an exemption to the exemption.

What does it cost to build a building, right?

Pete Kennedy: For the listeners, if *producers* have *less than 3,000* hens *then they* can get under this *federal* exemption, which you took advantage of. They don't have to be regulated or licensed if they want to sell eggs direct to restaurants or institutions.

Then you were just speaking about immigrants. This year you passed *a bill similar to a* bill that first passed in California, which allowed these home kitchens to sell foods with meat products *and to be in business with minimal regulation*, and you thought that it was basically an immigrant bill there; you thought the California bill—the way that bill read there—was that if they wanted to sell these kinds of products from their home kitchen, they needed the county to approve it. So, the *California* counties had an opt-in *provision in the* bill.

With the bill that you just passed, it covered the whole state of Utah, and there was no opt-in *provision*. It covered everyone in the state; basically, the FDA Food Code— *which all states have adopted to some degree* — in a typical state would have made something like this impossible.

What your bill did was *that, even though* someone still needs to get licensed if they want to sell a beef empanada or a homemade food product, you took away all of the requirements that were in the Food Code.

Speak to your thoughts on that bill and how it came about.

Symbria Patterson: We decided *not* to take what California did because it would be difficult to not have a state-wide bill.

Now that we know that you can't pass a big bill like that in a year—last year before we knew about the California bill—we had this idea. HB 181, our food freedom bill, *includes* kombucha; it's bottled. I think of it this way: if it's package prepared, you can sell it unregulated and uninspected.

We got this idea from Laura Bledsoe of Quail Hollow Farm because they had passed a similar bill in Nevada: “Why not be able to let farms and ranches serve their food from their farm unregulated and uninspected?”

There was huge pushback from the health department. We realized that we were going to have to work on this. So, we found the California bill, and we came back this year in 2020 and said, “Okay, great! We want you to regulate and inspect us.” The reason and the motivation for allowing that was, as you mentioned, with your help, if we allowed them to come in and inspect, then you would legally be able to include meat; whereas with our food freedom bill, because of the federal *law*, we saw this happen in Wyoming, Maine, and North Dakota where you can't *include* meat.

Interestingly enough, the health department hated the bill and did not want to regulate and inspect. They wanted us to make kitchens on farms legal without inspection. Actually, part of us wanted to let the bill go that way, but because we had partnered with Farm Bureau, and their whole goal was to have meat, I kind of wish that we could have had both.

So, we let it go through, and because of all of the work done on the back *side*, it sailed through; it was unopposed all of the way through. I feel like with everything that is happening with the whole COVID-19 [situation], it passed in the nick of time.

Now farms and ranches can find ‘a kitchen’, which doesn’t necessarily need to be on the farm. As we know with these bigger farmers, oftentimes they live in town and they will do corn mazes and pumpkin patches on much bigger pieces of property. So you can take a kitchen, you can have the health department come in and inspect it, and you will be able to prepare food and bring it out to the farm and serve it.

That is a huge win.

Pete Kennedy: There are a number of areas where you have broken new ground, and I think that this is one of them. The California bill was impressive, but so far, they have only had one county adopt it since it passed a few years ago.

Symbria Patterson: It is up to five *counties in California* now, I believe. That is a heavy lift for sure.

Last year [2019], *in a similar bill*, we included that they couldn’t stop you based on land use. There was such a huge pushback from counties and cities that we left that out of *this year’s* bill. We just felt like it was such a heavy lift. Now that we are entrenched in this, we see more opposition.

That was the great part about being innocent; we would have just plowed through. But even Representative Roberts realizes that.

The downside of that bill is that land use could still stop you but going in there [*to local zoning boards*] and saying that the health department is okay with it is going to be a big plus. You can say, “The health department is okay with this. Why don’t you let us do it?”

That was really our first local issue.

Last spring, we worked for an entire eight months on an ordinance in our county that allows people to have events *on the farm*. I don’t think that we even talked about that bill. We have a tax break for under five acres, and that is county by county. We rolled that into the fact that they can have events on farms and ranches. That is where individuals are going to have to step up.

It was a long process for us to work with our county to make that happen.

Pete Kennedy: Basically, the last three sessions you have passed eight bills. Just so people know, Red Acre Center works on a shoestring budget. I know that you and Sara have never taken *a dime* lobbying for the Center. All of your income comes from the farm.

This website www.Solari.com talks about these overzealous bureaucrats *making it difficult for people to earn a living and to have a free society*; the term that they use is ‘technocracy’. During the past few sessions, you not only passed eight bills, but you also were able to stop a couple of bills which would have increased the power of the Utah state government beyond what these potentially really damaging federal laws, like the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) could do to small and mid-sized producers.

