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The Solari Report

February 11, 2021

**Solari Food Series:
Rogue Food for Community and
Health
with
John Moody**



the **Food Series**



Pete Kennedy: Welcome to the Solari Food Series audiocast. This is your host, Pete Kennedy. Today's guest, John Moody, is a man of many talents. John is a farmer, homesteader, manager of a food buyers' club, as well as being an author and speaker. He is also a food activist and the cofounder of the Rogue Food Conference.

One description of "rogue food" is that it refers to ways that local food producers and distributors can evade onerous requirements in statute and regulation while remaining in compliance to the law.

John lives and farms in Kentucky, a state whose legislators and regulators have not been friendly to the production and distribution of local food. He is going to talk about his run-ins with regulators as well as what people trying to pass local food legislation in Kentucky are up against.

In spite of the obstacles, John has been able to build a solid food community in his area, and he has helped many others do the same throughout the country.

We will talk about the state of the food system since the onset of the COVID crisis and the opportunities that small farmers and homesteaders now have to be successful.

Finally, we will talk about the Rogue Food Conference, an event whose launch in 2020 galvanized many in the local food movement. John will tell us what's in store for the conference in 2021.

One other thing before we start, last but not least, John is a former executive director of the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund and the first executive director the Legal Defense Fund had.

Without further ado, John, welcome to the Solari Food Series audiocast.

John Moody: Thank you for having me, Pete. It's good to see you.

Kennedy: Good to see you, even though the listeners aren't going to see us.

Let's just start from the beginning. Most people have a story about how they

discovered and got into local food. What is yours?

Moody: I got into local food because the conventional food system almost killed me. I was in my early 20's, had seasonal allergies so bad that Benadryl sent me free stock options at the end of every year as a patronage dividend. I'd had enough antibiotics by the time I graduated college to qualify as my own CAFO Animal Operation. In my early 20's, my already tenuous health just completely began to collapse.

I developed severe digestive issues, including duodenal ulcers, that left me in crippling debilitating pain all of the time. When I went to a doctor, the only thing that the doctor could offer me was pharmaceuticals.

I was finally at a point in my life where I was willing to question why I was so sick at such a young age and why pharmaceuticals were the only solution to my problem. So we started down the rabbit hole of real food. I got exposed to the work of Sally Fallon [Morell]. I embraced traditional foods properly raised and properly prepared.

Over the course of about a year I was able to completely reverse all sorts of significant health issues I was suffering. So I became a true believer pretty quickly in the power of food, thus the importance to have real farmers who know how to raise it.

Kennedy: That gets on to the next question. You were actually the founder of a food buyers' club in Kentucky. What led you to start that club, which is named the Whole Life Buying Club?

Moody: We were like your super-typical Kroger/Walmart/Sam's Club shopping-type folks when Jessica and I first got engaged and then got married. So we went from shopping at Kroger and Sam's Club to shopping at Whole Foods ('Whole Paycheck') and Wild Oats (while Wild Oats still existed back in the day).

I have a background in economics and business finance. I would walk through Whole Foods, and I would see the prices on certain things. Some of the stuff was just 'Organic Cinnamon Toast Crunch'. I thought, "Yeah, it's organic

Cinnamon Toast Crunch, but it's still Cinnamon Toast Crunch. This is not good for me. It's not good for anyone."

Or I would be going through the meat aisle, and there would be a chicken breast at \$14 per pound. I thought, "Who can afford \$14 a pound for chicken breasts?"

I began to look into some of the data, and I figured that I paid \$14 a pound, and the farmer was getting \$1.50 a pound. How does that even work? Where is all of the money from the \$1.50 to \$14 going other than into Whole Foods' pocket?

I wanted to have direct relationships with farmers, and we also started shopping at farmers markets, and then we started getting raw milk directly from a local farmer. We were starting to have kids, and life was just becoming complicated. It was like, "Now I have to go to this store for this, and I have to go to that store for that. I have to go to these two different farmers markets. It would be so much better if I could get a whole bunch of this stuff in one place."

That was the push to start the buying club. It was the idea to bring a whole bunch of different companies and farmers to one place and make a market for them rather than having to chase them all over the countryside when you want stuff from them.

Kennedy: This brings up an important point. People just getting into local food want to know how to get sources and what a good source is and how you vet a potential source of your food.

I guess you had a bigger job. You weren't just providing for your family; you were vetting for maybe 100 other families. Can you describe that process and how you are able to separate the wheat from the chaff and get the best producers hooked up with your buying club?

