



Leaning Into LLCs with Farmer Hannah

Kate: [00:00:00] Hello. Welcome to the Farm Commons Podcast, where we make farm law accessible and actionable for sustainable farmers and ranchers, as well as their networks of support.

Eva: I'm Eva.

Kate: And I'm Kate.

Eva: In each episode, we explore real legal issues. Faced on farms every day, providing key knowledge and tangible solutions to help you grow a thriving agricultural business.

Kate: From managing liability to navigating tough conversations with landlords and neighbors, we've got your back. Let's get started.

Eva: Hi everyone.

Welcome back to the Farm Commons Podcast. I am back here today with Kate. Hey Kate.

Kate: Hi. Hey Eva.

Eva: And we are so excited for this episode because we are back with [00:01:00] another farmer fellow Hannah Hamilton of the Buckle farm and we have been so grateful to spend the past eight months with the Farmer Fellows. We've got four of them in the program. Hannah, who's up in Maine is actually a longstanding member of the Farm Commons community. We have the great pleasure of co-presenting an in-person workshop and the pre pandemic days back in February of 2020. And it was, was such a. a just like, I don't even know, like a salt to the earth of experience for me, flying up from North Carolina into Banger, Maine and then driving out to the MOFGA compound to meet up with Hannah and spend the day with a group of farmers talking about what Hannah has going on on her

and Jim's farm, the Buckle farm, and learning about what the other farmers in the room were also trying to accomplish that.

Just such a special experience and it has been [00:02:00] great to be with Hannah and Katie and Michelle and Martha, who you listeners will get to meet through the podcast over the course of each of their story episodes and. We're just so pleased to learn more from you today, Hannah. We always learn when we speak with you and for our listeners to get to know you too and learn from you.

And so I just wanted to share Oh, yeah, sorry, Kate, please. I heard that. Mm, that was a nice Mm,

Kate: Yeah, I, I mean, I just, I've met Hannah pretty recently because I'm pretty new to Farm Commons, but Two or three calls we've been on at this point have just been so wonderful. And I, yeah, I've just loved hearing about all of the the care and humor that you bring to your farm business, and especially excited to hear some of the wisdom that you're gonna share today.

And you have a really lovely introduction on your website about the farm and I, I think, [00:03:00] Eva, you're gonna take us through that just so we can get to learn a little bit more about Hannah and the buckle farm. Yeah.

Eva: Yeah, the writeup on their farm is, is. So lovely and I'm excited to read this out and for you all to, to go through imagining being on the Buckle farm.

The Buckle farm is a small, diversified farm and Orchard, located in the rural town of Unity, Maine, which was settled on the traditional territory of the Penobscot Nation, part of the Wabanaki Confederacy. The farmer originated in Massachusetts where farmers, Jim Buckle and Hannah Hamilton had lived for many.



However, both Jim and Hannah were born in Maine and when they found that their current land was for sale, they knew it was the right place to be. The farm is also home to an energetic cattle dog mix name named Lemi, and the farm sits on a gently sloping ridge and has an orchard of mixed heirloom apple varieties.

Jim and Hannah produce certified organic produce for wholesale [00:04:00] buyers in Maine and the greater Boston area. The farm is also GAP certified, ensuring that all of the produce leaving the farm has been raised, harvested, and handled with end user and worker health and safety in mind. Running a business based on building healthy soil and food.

At turns incredibly challenging and deeply rewarding. Jim and Hannah are grateful for the support of the chefs, CSA members, distributors, and market customers that have supported the farm through it all as well as for the hands on help that they have received from friends, family, and fellow farmers along the way.

So super, super special business. Very inspiring journey, and we're excited to see how farm law has been a piece of your puzzle today. And specifically through the lens of business structures because, right, like the business structure is one of the containers for all of this growth with the joys and the hardships that [00:05:00] you're cultivating through the buccal farm.

So welcome Hannah. It's so great to be here with you.

Hannah: Hi, Eva and Kate. Thank you so much. So my name is Hannah Hamilton and I'm one half of the Buckle farm. I grew up, born in Maine, raised in Vermont, went to college in Massachusetts, lived in Connecticut for a bit. So I just consider myself a new Englander.