I think that this last session Paula *was reading* a general agricultural bill, and she discovered a few provisions in there that would have given the Utah state government agencies even more power than they would have had with these cooperative agreements they signed with FDA to carry out federal law for people like produce growers and local food processors.

You have not only been passing bills, but you have been keeping an eye on this bureaucracy and trying to minimize their role in the business of the local food and prevent them from expanding beyond what these onerous federal laws could hold in store.

Symbria Patterson: Just to be clear here, I would like to get something someday because our pockets are not endless, but that is part of the beauty of having Paula. She doesn’t get paid very much, and definitely not what she is worth, but she reads every bill that has to do with agriculture. It was a 40-page bill that, like you said, had random things in there. It had a car for the commissioner and licensing and fishing and some random stuff in there. It was five lines.

Once again, the exemption to the exemption which we fought *for* so hard at the federal level *in the Food Modernization Safety Act for the produce safety requirements* to exempt *growers* under \$500,000 and completely exempt *growers* under \$25,000 *in annual income*. There were a few lines in there where what we see happening right now was their complete *authority* to shut down, investigate, regulate, and inspect without those exemptions. Once again, this was unchartered water.

We have brought bills forward, but we have never had to oppose a bill that was already up there. I thought that it would be harder, but talking to everybody, they said that fear, doubt, and uncertainty were the easiest things to spread. They said that the heavier lift is getting a bill passed.

I was like, “What?” I thought that this would be harder, but we worked with the chair and we worked with the representative, and it was no problem. That has been stopped.

In the case of an outbreak, all of that goes away – as we are seeing right now. But to the extent that we can, *these federal exemptions from FSMA have* all been safeguarded.

Sara Patterson: I just have to chime in about this session and working with that bill —being out there *at the capitol* is paying off. We couldn’t have done what we did in the beginning. I mean, it is still a fight and it is still work, but it is totally different now. The game has changed. Now they ask us what we think about something, and when we bring something up, we don’t have to fight to tell them why it matters.

It’s nice to know that it is paying off, but the reason why it is paying off is because we are there.

Pete Kennedy: Right. You have earned every bit of it. I think that is a key point that they are letting you know beforehand what they would like to pass instead of trying to sneak something or just not bother. I’m talking about the legislators, like the chair who had that 40-page Ag bill. It sounded like he worked with you throughout to get it to where you wanted it.

I have also seen instances with you where the bureaucracy where UDAF [*Utah Department of Agriculture and Food*] is working along with you – at least in some instances.

You *now have* that seat at the table. It had nothing to do with throwing money around; it was just hard work and sticking with it and going 250 miles from your farm every session to work on these bills.

This brings us to now. This looks like it’s a new era right now. I don’t know the reports that you have been getting, but business for small farmers and people selling direct to consumers is just booming right now. I know that one concern that you had, Symbria, was with the health department.

Right now, they are working on taking care of the people who have come down with the coronavirus. But once that is over, do you think that they are going to turn this increased power against local food?

I think that one thing that we agree on is that if you are going to have an agency regulated, you would rather have the Department of Agriculture than the Department of Health. I think that holds true in most states.

First of all, how are the local food producers *doing* in Utah this last month? Have they had a business spike like most other places? And what are your concerns about the health department with their expanded government power this last month?

Symbria Patterson: The problem is that if you are Ag, you are Ag. But now when you are small, and now seeing these bigger farms, they are becoming diversified. So, they are crossing over into the jurisdiction of the health department. So, you are having to deal with both. I don't see any way of really getting around that.

I feel like department of Ag cares about farmers and agriculture. I'm not sure what the health department cares about. I guess it's the public safety, and they get to decide what that is. The fallout of this, I just think that it's our opportunity to be louder than ever that our food isn't shipped, packaged, or touched by thousands of hands. I mean, when you think about that chain from truck to warehouse to pallet to being on the shelves, I don't want to be like the models who are out there with predictions, but there is a difference.

Pete Kennedy: I agree with you. There was a problem before this came about. I mean, we met a couple of years ago after I went to this International Association for Food Protection ([IAFP](#)) food safety conference. The one thing that you realize is that they [*in the industrial food system*] have these long, complex supply chains where if there is an outbreak, who knows where it is along the supply chain. You may have a product that has made people sick that has ingredients from half a dozen different countries. If someone gets sick on hamburger, that might have been *commingled from beef* produced in a number of different countries.

Symbria Patterson: Sara can address what has happened with the influx of interest, but we can take advantage of fear, doubt, and uncertainty, too, right? Where does your food come from, and are you afraid? You should be questioning what you are eating. This is the time to sing that song louder than ever.