Moody: We do farm visits. All of our farmers either get visited directly by us, or if they go through a local business like Marksbury Farm Market, who is somebody we now work with, they actually started out as a farm that was supplying our club. When they saw the amount of demand, our support and other factors allowed them to build their own inspected processing facility that

now services eastern and central Kentucky.

If it's farms that are directly sourcing with us, we do phone interviews and farm visits and we also ask other farmers who we work with who live close to them about them. We have different auditing tools in place. We ask them where they buy their feed from because we can then call whoever supplies their feed and make sure that where they are getting their feed is where they say they are getting it from. Or if it's going through someone like Marksbury, they have their own auditing in place to insure that what they are buying from different farmers is what it says it is.

Definitely staying on top of some of our suppliers' practices is one of the bigger challenges. We've noticed that some farms or some companies, as they scale and grow and become popular, sometimes they begin to fudge on their sourcing and practices.

It's an ongoing thing where we are constantly following back up with suppliers, following back up with farmers, and making sure that they are still headed in good directions and doing things to our standards or higher.

Kennedy: Another challenge you have to put up with is just trying to get on the right side of the law, making sure you are in compliance when you are procuring food or distributing food to your customers. I'm going to get into a run-in that you had a bit later with the Louisville Metro Health Department and the Kentucky State Department of Health, but first maybe you could describe the challenges that you face.

A lot of this quality food isn't easy to get or easy to navigate the legal channels that you have to go through to get it for your buyers' club members. Could you describe some of those challenges?

Moody: The reason why I set up the club the way I did is to avoid a lot of the legal stuff. Some of our farmers are inspected, and some of them are not. The farmers really work in a wide variety of ways, depending on the situation and what our goal with them is and what the product is.

So much of the structure of our club, since we don't sell things, which is one of

the biggest ways that we stay out of the legal crosshairs. The buying club isn't a business, and we don't buy and sell things.

What we've done is we've created a place where people can directly buy from a wide variety of farmers and sources, and we just help facilitate it.

Kennedy: I think that you are known as an innovator. You were doing Rogue Food type maneuvers long before the Rogue Food Conference started up. Just one example of a Rogue Food maneuver would be the herdshare agreement where in Kentucky you can't sell raw milk legally, so you have to find some way that you can get it through another type of distribution.

Probably the best single response I know of to an enforcement action in our area of work was yours, and it's coming up on ten years now. First, could you describe what a herdshare is? Then go through the events that really led to an amazing result considering what you were potentially up against.

Moody: There are a couple of things that I will mention really quickly. There is a lady in Canada who has a hair salon or something. They've had them close down forever. In the province of Canada that she is in, you can do interviews in person for podcasts and radio shows and TV and whatnot. So she turned her hair salon into an audition place. It's brilliant.

This has always been my heart in dealing with when the government is out of control and beyond its bounds. How do you use their own ridiculous stuff against them?

So one of the ways in which we do work with a lot of farmers is we have an ownership stake in the animals that we are getting food from. So if we want a farmer to be able to butcher chickens on his farm for us rather than having to take them 200 miles away so that they can go through a triple chlorine bleach bath before they hit our tables, we might buy the baby chicks. So they are our chickens, and we will have a labor contract with the farmer to raise our chickens and to butcher our chickens for us to get away from this buying and selling, where so much of the regulation happens.

For dairy we have a herdshare with the dairies that we work with. Basically that

means that we own part of the dairy herd, so we own part of the milk that the cows produce, and we pay the farmer to care for our cows and all of that kind of fun stuff.

It's definitely a game of Whack-A-Mole, really seeing where you can exploit or take advantage of chinks in the regulatory system while also seeking to change the regulatory system and create more space and roll back all of these unconstitutional and corrupt government agencies and programs.

Kennedy: I guess it was May of 2011 when this started. Can you go through the events of this enforcement action and your response to it?

Moody: I actually wasn't at the club. I think it was Kane Holbrook's, my co-administrator (or co-conspirator, depending on which word you think fits better) first time running a day of club solo. I believe it was my first day off in years and years of running the club.

I was at home – out here on our farm – and I got a phone call from Kane. Kane said that the health department was there, and the health department said that they had some kind of complaint or report or whatever, which is the beauty of not getting to face your accusers in the current system of malfeasance.

Was that Memorial Day weekend?

Kennedy: Yes, it was.

Moody: So it was a holiday weekend, and you could tell that the inspector really didn't want to be there. He was one of those 'I'm just following orders' kind of fellows.