Jim also was born in Maine, raised kind of around New England. And we both had this desire to return to Maine and Jim attended Unity

College. So the town of Unity, where we are now, was very familiar to him. A beautiful place home of the common ground, country fair. So we, we were both familiar with Unity and we found this, this great piece of property. With these old apple trees and nice open fields, and a beautiful view from the ridge where we [00:06:00] grow organic vegetables and some fruit. And currently we mostly focus on selling to wholesale markets, and our big top three are onions, winter squash and potatoes.

Kate: And, and just before you started talking, we were, we were all chatting about this presentation you gave about how to not grow everything, which I think is important context for just how, you know, you've done a lot of winnowing to get down to those few crops that are your specialties now.

Hannah: Literal winnowing. It's really, it's literal, literal winnowing. Yeah. We have done a little of everything. , including trying our hand at growing seed crops. So winnowing reference there. Yeah. We started with a ton of energy and a lot of enthusiasm and we, we, we just, Tried it all from cut flowers, specialty herbs, the, you know, the fun, [00:07:00] super obscure vegetables that, you know, our chefs were looking for.

Eva: Like, what's one of them?

Hannah: Oh hibiscus. Buds. Oh yeah. Wow. Rozel I think is the Rozel. Yeah. A lot of different names and different cultures. Really hard to grow in Maine. .

Eva: I was about to say, I know that from like the Caribbean and you know, the southeast of the United States, I wouldn't necessarily think of Maine, that that might be the most obscure.

Hannah: And didn't really produce a lot, but it makes the whole plant makes an amazing tea. Mm-hmm. , so Yeah. Yeah. We

Kate: So you've been on a journey.

Hannah: We've been on a journey and, and we're finally arriving at a business model that is, that is like the, the path that feels really good.

Kate: Wow. Yes. I'm so excited to hear about that. And I think that you've made a pretty big legal decision this, this [00:08:00] past year. Can you tell us a little bit about what your current business structure is and, and this big decision you've recently come to?

Hannah: Yeah, absolutely. So we've, we've been in business structure vagueness for for, for years. Jim started the business on, you know, on his own basically. He had been working at a really large scale farm in Massachusetts and knew he wanted to farm for himself. So he bought a small property in mass and started farming. And the business was basically Jim. And he had a, you know, he had a partner at the time helping, but he was truly operating as a sole proprietorship.

Which is, you know, it's a, it's a business structure. And then I came into play. I joined Jim, you know, moving up to the farm from Massachusetts and pretty much dove into farming with zero experience. But got, [00:09:00] you know, got caught up enough where we were really both kind of cooperating the farm, but we were, we were still thinking of the business as a sole proprietorship because it wasn't categorized as anything else on paper. And we really, we really didn't understand that from a legal perspective, you know, if it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a general partnership. like, you know, we really were operating the business together. We were purchasing assets for the business together. But, we referred to it as a sole proprietorship because, you know, it's like on the tax returns, especially once we got married it, it seemed like on paper it was a sole proprietorship and we were missing a big piece of the puzzle, which was that if we had come up against a real legal challenge we would've been viewed as a partnership because [00:10:00] that's how we were operating the business.

So we had this misconception that proprietorship might also protect some things because I was buying some assets for the farm kind of personally and in my own name. And I thought that was like, we thought that was a clever way to kind of protect the business a little bit. But we just didn't realize that that really wouldn't stick if it had come to like a serious legal issue.

And at the same time, you know, the business was growing and we were becoming more successful. And so our big decision is that starting next year we will be an LLC

Kate: Woo.

Hannah: Yeah. And oh, it's so exciting to say that, you know, it's a big, a big step for us and, it will, you know, add a lot of legal resiliency to the business.

Mm-hmm. . And it will eventually [00:11:00] just really help us keep our business on track, keep our personal lives on track and ensure that the business can be successful and flexible. And just set us up for best case scenario and worst case scenario.

Kate: Yeah. And you, you gave a little peek into, you know, the early days of your business when it seemed like business structures weren't something that you were really heavily considering or looking into.

And so I'm curious how, like, what your, your learning journey was like in. in the decade or so that the, the farm has been operating, how have you come to this place now where you feel like business structures are an important thing to be considering and that n LLC specifically is best for your, your business at this point?

Hannah: Yeah. I mean, I had mentioned earlier that we were kind of doing it all, trying it all. It wasn't all working . And when we started the farm, [00:12:00] we were really fortunate to have the

opportunity, or I should say Jim really took the opportunity to purchase this land. He had actually been familiar with this farmland from, you know, back in the day when he was still living in Maine after college. And it took a lot of, it took a lot of help. It took a lot of planning.