We have seen twelve states say that farmers' markets are essential – not the event, but the fact that we are selling food.

We always blew that off because no matter how much we put in our bills that they [*government agencies*] couldn't make rules or that they *could only make limited* rules, people would say, "Well what if someone gets sick," there was always the caveat, "In an outbreak, there is no limit *on the agencies' powers*. The health department can come in."

With the CDC and the health department, we are now seeing what that means. It's, 'in the name of public safety' and 'in the name of safety' and 'in the name of people getting sick'.

Pete Kennedy: It's kind of aggravating when people who often have a Diet Pepsi and a Snickers bar for lunch are trying to shut you down because they don't think that your food is healthy.

Symbria Patterson: There isn't a food shortage. This is about a flu or a virus. Sara and I walk through the stores for fun, and it was interesting because people are buying toilet paper, rice and beans, and flour – which they probably don't know how to use, so they will throw it in the garage. But what are they still buying? Frozen food is limited in our market. They've got their gallon of Mountain Dew, and they are going to eat what they always eat.

If there was a food shortage, trust me, they would be asking their friends, "How do I soak these beans? What do I do?"

They are going to keep buying that same food. Somehow McDonald's is a necessary business.

Pete Kennedy: Right. McDonald's is an essential activity, but a farmers' market isn't.

With this disease, the stronger your immune system is, the better you are going to be able to handle it. So, the food that you are going to find that is best for your immune system is at the farmers' market, not the supermarket.

Symbria Patterson: Or a farm stand. Sara can talk to you about that. At our farm stand, one person can go in there. If you are afraid, the grocery store has shields and everything, but we don't even have a person in there.

You can put your money in a slot. It's an honor system like a lot of farm stands. How much safer can you get? You don't even have to see a clerk or someone else.

Pete Kennedy: Sara, how has the demand been for Red Acre Farm the last few weeks?

Sara Patterson: If you look at CSAs across the country, we have switched our model. We do a full diet. It's totally different, and there aren't that many of us. We have had interest like crazy.

There are definitely more people coming to the farm stand. We did an order yesterday to a town 45 minutes away. We literally posted five hours before we had to deliver the order, and we had more than we do during the holidays when we promote and do all of this stuff.

So, it's been crazy, crazy. I don't know if people aren't going to restaurants as much, and now people are at home.

It scares me at the same time because these are people who are doing it for now, and it's great, and I'm going to roll with it while they are here, but we need to keep that momentum all the time. So, what do we need to do to make sure that this interest is here, and *that* people have awareness?

As a farmer, we *are* having people who have never heard of us and who have never come out to the farm stand and just know that there aren't eggs in the store; so, they are coming out here. How can we take that new group and educate them as to why this is important and as to why they need to keep supporting us? It's great, but at the same time, we want to keep it going.

We are not currently taking any new shareholders. Part of the reason is because these are people who—because of what's happening—will sign up for a share, but then in a few weeks or in a few months they are going to forget or not want to work as hard to eat this kind of food because it is a different way of eating and living.

I think that more than ever being up at the capitol is going to be so important. I don't even know if we will be able to pass the bills that we have been able to pass because people are so scared right now of food safety and contamination. We have always just said, "You have the right to eat what you want to eat," but I don't know if the health department is going to let us keep having that right.

I am very nervous and hesitant and a little afraid.

Pete Kennedy: There are a couple of things that I see. I don't know about out there where you are, but it's more often than not the two items that I really see flying *off the shelves* and the demand going up for *are* beef and eggs. One of the problems that we have in this country is just a lack of slaughterhouses. This could bring USDA into the picture, but I would like to see some people at the state level trying to see what happens if they relax the laws on custom slaughter. It seems like there is going to be more demand for beef and the other meats and more pressure on the slaughterhouses to keep up.

There are all of these custom houses right now where you can't sell the meat that was processed at a custom house, but maybe they can relax those laws in some way to be able to *meet* the demand.

It's like you said, Symbria, there is plenty of food out there now, but there are warning signs, like the U.S. government isn't issuing as many visas for the [migrant] farmworkers right now. There are other countries that have stopped exporting certain foods. Then there is the disruption in transportation. I guess that a lot of our food is imported via ship, and there are disruptions in the normal flow of traffic there.

It might come to a point where it should be a conscious government policy to actively grow the local food system. The more local food producers you are going to have, the safer the food is going to be. To do that, you have to be deregulated as much as possible. What are your thoughts on that?