John-Mark Hack was also there, and John-Mark tried talking some with the inspector unsuccessfully. Kane talked with him, and I might have also talked with him on the phone some. It ended with the inspector serving us with cease and desist and quarantine orders for the raw milk that the buying club makes available to members.

That probably happened mid-afternoon on a Friday. Maybe it was 2:00 or 3:00.

At this point, we had about 150 families who were members, and everybody was wondering, “What are we going to do?”

You know that at this point in time, this was right in the middle of the local food wars where the government raided Rawsome and shut them down, and they raided Manna Storehouse in Ohio and shut them down. They also raided Athens Locally Grown and got them to cry uncle. You could toss out the names of a number of the farmers who got raided.

Kennedy: Vernon Hershberger had several raids on his farm around that time as well.

Moody: I think Vernon’s court case came after ours.

Up until our altercation, if I remember correctly, no one had won. It was like this brutal streak of government enforcement actions shutting down farmer after farmer or local food operation after local food operation.

I was just sitting there on a Friday night praying and taking counsel with a couple of different people I know, and really thinking through everything. My wife was pregnant at the time with our third child, Noah. I was sitting there thinking, “Am I really willing to go to jail over the right to choose what I feed my family and myself?”

I decided that I was totally willing to do this. This was the line in the sand. But I’m a skinny guy. If I’m going to go to jail, I don’t want to be in a cell with Bubba who is 250 pounds and lots of tattoos; I want to be in a jail cell with Kane or somebody from my food buying club. So if I’m going to jail, I’m taking as many people with me as I possibly can.

We basically drew up a really simple thing that said, “I, the undersigned, in accordance with my Constitutional and God-given rights, am taking my raw milk from my cows, and if anybody from the health department has a problem with it, they can contact me at the name and phone number below.”

Kennedy: Just to back up a little, there was a quarantine order placed on that

milk. What that means is that milk is not supposed to move anywhere as long as that quarantine order was in effect. I believe it was the State Department who placed that order, and then the Louisville Department of Health sent you a cease and desist.

So you were looking at potential criminal penalties here for violating that quarantine order if anyone removed the milk.

Moody: Right. It's crazy to think about. So we made these sheets, and I also printed the pertinent sections of the Kentucky Constitution. We hung those pertinent sections of the Kentucky Constitution next to the sheets that members could sign, next to the cease and desist and quarantine orders. At the same time, I emailed all of the members of the club – because we have an email group for the club – and I still have that email.

I basically said to the members of the club:

You have to make a choice. Who chooses what you eat? Is it some unhealthy, overweight health inspector who is in the pocket of big pharma and big food? Is it some bureaucrat in Washington, DC who is 1,000 miles away? Or is this truly a fundamental human right to choose what you eat and who you get it from?

You could go to any corner store in Kentucky and get Skittles and cigarettes and a thousand other foods that we know will make you ill and kill you – if not immediately, then surely over time. Are you really going to let them say that you can eat all of the crap that you want, but we are going to restrict your ability to support local farmers and choose what you feed your family?

I sent that email, had Kane and them put up the signs, and then I just had to wait and see what the members would do.

A big part of winning is building community, especially back in the early 2000's. Our buying club was like a giant family. Many of the members joined right when they were just having kids or had just had kids, so a lot of us went through having our first kids together, sending meals to each other after babies were

born, and helping each other navigate health issues. We had a lot of built-up community and trust in the buying club membership.

So I sent this email, and I think that all but two member families came, broke the quarantine, and signed the paper. One of my greatest regrets is that the health department came and took that paper. So I never got to see for myself all of the names of our members.

People who weren't even members of our club came and broke the quarantine and signed the papers. It was really cool to see.

Once that started rolling, I wanted to maximize impact. So the first rule of beating the government is to make a big target. This is one reason why Vernon was able to eventually prevail in Wisconsin. A bunch of us – you, Max Kane, and me – enlarged his influence and the target that he became and the community investment in Vernon to where it just became an untenable fight for the Wisconsin DATCP.

While my members were now breaking this quarantine, I started thinking through what we were going to do next. What else could we do to really turn the screws on the Kentucky Health Department?

Well, it was Memorial Day Weekend. It was a weekend where theoretically people are to pause and remember their family members and fellow countrymen who gave their lives so that we might enjoy freedom. I was like, "This writes itself!"

