

09th September 2020

In conversation with a producer and member of the artisan agriculture project advisory group

To follow on the series of conversations with the Artisan Agriculture Project Advisory members, Sharon caught up with Danny Kinnear from Danny's Farm in Blampied.

Q: (SH) What inspired you to run your own small-scale farm?

A: (DK) I grew up on my grandma's small farm just outside of Daylesford but I never really considered agriculture as a future career. Two experiences that had a profound impact upon me was growing a sunflower from seed when I was 17 and seeing how a little water, soil and time could result in this huge plant was gobsmacking and this was then taken to the next level upon growing and tasting my first heirloom tomato the summer after I finished school.

It was during the final year of my degree in English and psychology that I watched the film Food Inc. and read the book The Omnivore's Dilemma by Michael Pollan and these two works opened my eyes to the damage the industrial food system was doing to ourselves and the planet also the ways in which regenerative agriculture could help remedy huge issues like climate change and biodiversity loss. I saw these systemic issues as being caused by a disconnect between people and the ways in which their food is produced and so I went and worked on different small-scale farms around the world and then at 24 decided to lease 5 acres and give it a go myself. Seven years and many lessons later and I'm in the process of buying 23 acres here in Blampied with the aim of having an on-farm restaurant that mainly uses food grown here whilst also supplying fresh seasonal produce to the local community.



Image taken by Juanita Broderick

Q (SH): What does Danny's Farm Produce?

A (DK): Because I started so small on leased land I've focused on value adding and I currently make Portuguese tarts, brownies and ice cream from the eggs and fruit produced on the farm. I sell predominantly through farmers markets and I'm working to supply local cafes and collect any food scraps which I can feed back to the farm's chickens and compost helping to close the loop in feed and nutrients.



Image taken by Juanita Broderick

Q (SH): Why do you think people have turned to buying products direct from farm producers rather than other market channels?

A (DK): In the last few years there has been a growing awareness on the value and importance of eating seasonally and locally. COVID-19 has, I believe, firmly cemented in the minds of many the value supporting local and demonstrated how fragile the centralised industrial food system can be. By directly supporting their local producers, people are able to get fresher more delicious produce and know that their dollars remain in the local community and ultimately increase the food security and economic wellbeing of the local region.

Q (SH): What made you interested in the Hepburn Shire Artisan Agriculture Project and the project advisory group?

A (DK): I was involved with the original working group in 2017 and jumped at the chance to advocate for young farmers and work with a really inspirational group of local producers. I am passionate about removing barriers to entry for young farmers as the average age of farmers in Australia is rapidly approaching 60 and I believe that council can be integral in removing and minimising some of the barriers associated with farming.

Q (SH): What do you feel might be the top two learnings for local small-scale agricultural producers from the Global Pandemic of COVID-19?

A (DK): I can't speak for others but for me personally the impact of COVID-19 on markets was significant for my business with 60-70% of my revenue coming from tourist trade at farmers markets and so my greatest learning is that I need to diversity both my customer base and the products I create. There have also been issues with outbreaks in the abattoirs used by many local farmers and this has highlighted how important it is to have more locally owned and operated food processing facilities and move away from a centralised food system.

Q (SH) Where can people find out more about you and your products?

A (DK): I regularly attend the Daylesford Sunday Market and you will find me on the following web and social media sites.

Web: <https://dannysfarm.com.au/>

Instagram [@dannysfarm](https://www.instagram.com/dannysfarm)

Facebook www.facebook.com/dannysfarmblampied

Q (SH): Danny, thank you so much for your precious time today and I have one last question. What do you see as the future opportunities for small-scale agriculture producers in the Shire and broader Central Highlands?

A (DK): I see great potential for Hepburn to be a lighthouse shire for regenerative agriculture and for farmers and council to work collaboratively to address a range of systemic hurdles facing producers at the moment. This region has great soil and water and is situated almost smack bang in the middle between Bendigo, Ballarat and Melbourne and will play a greater and greater role in feeding those cities in the future. What excites me most about the possibilities here is the idea of building community and farmer owned co-ops operating local abattoirs, dairy facilities, feed mills, composting facilities and so on to create more local jobs and build a thriving circular economy that meets the needs of all members of the community. Thanks for the opportunity to be involved and I'm excited to see what can be achieved with farmers, community and council all working together!