Symbria Patterson: We are letting up *on* all kinds of regulations. Doctors can now practice across state lines. If there is really a food shortage – if and when there is – what will happen? They are going to have to let up on regulations. If people don't have food and you are waiting for slaughterhouses, what do you think will happen? They will deregulate. They are going to let people open-air process chickens.

The truth is that we don't have a food shortage right now. That is the truth. It's just a supply chain interruption. You can serve cocktails curbside now, right?

Pete Kennedy: Right. It just seems that this is the way to go. There is not a food shortage now, but at the same time, if you just want to keep the supply consistent and farmers are able to meet demand better locally on a number of items than it seems that the supermarkets are right now.

Because of all of the restaurants shutting down, the conventional food business has changed. It looks like this big battleship trying to maneuver where it needs to be whereas with the local food system it is much more flexible. *The local food system is more like a canoe.*

To meet some of the shortages now caused by the disruption in the system and as a plan for the long haul, it seems like the thing to do is to strengthen the local food system as much as possible. Maybe they could do that by starting with meat and having the Feds just use enforcement discretion with some of these *regulations on meat and poultry.*

We have talked about the PRIME Act before, where states could pass laws allowing meat to be sold that is processed at a custom house. In a sense, [it could be using enforcement discretion in this area in] giving the *federal* PRIME Act a trial run now.

Symbria Patterson: I'm grateful for any bill we have passed. Like I said, I don't know if the current situation is going to give the health department more credibility and tons of authority because we of what saw this session up at the legislature; people don't even care about the health department anymore. They are tired of hearing that people are going to die.

Now they are going to say that people did die. So, I don't know. This will be a very interesting time to watch. Hopefully, our food freedoms won't be eroded by the panic and the fear. No matter how real the virus is, it has nothing to do with food. But just wait until something does have to do with food.

We know that there are lots of viruses, diseases, and even ones that are contagious that we have chosen not to focus on. So, if they pick a foodborne illness or something to focus on like they've done this one, we could all be eating mac-n-cheese out of a box!

Pete Kennedy: As you know, so many of these laws and enforcement actions are business protection measures disguised as health laws. So, I think that what we have to make clear right now is that the safest, healthiest food is produced direct on the farm at the local level. The more that you deregulate that, the more local producers you are going to have, and the more that healthy food will be out there among the population.

Right now, they should have enough to do with taking care of all of this imported food coming into the country. Even before COVID-19, the USDA just passed a law allowing the import of poultry that is slaughtered in China. Beef has been given the green light in the past six months or so to be imported from Brazil, which has a history—in some regions of the country—of hoof-and-mouth disease. We know about these country of origin labeling laws, right now, for beef and pork, and they are a joke. You can *simply* have beef slaughtered in China or in one of the countries with a history of hoof-and-mouth disease, and, if you do the slightest bit of processing in this country, you can just label it as ‘made in the USA’.

It just seems like between COVID-19 and some of these prior developments, there *should be* all the *incentive* in the world to strengthen local food now.

Symbria Patterson: We could talk about this for hours, right?

Pete Kennedy: We have run way over as it is, but the last thing that I want to do is give you an opportunity to let people know *how they can support* Red Acre Center or find out more about all that it has accomplished in a short period of time.

Symbria Patterson: Thank you. We appreciate that. Obviously, there are expenses, donations are helpful. We do focus on Utah, but I think that our bills can be an example and effect other states.

We love donations. We *are a membership organization*, and our services are available to you *when you become a member*. You can check our website out at www.RedAcreCenter.org. That is where you can *make* donations *and join as a member*.

If nothing else, if you just want to get on our email list and know what is going on, we appreciate that as well. We are on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

Pete Kennedy: As someone who has worked with you for a number of years now, I can just tell you that seeing is believing. *Watching* you go from that little herdshare bill in 2015 to where you are now, it’s phenomenal the progress that you have made. I haven’t seen this anywhere else.

One of the biggest frustrations that I have is that you don’t get the support that you should be getting. You still get things done anyway.

Symbria Patterson: Thank you. We appreciate that.

Pete Kennedy: Symbria and Sara, it's great to have you on the *Solari* Food Series. Best of success to you both.

Sara Patterson: Thanks!

Symbria Patterson: Thank you for having us on.

MODIFICATION

Transcripts are not always verbatim. Modifications are sometimes made to improve clarity, usefulness and readability, while staying true to the original intent.

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Nothing on The Solari Report should be taken as individual investment advice. Anyone seeking investment advice for his or her personal financial situation is advised to seek out a qualified advisor or advisors and provide as much information as possible to the advisor in order that such advisor can take into account all relevant circumstances, objectives, and risks before rendering an opinion as to the appropriate investment strategy.