So I began to contact all of our members as well as some other people. This was back when all of the legislators in Kentucky's home phone numbers were on the LRC website, so you could easily find a legislator's home phone number as long as you could access the internet. I said, "On Sunday or Monday I want you to make a couple of phone calls. Call your state representative, call your state senator. They are going to be like, 'Why are you calling me on a holiday weekend at home?' I want you to be super-kind, don't be belligerent. Just say, 'I don't really want to be bothering you. I understand that it is a holiday weekend, but on a holiday weekend I should be celebrating the freedom I have because of sacrifices my family and other people in this nation made. Your health

department if threatening me with jail over choosing what I feed my family, and I'm not okay with it.”

We just peppered all of these elected officials with hundreds and hundreds of phone calls, and with really good messaging. It wasn't a bunch of angry people screaming at them on the phone, but just really, really good, focused messaging so that a legislator would really understand the issue and not be able to wiggle.

I was told five or six months later that when the Kentucky state government reopened on Tuesday, it was an absolute circus crap show because all of these legislators are ticked off, and the health department has been getting all of these calls – both from citizens and legislators – saying, “What are you doing? What are you thinking?”

Then I went on some radio shows that first part of that week, and so I think it was by Thursday night or Friday that the health department released a statement, not apologizing, but saying that they didn't have jurisdiction over us, and that it was just a misunderstanding.

Kennedy: That is such a key mark that you were able to set right there because one of the big disputes is: Is there a distinction between the public and private distribution of food? A food like raw milk is legal to consume, but how do you get access to it?

You were *using a business model* where you can legally get access to *raw milk even though the law prohibits its sale*. We are still looking for a court case that says *there is a legal distinction between public and private distribution*. Just these kinds of actions can set precedent in themselves, even though they don't take place in a courtroom.

From what I understand, *before* that day, there were enforcement actions against these herdshares *in your state*. There was one against Gary Oaks, a Kentucky farmer, about five years before yours happened. But since then, as far as I know, there hasn't been any enforcement action. Is that correct?

Moody: I think I've heard of one or two farmers who have received warning letters for advertising, and maybe advertising that they are selling raw milk rather than advertising that they have a herdshare or whatnot. But other than

that, the health department has moved on to giving everybody B-'s and B+'s and staying in their lane and leaving a lot of these grassroots local food-type things alone.

Kennedy: It just goes to show that this kind of action in effect can make law. You don't necessarily need to pass a law, but if you can change a department's interpretation of the law – which you definitely did – in effect, you create law anyway without going through the legislature.

Getting back to rogue food, you mentioned this briefly earlier, but there was another way that you were able to take action to avoid onerous requirements and what is known as the FDA Food Code. Often when someone setting up a buyers' club and has a central distribution point, an agency might say, "Well, you are selling food to the public, so you need a permit and all of the requirements that go with it."

You were able to design this administrator contract which was able to take it out of the public forum and also where you served not as someone who was distributing food so much as just a pass-through for the farmer and consumer to do business directly. Maybe you could speak to that.

Moody: My background was business finance before I got into other stuff. As we talked about years ago, a lot of the legal stuff is predicated on buying and selling. It's when you are buying and selling stuff that you begin to get into their snares and nets. I didn't want to buy and sell stuff; I wanted to help people access real food, and I wanted the farmer to make good money, and I wanted the food to be affordable for people.

I was like, "Why don't I provide an administrative service which would be a combination?" Justin Bieber doesn't usually go to the grocery store; he gives somebody his money, and that person goes to the grocery store. That's kind of how the club works in one way. Members have accounts with the club that they keep money in. They say to the administrative team, "This is what I want you to go get with this money."

We are never using our own money and then selling stuff to people. They are basically handing us their credit card and saying, "Go get me some grass-fed

ground beef. Go get me this. Go get me that.”

That is one part of it, and that is really the big part. They are prepaying for things, and we are just grabbing it for them. It’s all private. There are no sales between me and the members. There is no buying and selling. The members are basically buying things directly from these companies and these farmers. The club just exists for education and to grease the wheels of making that happen.

Kennedy: Before I forget, I want to go back to you talking about building a community with this club. One of the things that the Farm-to-Consumer Legal Defense Fund is there for is to protect that community.

I forgot to mention earlier that the Legal Defense Fund’s name is actually on the cease and desist letter and the quarantine order that the buyers’ club received.

One of the main jobs of Farm-to-Consumer is to provide a backstop when something like a raid in the buyers’ club in Kentucky happens. So maybe you could explain how it came about that Farm-to-Consumer actually had their name on the quarantine document.

Moody: Our club is a member, and I’m guessing Kane called the hotline and had the inspector speak to Gary, who was on call that day.