We had a kind of lease to own agreement with Maine farmland trust, which really provided us this huge opportunity to jump into and we really did jump into it. You know, Jim had just recently started farming on his own and wasn't necessarily expecting to move the farm so quickly, but it was a really special opportunity, so we jumped into it. But we were, we were operating the farm, so lean, you know, we didn't have all the infrastructure we needed. We didn't have a lot of cash on hand. So we were, [00:13:00] we were working really hard with very little. So thinking about the, the legal resiliency of the farm was not really on the front of our minds.

We were kind of in survival mode. Just, you know, working through, not really having the right equipment, not really having an irrigation plan and kind of playing fast and loose season by season and just getting as much grown as we could, trying a lot of different things, marketing to a lot of different customers.

So. We just, we didn't have the stability to feel like we could sit down and really think through strategies for legal resiliency. And we really felt like we were, we were just racing through each season, and that if we stopped for a moment, failure was gonna catch up with us. And we, you [00:14:00] know, we were, it was so exciting.

And so challenging and we couldn't see failure as anything but this like looming monolith, and we didn't understand that we would go through a lot of things that would feel like failure in the lifetime of the business, but, we'd stay in business. So I think for a lot of people that are new to a small business, especially new to a, a farm failure just seems like an opaque, massive, very scary concept that you like,

don't wanna dive into and don't wanna, you know, like analyze too much.

You just wanna run in the other direction. And in that way it's a good motivator too. It it, I mean, it, it was a great motivator. Yeah. But as we started to first of all acknowledge that we were heading towards burnout. Mm. But also starting to, you know, we [00:15:00] were, we started realizing that we were doing too much, weren't making enough money, we weren't planning far enough ahead in the future. also that we could do those things -that became like the pinpoint of light that we needed to head towards. And when we started rethinking our, our business model, we realized that we could get that foothold towards stability and then we could, you know, make longer term plans for the business and we could, you know, think about legal resiliency and you know, what steps we could take to just strengthen the business even more and ensure that we can, could make it through, you know, what might seem like failures.

Kate: Hmm. Yeah. I love that description of failure is this vague, omnipresent threat. It's just kind of looming there that's [00:16:00] people don't wanna investigate.

Hannah: But when you do investigate it, it becomes less scary. So much less scary. Mm-hmm. and you realize that a lot of what we think of as failures are, are just challenges with many different possible outcomes. Mm-hmm. And whether it's financial or relationship or health-wise, there are a lot of ways to continue your business through those things that feel like, you know, might be giving you failure vibes, a lot of them aren't failures at all. They're just changes.

Eva: Mm-hmm. . . Yeah. There's that saying, I think I recently heard it attributed to the I-ching it's part of Chinese philosophy that success comes to those who weather through the storm, and it takes so much bravery and courage to like look the storm like in the face. and then to sit with it to see what are the elements of this storm? What

can I tackle? You know, that's like one cloud, what's one cloud that I could approach. And [00:17:00] then you find yourself in the eye of the storm and you're like, wow. I'm like halfway through. I see the other side. And the, the journey arc that you just painted, Hannah?

I think a lot of our listeners will relate to at least fragments of it. Maybe even the whole thing, you know, like going in strapped for resources and giving it their all and trying every market, every crop, every value added, every relationship to move farm product and get it to the, to the end consumer and quickly approaching burnout.

And that being the point in time that when things get so pressed, it's like, life says, oh, we're just gonna bump out and create some spaciousness. Or you're gonna reflect on what you need because you need to address your needs in order to sustain yourselves as farmers, but also the, the farm business moving forward.

So I was hearing, you know, you guys got to that point and you were like, oh, we can make long-term plans, but I also wanna highlight what you shared [00:18:00] earlier regarding some of the Legal mental gymnastics you guys did with the sole proprietorship, and you're like thinking that if you were to get purchase things as yourself a, a separate from the sole proprietorship that Jim was running as the business, that that would provide some protection.

Which we know that like, that's, that's not how the law works, but in your mind, you were managing risk. And I think that is, is admirable that you were like thinking even then like, oh, we can, we have some power here over our liability. And so you did, did your best with the knowledge you had at hand and a lot of farmers.