Kennedy: Right, General Counsel Gary Cox.

Moody: The inspector spoke with Gary. The inspector was unconvinced to walk away, but he added Farm-to-Consumer to the cease and desist quarantine, I guess. I’ll have to find those. I have them filed away, but it’s been forever since I’ve looked at them.

Kennedy: I just remember I was out in Colorado that weekend. I remember talking with you a number of times all through the holiday. That was one thing that Farm-to-Consumer can provide – a 24-hour hotline. With a lot of these attorneys, if they are gone for the weekend, Farm-to-Consumer always has someone to talk to. I think you spoke with Gary and I throughout that weekend.

One part of your battle in Kentucky is the legislators. Kentucky is just one of

those states that is very difficult to get food legislation passed in. You really have to take the initiative, like you've done and others have done outside of the legislature. But you did try to pass legislation one year. I think it might have even been in the same year as the raid, or maybe it was the year after.

Moody: It was probably 2012 or 2013. It definitely wasn't the year they raided us, but it was partly in response to the raid.

Kennedy: Talk about the legislation because it just seems like this helped strengthen your views on Rogue Food with the experience you had trying to get the legislation passed in the state of Kentucky.

Moody: I try to avoid politicians like I try to avoid the plague because they are highly infectious and deadly, but some friends convinced me to help work on some legislation around food freedom in Kentucky.

We had a very simple goal, and it was a very simple bill. All the bill said was that if somebody has an ownership interest in an animal, then they can benefit from the animal and what the animal produces without government interference. So if you have an ownership interest in a cow, you could eat the cow and it doesn't have to go through the USDA. If you have ownership in a milking cow, then you are entitled to milk from that cow, and it's not the government's business because you have an ownership interest in the animal.

It was a tiny, tiny bill. It was really nothing earth-shaking or radical. So we began to work on this bill. We had a really great state rep by the name of John Schickel. He was our lead person on the bill.

As part of our bill, me and Christy Arendt and a few others would trek to Frankfurt, Kentucky and go meet with legislators and all of that. There was that scene in the first Star Wars movie where Obi-Wan Kenobi took Luke to Tatooine. As they were standing there looking over the city, Obi-Wan said, "You will never see a more wretched hive of scum and villainy."

That is how I look at Frankfurt now after having to go there and just being straight-up lied to repeatedly by legislators or sitting across from a legislator, and as I sat down across from them, they would purposely touch their Farm Bureau

pin, or they would hold up a Farm Bureau ring to let you know that they are going to listen to you, but this is actually who they listen to, and this is all that matters to them.

It culminated then, and John-Mark Hack, Christy Arendt, and I had to go to a meeting with other stakeholders. We drove to the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy, which ironically John-Mark had founded, and behind closed doors in this private meeting are people from the dying Kentucky dairy industry. So these people who have all of the power over the Kentucky dairy industry, in the course of a little over a decade, turned the Kentucky dairy industry from over 8,000 independent small dairy farms to less than 1,000. So these people have overseen a total and complete disaster in terms of the Kentucky dairy industry. It's just utter ruin, and these are the people who we have to sit down and talk with.

We sat down behind closed doors in this meeting, got through some pleasantries, and then they basically looked at us and threatened us with physical harm if we did not drop our bill.

Kennedy: Was this a representative from the Farm Bureau who made this threat, or was this somebody else?

Moody: These people were part of the dairy processing industry. Maybe they were the Kentucky Dairy Federation, the KDF. They obviously were also a part of Farm Bureau, but they are all cut from the same cloth. It's this corporate control of food distribution.

If you want to make money, you make a great product, but if you want to become rich, you want to be PayPal. If I sell 1,000 chickens, I can only make so much money per chicken, but if I can get a quarter off of every single chicken sold in Kentucky, now I'm a multi-millionaire and I don't even have to do the work. That is why our food system is regulated the way it is, because there are people who want to make tremendous amounts of money with none of the risk and none of the work.

Kennedy: The amount of money that the small farmer has gotten out of this has shrunk over the years to where the middleman makes far more. But you are

talking about poultry. To give you an idea of what a tough state John has to work in, one of the better laws for local food producers is this: Most states let them process up to 20,000 birds a year on their farm without inspection. In Kentucky, you can't do that. All they have is two or three mobile processing units in the state (which aren't mobile at all), so you have to drive there and process your birds at these 'mobile' units. There is such a line that it is impractical for most of the farmers in the state to use *these facilities*.

Moody: Right, the non-mobile 'mobile' processing has always been a big joke. It's Kentucky incompetence in action.

Kennedy: I think we have both seen this past year one of the big things that has turned out to be one of the few good things to come out of this COVID-19 crisis has been the opportunity for local food producers selling direct to consumers, especially the ones producing meat and to a lesser extent dairy.

In addition to being active in Kentucky, you talk to people all over the country. What have you seen since the COVID crisis as far as farm-to-consumer direct sales?

Moody: It's been crazy! Especially last spring and summer sales just skyrocketed.

I know friends who in March, April, and May would have single month sales that equaled half of their previous year. It was utter and complete madness. It was just a circus.

Things really spiked last spring and summer. They kind-of calmed down a little bit in the fall. One of the problems that I warned about is starting to really work its way out in the system, which is that there are a lot more people now wanting local meat. They don't want to go into these dystopian grocery stores and be biometrically scanned and have to show a vaccine passport to buy a chuck roast. So there are a lot of people who are still trying to keep their money in other places, but now all of us local farmers are running into issues where the butchering capacity and infrastructure for handling this increase in demand is struggling to keep up.

Over the past month and a half our buying club has picked up 20 new families as members. I think I picked up three or four new members just yesterday. So there is definitely a lot of demand for local food, and you just have to be really creative and work together.

One of the other good things that I'm seeing is more and more local farmers and more and more local food clubs and food hubs working together to address product shortages, butchering shortages, moving things around, and really trying to tag-team to overcome some of the challenges.

Kennedy: Convince our listeners to join more buyers' clubs like yours providing real food. It's worth going into what happened with the conventional industry. The conventional industry is moving towards a synthetic food system, especially in the area of meat. You have these lab-cultured meats. I've gone to this food safety conference for the last couple of years, and they have had presentations on these lab-cultured meats. These officials are complaining that they can't find out what ingredients are actually in the meat. One of the ingredients has been disclosed recently. If our listeners are sitting down, 'fetal calf blood' will be an ingredient in some or all of these cell-cultured meats.

There is actually a trade paper called *The Milkweed*. The editor, Pete Hardin, covers mostly the dairy industry, but they also cover the meat industry. He's a great investigative reporter.

He had a call from this member who was saying that he wanted to purchase these heifers that were healthy and very close to giving birth, and he was outbid by this private group, and this man disclosed that the *group* was going to use the fetal calf blood for their cell-cultured meat. That is one thing that is going on.

The other thing that is going on is it just seems like the four meatpackers in this country control 80% of the beef market and four control between 60-70% of the pork market.

One of the things that they tried to do was to create these artificial shortages. Last spring there were shortages.

I know that you communicate with a farmer named Jordan Green who did an

investigation on what actually happened with pork. The meatpackers were crying, telling the supermarkets that they didn't have the supply for them. So what actually happened there with pork?

Moody: Jordan Green, myself, and Thomas Massie were all poking around our contact networks and other stuff. Basically as we went into last winter and into spring, there was a giant surplus in the industrial meat system. That is why meat prices had been coming down.

If you look at forecasted meat-tracking prices, last winter meat prices were already trending down, and they were looking to go down even farther. China and America really had significant overproduction coming into the pipeline.

It really looks like the meat industry pulled off a wonderful scam at taxpayer expense where just in the pork industry, the last time that I looked into it they had culled just in America 20 million pigs. So these are 20 million animals that were butchering size. So if each of those animals yield 200 pounds of meat, that is something like 4 billion pounds. It's just an incredible amount. They did this in beef to some extent as well.

They culled all of these animals because they said that there was no way for them to be butchered. You could go look at all of the financial data, and all of these companies recorded record profits last year.

They culled all of these animals, saying, "There is no way to butcher them all," they ratcheted up prices a bunch, and then they made record profits while paying farmers even less. I'm sure they are going to get insurance settlements and other government handouts to pay for the lost animals. It's a total scam.

Kennedy: I think what they did with beef was these meatpackers cut off and dropped some of these ranchers supplying beef to them. While they were doing that and putting those people out of business, they were importing more beef from Brazil and Argentina. So it almost seemed like they had it set up to where eventually as they go towards synthetic meat, they are going to be more reliant on imported meat. Then when it gets near the time where they want to go more towards synthetic meat, they can then drop the imports down. The loser in the whole thing is the ranchers.

Bill Gates has a partnership with Tyson and Cargill in Memphis to make lab-produced meat. It almost reminds me of what happened in the dairy industry where the late Dean Foods was also selling soy milk and other nut milks and cutting the legs off of these dairy producers.