You know, take that route. They're like, oh, my, my peers are forming LLCs. I'm gonna form an llc. You know, like there's these legal tools that we develop in our mind that may not actually be legit legal in nature, but they, they help us to find a sense of , security, comfort and a source of bravery for, for [00:19:00] moving forward.

So yeah, thank you for, for sharing all of that. And I'm so curious to transition and take a harder look now at, at your, you and Jim's decision and to form the LLC and can you talk a bit more about your, your individual perspectives on the business and that decision making process around, you know, starting off 2023 with forming the buckle farm, LLC.

Hannah: Yeah. So Jim definitely comes from more of the boots on the ground and in the soil like production focus, which is fantastic. Jim is really intuitive. He's, he's like a wizard with our machinery and his priority is always, you know, like, what's going on in the soil? How are the crops doing? And I definitely brought a different skillset to the farm.

You know, with, I [00:20:00] worked in a lot of different businesses. I had a little more. Kind of admin skill under my belt. Obviously like studied art. I love design, you know, I love incorporating that into our business. So I think it was, you know, a relief for Jim to have kind of another skillset brought into the business.

But also like in the early days, I'd say starting to think more about these more administrative tasks and aspects of the business that could like build in some legal protections. And Jim was still, you know, just really focused on the health of the crops and the soil and moving production forward.

So what at first you know, resulted in a little bit of tension. Eventually as we worked together more and as the business became more stable we both came to really understand that [00:21:00] Jim's skillset is so critical to the business and that I was also bringing a skillset that was like fairly critical to the business and that we were actually just building up you know, a synergy in our personal relationship and in our business relationship. And once we both really accepted that we couldn't become the same person that we, that our strengths were actually in being too different individuals, bringing different perspectives to this business it really helped us, helped us, you know,



embrace the changes we wanted to make, helped us, helped us both accept that we wanted to take some big legal steps that felt challenging, but that we could do it.

Eva: I love that you say that with a smile like, Ooh, oh yeah, yeah. Take these legal steps. .

Hannah: Yeah. And just realizing that, you know, we can let the other handle some of the decision making [00:22:00] like Jim still handles a lot of decisions around crop planning. And I fully trust him and he allows me to do some of the legwork for some of these big administrative decisions that we're making. So yeah. What started at as feeling tension between perspectives has just really become this like, energetic way to keep the business moving forward.

And our farm, our farm is so special to us that we, like, we literally feel like we are married to it. And we even, you know, incorporated the farm and, and literally some soil from the farm which is sitting in with us.

Eva: Oh, in the jar. We've heard about this. Oh, I wished all our listeners could see this jar

Hannah: When we got married, we brought a jar of farm soil to the ceremony so that it could be with us [00:23:00] as we set our vows to each other and kind of you know, be witness to our vows. Cuz our, we really wanna be, you know, the best tenders of soil that we can and, and prioritize soil health and just the health of the land that we're on, such a gift and a privilege.

And part of building a strong, stable business is, you know, taking steps. Ensure that we can do that for the lifetime of our careers. So, you know, we found ways to get excited about things like forming an L L C, making sure our insurance policies cover everything that they need to, and that we understand them fully.

Making sure that our, our accounting is really accurate and up to date, and that we're utilizing all that data. You know, you have to find a way to make what might [00:24:00] seem tedious and boring, exciting and fulfilling and and the LLC in a way is kind of a reaffirmation of our commitment to our farm and the soil and to the relationship jim and I are taking, you know, being partners in life and partners in business.

Kate: Wow. I love that parallel with between the L L C and like your, your marriage vow. It's like a renewal of your vows to each other and the land.

Hannah: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's a ceremony and yeah, it's a , it's a marker of, you know, like reaching a certain level in our business.

Yeah, we're super excited. Never thought I could get so excited about business structure.

Eva: I know Hannah you are literally glowing. Oh, but I, at the same time, it makes, you know, a lot of sense to me with the trust building that you and Jim have cultivated. Your honoring of each other's skills, individual unique skills that you bring to the business your own personhood and how it [00:25:00] manifests in the business.

Yeah. There's, there's so much that you guys have been building brick by brick over the years to make your your, your business and your lives together and it sounds to me like. You know, furthering your legal resilience is just like adding cherries on the top of this house. I'm like mashing up metaphors here. Cherries on top of the cake. Yeah, bricks of the house...

Hannah: we love cherries.

Eva: Yeah. Me. Yeah, me too.

Hannah: And like now that we are able to look further ahead, The future is like, is rushing towards us. I like, we both can't believe that we've been farming here for eight years. Like we, we still feel like we're, we're like starting our small business.

But it's, you know, it's, it's going and it's growing. And our, you know, our families are aging. Like that happened so fast. I I just. Never thought that, you know, in my [00:26:00] thirties I'd be thinking about my parents aging and, and how that's going to affect us. And we have we have this really, we're in a really unique situation where we never expected that we would inherit as much as we realized we are going to.

We, we just couldn't have seen it coming and it's a huge privilege that not everyone receives and that I, I, I certainly did not see coming our way. But as you know, generations pass we're going to inherit a lot, and that needs to play into our business decisions. So that's, that's another reason to form the LLC..

And, you know, when we started the business, we had so little in terms of personal assets, personal things we just, [00:27:00] we were struggling financially. And just to see how, how much that can change in almost a decade. It's been shocking. Again, it's, you know, it's a huge privilege and we're so thankful for it.

And it's really, it's just been this like wow moment of like, okay, I, I understand more about why people choose to form LLCs and choose to formally delineate what is business and what is personal. So obviously not every farmer is going to experience this, you know, fork in the road but some maybe experiencing it right now and or, or may have it coming in the future.

And it's important to understand what business structures are out there and why businesses choose [00:28:00] them, even if you're not quite there yet. Because, you know, ideally your business will grow and you will have, you know, a lot of like really complex growing

relationships over the course of the business and you may never need to change your business structure from a sole proprietorship or a general partnership. But hopefully you have strong reasons to consider it.

Eva: Yeah, no, Hannah, that you're illuminating two key reasons to form a formal business entity such as an L L C which is personal asset protection, but functioning on two different levels, I should say. Protecting, you know, you and Jim as individuals for many, you know, legal issues such as risks of injury that results from the course of your business, but also you know, you guys are now looking at some significant.

Unexpected personal assets that you'll be receiving that the LLC can help. Maintain as a personal asset, [00:29:00] you know, keeping your, your business firmly within the llc and separating, separating the business from your personal assets. And yeah, I I love the imagery that you painted of like, you know, coming to a fork in the road where if a farmer is a sole proprietorship or a partnership, they may have to consider like, oh, do I wanna formalize, do I have Certain life factors that would incentivize this decision because it is a decision that involves steps to take and, and resourcing of information and potentially service providers to support that business entity formation.

So would you be willing to share just a bit about the steps that you guys have taken towards forming the LLC and what that has looked like? Just generally?

Hannah: Yeah, so we, we actually started thinking about business structures and asking ourselves if we wanted to form an L L C in 2019 which was around the time that we were also realizing that we wanted to shift our [00:30:00] business model to be more focused, more focused on wholesale, growing fewer crops.



We were really kind of auditing every part of our business and asking ourselves what, you know, what to keep, what to shift away from and getting on. I'm getting away from that path to burnout. And I have this, this analogy from, from the art world that, you know, kind of like helped, helps us like steer these decisions, which is artist mode versus craftsperson mode.

And when we started our business, we were fully in artist mode, which was we were being you know, super flexible, super innovative, extremely creative. We were working, you know, turning nothing into something. And it was a really fun, exciting time, but it was also like really high risk. And like I had said before, we were just kind of racing through each season, putting out [00:31:00] little fires, dealing with all these hiccups and just being as, as improvisational and flexible as we could. And, and we didn't really have the resources to operate otherwise. We were, we were just pulling as much together as we could. And that creativity and that flexibility, I think, you know, really benefited us. But now we're shifting to craftsperson mode, which is about a dedicated, defined, focused practice in which, you know, the craftsperson would consider every tool that they use, every material that they use, you know, the longevity of their, you know, creative output.

So we're, we've shifted into craftsperson. Taking care of these these, you know, legal risks and finding the right tools to reduce the legal risks definitely falls into [00:32:00] craftsperson mode. And we also realize like we wanna save our artist mode energy for some of our personal life lives. So forming the L L C was also a way to, to really define the role of the business and our roles within the business, and also to help us separate our personal lives from our business lives.

And to be able to take more time and understand that we really need personal time in our lives to focus on: hobbies and self-care, rest, all of that.