Moody: I just posted this yesterday: Bill Gates is now in a venture to create synthetic breastmilk. U.S. farmers lose, but U.S. consumers lose as well because the quality of the food continues to decline, and our communities lose because you are continuing to hollow out rural areas and anything that is not a city in America, and they suffer as they crush the economic wheelhouse of the countryside, which is food production.

Kennedy: Just to pile on here, USDA has plans to eliminate the disclosure requirement on the label for irradiated meat and poultry. That could be coming up in the year. This was at the same food safety conference where this USDA official was saying that they are talking to the FDA now and trying to convince them to eliminate any radiation disclosure requirement on the labels for some kinds of produce. They are trying to expand this throughout the food system.

Moody: The mainstream food system is just a disaster. Hopefully your listeners are at least somewhat familiar with some of the documentaries and books written.

Just look around you. Look up and down the street you live on. How many people are healthy? How many people have a good body weight and health? How many people can go an entire calendar year without needing pharmaceuticals?

On the one hand, you and I, Pete, can talk more technically about all of these more technical problems in the food system. For people listening, I remember years ago when my wife and I would go to the Louisville Zoo on occasion. One of our family members would buy us a zoo pass for the family to go to the zoo. I would go to the zoo, and I would look at the people walking in and out of the zoo and around the zoo, and I thought, "We are so unhealthy. Half of the people were carrying around a half extra person on their person."

Kennedy: Just with this move to synthetic food, we know who benefits from this. It's the pharmaceutical companies. If you look at the billions of dollars that Bill Gates has in the pharmaceutical industry, his one business is going to help the other the more he gets into food.

But there is an answer to all of this. You were mentioning just how much your health improved once you started purchasing local food. It's just a tremendous difference.

Weston Price has a 50% pledge campaign to encourage each of their members to buy more than half of their food directly from a farmer or a local artisan. This campaign was launched over a year ago. With what has happened with the food system since, it should really be a lot higher than that number.

Occasionally one of the Weston Price members will have a miracle cure or a reversal of disease. They might have had Crohn's Disease or something like that and credit food with being a big part of their recovery. But more than anything, these people don't take drugs, they don't have to go to doctors, and just with what has happened with the healthcare system over the last year and the upheaval it's now in it just seems more critical than ever to go direct to the farm.

Let me finish out this section with this question: John, with all of this demand for local food and many people who aren't part of the local food movement who would really benefit by participating in it, what do you see coming down the pike as far as access for these people wanting this kind of food?

Moody: It is going to be an interesting year. I warned back in December that there was going to be seed shortages this coming year. Go to any major website that sells seeds like Johnny's or Baker Creek, and a lot of them have discontinued orders already for spring.

There are more people getting into farming and more people getting into growing food, and it's going to be a bit bumpy as the demand and all of the new producers and all of the supply chains have to adjust to a different food economy.

Look for local people who you can support. There are still lots of them out

there. When you have the opportunity to help them make changes at the state level to make their life easier, please lend a hand.

Kennedy: In the area of meat, a bill that really could have helped the meat supply in this country would have been the Prime Act where if you are a custom facility, someone would be allowed to use the custom facility and sell meat by the cut from that facility. We saw what happened. The Prime Act has been before Congress for the last three sessions. They had between two and three times the number of sponsors that they did in the prior sessions, but what I saw the opponents do was they kept introducing these other bills – a bill to improve state meat inspection and a bill to allow state-inspected meat to go over state lines. These were good bills, but they don't nearly as much as the Prime Act did.

In the end, from what I understand, they included a bill in the last stimulus package called the Ramp Up Act which provides \$60 to \$80 million worth of grants for these slaughterhouses that are already existing, and that is not what we need; we need more slaughterhouses. It just seems like this is another opportunity for Rogue Food to come into play here.

The USDA does have this regulation called the Personal Use Exemption where, according to their interpretations, someone can actually raise cattle on their own property, sell that cattle, and have the owners come on to that farmer's property to slaughter and butcher the animal as long as the farmer who raises the animal doesn't take part in the slaughtering and butchering. That can be done without inspection and really without much regulation at all on the property. So that is potentially another area that the Rogue Food movement can go.

This brings us to the Rogue Food Conference that you created with Joel Salatin last year. You were the manager, and you had a tremendous response from that.

What was the inspiration for the conference? When you were first starting out, in your mind, what was the purpose for the conference?