Kate: Yeah, that really reflects stuff. Something that I've heard from ag service providers as well, that when they get a farmer to consider forming a formal business entity, it actually helps just with this like mental separation, that creates a lot of space for people to view themselves as separate from their business in a way that's really healthy. [00:33:00]

Hannah: I think healthy is a great way to describe it. It, we have really taken our physical and mental health far more seriously since, since that period at the end of 2019 and going into 2020 and realizing we needed to shift our, our business for the health of ourselves and the business. Mm-hmm. . Yeah. And you know, back in early 2020 before the pandemic, when Eva and I were face-to-face at this really great workshop that Farm Commons was putting on, you know, we were planning on forming the LLC much sooner, but covid happened. A lot of, a lot of change happened you know, globally and locally.

And we were making that big business transition and still kind of asking ourselves like, okay, will it work? Will this new model really work out? And I'm glad we took the time [00:34:00] to focus on you know, shifting our model, really, really taking time to ask ourselves what we need and want out of the business and what we need and want out of, you know, our personal lives and outside of the business.

So , know, we didn't think it would take years, but at the same time, we're glad we took years to really address like these big building blocks of our business. And to get, get through covid, get through like huge upsets in our markets. Get through some climate change issues like, you know, understanding that our water is so much more limited than we expected.

Kate: Mm-hmm. Yeah. Working towards those pinpoints of light that you, you talked about structures guiding you through and yeah. I wanted to ask at this point you've talked a lot about you and Jim and,

and your decisions and the journey of your business sort of in isolation, but can we talk a little bit [00:35:00] about the network of, you know, advisors, support, educators, et cetera, that have kind of helped you get to this place where you are now. Who's been, who's been with you on this journey for people who might be listening and, and want to embark on this journey as well?

Hannah: Yeah, absolutely. . Yeah. So another thing that happened in this time period, you know, kind of starting at the beginning of 2020 is, you know, once business structure was like on my brain I started finding so many peers I could connect with about business structure and, you know, realizing like, oh, like, you know, a lot of farmers that we already know are on kind of like all different paths with their business structure journey. So we know and have spoken with a lot of farms that have really, I wanna say like functional LLCs that are you know, not only helping formalize the business arrangement they might have, [00:36:00] like with a life partner, the farming. But you know, I, we've met farmers that are farming with people, you know, outside of their households, you know, just business partners. It's been super interesting to talk about all the different relationships that farmers have put together within LLCs. And we also know some farmers that. , we, you know, approached expecting them to say, oh yeah, of course we formed an LLC.

Like, it makes so much sense and it didn't for them. And, you know, we kind of talked through where they were at and it's like, okay, so why don't you have an L L C mm-hmm. . And I think for some of those farmers, it, it truly made sense, you know, that, that they hadn't formed an LLC and didn't need to. And I think other farmers were just still on the journey of, [00:37:00] of understanding their business. And you know, I, I feel like I heard some responses that sounded like early, early years in the Buckle farm. You know, like it's too expensive. We just don't have, we don't have. , you know, built up yet, you know, we don't have, the business isn't built up enough yet, or, and some farmers that just just didn't really have like, the knowledge base of like, why, why would you form an llc? Like, that

seems complicated. . So I definitely, I, I didn't expect to learn, I didn't expect such a varied response from our peers. But it was really helpful to just understand all of the different reasons why these like small farms at a similar scale to us had chosen to form an LLC. And a lot of those LLCs had seen those like big changes that seemed super scary. Like someone leaving the LLC or romantic partners that decided [00:38:00] not to farm together and how they navigated that.

And there are just so many different outcomes to your farm, and it's so easy to focus on what you want your best case scenario to be and to try and run towards that best case scenario as hard as you can, which you, you certainly should. But it's so likely something other than the best case scenario will happen, which is fine. There, there are plenty of like, okay, case scenarios. and if you never, you know, if you're always running from the idea of that like big looming failure monster and you never consider how you might deal with the worst case scenario, then you know, you leave this huge vulnerability. Vulnerability in the farm, and in the relationships involved in the farm. You know, and for a lot of us, those relationships are hugely [00:39:00] important. You know, a lot of us are farming with a romantic partner or a life partner. And obviously you don't want that relationship to change, and you don't want your business relationship to change. there are a lot of things that can cause a change and a lot of businesses can totally get through that. You know, it seems like so unlikely that Jim and I will ever stop farming together, but part of this decision builds in clarity that makes it like much easier if one of us does decide that they don't wanna be part of the LLC anymore. Or can't farm anymore. Yeah. And it makes it a lot easier to involve a, you know, a third party if we do, you know, if we do want to maybe just spread out some of the business responsibility a little bit more if we have some unique opportunity that comes our way. And [00:40:00] farm Commons content was honestly such a huge and important starting point for me.

Kate: Ugh, love to hear it.

Hannah: Yeah, it, you know, when I was introduced to Farm Commons through. Bo Dennis and Bo Dennis at MOFGA yes. I just dove into the Farm Commons resources on the website and just like hoovered them up, . Cuz it, it was just so helpful. To find really well designed explanations of very complicated le legal subjects.

And I still like find myself just checking in on the website time and time again and just reading through some of these summaries of, of like legal topics. So helpful to just keep these like important bullet points fresh in my mind. And we have a really great tax accountant who is really familiar with farms, farm businesses, and farm [00:41:00] taxes which is its own unique animal.

And she was just super helpful also giving us, you know, these like summaries of how different business structures are taxed and how forming an LLC might change the way that we file our taxes and what the benefits could be. So I had a lot more resources around me than I realized when we were, when we were still in survival mode, and it just felt like, like such a long, difficult, opaque process. Really just once I started reaching out to people and talking to people, I found that, you know, peers were really willing to share their stories. There were so many more just like resources literally at my fingertips than I realized. And yeah, we.

Kate: Yeah, I'm so glad that you had [00:42:00] all those resources. Such a wonderful realization to come to that you actually have a lot of support so accessible and always love to get the affirmation that Farm Commons resources are there and were helpful for you. So we're almost at time here and I've heard you give a lot of really incredible wisdom about you know, planning for something other than the best case scenario to come about talking to peers and, and just seeking asking questions that you have and trusting that your peers have probably also thought about them. And I'm wondering what other advice would you give to a beginning farmer or any farmer that's curious about business structures?

Hannah: Oh, that is a good one. Start with a peer or, you know, they might not seem like a peer they might seem like you know, a farming rockstar or you know, it might feel intimidating, but a [00:43:00] lot of farmers have a lot to give to the next generation of farmers. And you know, conferences are great spaces to find time with farmers, like not , not in the middle of the season.

You know, find an appropriate space to look up a farmer near you and ask them if they're willing to just have a casual chat with you about business. You know, as busy as we all are, I think there are a lot of us that really wanna see new farmers and really wanna see them succeed.

Kate: Yeah. Perfect. Well thank you for all of your time and thoughts and the laughs and your wisdom today, Hannah. Yeah. I know that me and Eva are both feeling sad that the Farmer Fellows program is going to [00:44:00] be wrapping up soon. But I'm just so grateful that we are able to learn from you and, and carry some of your words and that we're gonna be able to share them with, with the world through this podcast. So, thank you. And thank you, Eva. Any, any other things to add?

Eva: I am going to be caring forth, especially that , artist versus craftsperson filter into so many elements of our work at Farm Commons and also my personal life because yeah, there's, that's a great way to, to conceive of energy management.

You know, we only have so much life force to give to our businesses, to ourselves and the causes we care about. So thank you for that nugget and all the others, Hannah, we're so, so grateful for your leadership in this. Oh, thank you both. Yes. There've been so many nuggets to come out of the Farm Fellows Program and definitely reserve time in your life for artist mode and [00:45:00] craftsperson mode.



Yes. And use them both. Yes. Wholeheartedly. . Awesome. Before we, we actually like really say goodbye y'all, how can our listeners follow, follow your journey, Hannah, you and gems?

Hannah: Ooh. You can find us on our website, bucklefarm.com doesn't get updated nearly as often as we'd like to. Also our Instagram that's a great way to stay somewhat up to date on what we're doing.

Kate: And yeah, hopefully we'll meet some of you listeners in the future. What's the Instagram handle? Buckle farm. Buckle farm. Perfect all right. Thanks everybody. We'll see you next time.[00:46:00]

We're so glad you joined us for this episode of the Farm Commons Podcast. If you are looking for more resources on your Burning Farm law questions, visit our website@pharcommons.org for a variety of workshops, guides, checklists, tutorials, and more. You can also email your questions and comments to info@pharcommons.org.

Stay tuned for our next episode, and until then, keep growing.