Moody: Joel approached me three or four years ago. We were having lunch somewhere, and Joel said, "I wish I could go to a conference where people would teach circumvention in how to beat the government instead of how to get along and comply."

I said, “That sounds like a dream, Joel. Nobody’s going to put on this conference.”

Joel said, “We’ll put on this conference because I want to go to this conference. We will make this conference happen.” But at that time he was really busy, so it was an idea that sat on the back burner between us for a couple of years.

The first one was January of last year, so it was probably January of 2019 that Joel sent me a message and said, “I’m finally ready to help make this happen. Let’s have a Rogue Food Conference – a conference that is all about circumvention and innovation rather than compliance.”

So that was the basic inspiration – wanting to highlight innovative circumvention solutions to government-created problems in food. That’s what we ran with. You were there, and we had all of these amazing, absolutely crazy people from across the country. We had people doing food churches, people doing community pantry-type things, and so many different interesting folks really trying to do work around and stay out of the crosshairs that make it so hard to do real local food.

Kennedy: This isn’t violating the law; this is just finding creative ways to avoid some of the more onerous requirements of the law while using those ways to be able to make a living, which so many of these ‘one size fits all’ requirements in the law prevent the farmers and local artisans from doing.

One impression I had from that conference was that it seemed like a lot of people after that conference had the feeling that they weren’t alone. They realized that there were other farmers around the country who were in the same boat that they were in, looking for creative solutions and still being able to stay on the right side of the law.

There is a local community, and there is a national local food community. This really seemed to jumpstart the national community.

Moody: It’s great! A lot of people were encouraged that there are people who have solutions or they were inspired to start working on their own solutions. I

was just blown away by how encouraged attendees were by the event.

For this year, we are slated to do two more. We are going to do one down in Tennessee, probably June 5th is the tentative date for that one, and then we are going to do one at Polyface Farm, probably around August. I'm waiting for Joel to get back to me about locking that date down and knowing that that is when it's going to happen.

The legal issue is tough. As you and I both know, so many things that are illegal, it's just a matter of some bureaucrat's interpretation. There isn't an actual law; there is some government agency who says it's wrong even though there is no law to support it at times.

Kennedy: That is where this strength in numbers comes in. The more people who are doing this, the less likely government is to strike back. At one time when either farms or buyers' clubs such as yours were being raided, there were more actions against raw milk. There still are actions occasionally, but it's gone away quite a bit.

I think of the growth of the number of farmers producing raw milk and the number of people consuming it in the country. The truth is that the one argument that the government has always used against people selling food locally without regulation is the food safety argument, but when you look at the mess that the industrial system is in now, they have these long supply chains, and food that is unregulated might be coming in from 10,000 miles away from this country – unregulated seafood and things like that. The industrial system does not have the food safety argument; the local food system has it.

When you take that argument away from the industrial system and give it to the local system, there is nothing in favor of the industrial system anymore. More money stays in the community with the local food system, the producers make a better living in the local food system, and the public health improves when members of the community are buying more of their food direct from the farm.

One of the things that has come out of this COVID crisis and the upheaval in the conventional system is that I think there might be as many as seven food freedom bills before the legislature this session in different states. Most of them

probably won't pass, but there might be one or two that do. One of the more amazing stories is that the Governor of South Dakota's office is supporting the food freedom bill before it even gets to the legislature.

Moody: That's great!

Kennedy: She's trying to work with people who want the same thing on the bill.

Even though you need the Rogue Food system to maneuver over the existing laws, it looks like there is a real chance now to change the law in major ways, allowing unregulated local producers to sell direct to consumers. The more of those you have, the healthier the food system you are going to have, and the more self-sufficient the local and regional food production you are going to have.

In spite of all of the trouble that is going on now, there is really a lot of opportunity for the local food movement.

John, I want to finish up by just getting all of your contact information for people who are interested in finding out more about the Rogue Food Conference and about your consulting services. You consult with people all around the country on forming and operating a food buyers' club. Where can they go to contact you?

Moody: Rogue Food Conference can be found at www.RogueFoodConference.com. My personal website is: www.JohnWMoody.com.

Kennedy: There is a lot going on in the area of homesteading. We will try to make that a separate broadcast to meet the interest out there for it and the knowledge about that.

John, I appreciate you taking the time for the broadcast, and I wish you continued success.

Moody: It's good to see you, but I really can't wait to see you in person,

hopefully in a couple of months at the next conference.

Kennedy: I'm looking forward to it. Rogue Food in Tennessee in June. Be there.

Take care, John.

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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