

# Susie Kyle Commentary: Focus on Healthy Local Food Will Help Us All

For The Chronicle | Posted: Thursday, November 15, 2012 10:38 am

I've sold the farm. As I write this, it makes me contemplate the saying, "I've sold the farm." I'm thinking it refers to selling the farm to move to the city for a better, more profitable way of life. Something as a society we bought hook, line and sinker after World War II with the entrance of the era of "better living with chemistry." As another one of the sayings from the farm goes, it is coming home to roost, I hope, finally, that the treasure is in the land.

I have sold the farm, though not to development and the illusion of a better way of life, but to a family who wants to raise their 9- and 11-year-old daughters in a rural setting, the very reason I bought these most precious 15 acres 20 years ago.

They won't have to board their four horses any more. They aren't hobby farmers. The girls want to raise pigs and chickens and mom wants to teach them how to sew and can. Dad is a logger and has the muscle and experience on how to care for the land. Note, there aren't any trees that can be logged on my farm as they are majestic old trees protected by proximity to a creek. He knows the value of land, and of trees. So, I haven't sold out, I've just sold the farm to another farm family who will love the land as much as I have.

As some of you know me or of me, I have been a relentless advocate for preserving farmland and protecting our food supply in Lewis County for 17 years. There was a moment when I was contemplating the CSA (Community-Supported Agriculture) model in 1998 when I had an inspiration and I've been a passionately driven farm activist ever since. On another note, I said passionately driven, not rationally driven. But that's a story for another time and another place.

**Why then did** I sell the farm? The first reason is my daughter has become the farmer in the family in Thurston County and I want to move closer to her and her husband and her farm. I don't have any grandbabies, yet, but one day I realized I had thousands of them, seeds full of hope of the next generation, newly sprouted ones, and ones ready to go on to their next destiny. Just like grandchildren, I get the joy of their company, but I don't have to take care of them 24/7.

The second reason is my attention has shifted away from being the farmer to being a local artisan food producer. I've developed an entire brand line of ready-to-eat foods made from as many locally produced foods as possible. My time is now in the kitchen supporting our local farmers and food producers.

I started farming 17 years ago because I didn't want corporations making my food choices. I was newly 50, newly single, newly on 15 acres of land, and I had never thought about being a farmer a day in my life. I also decided a farm was as good a

place as any to create social change, maybe the best since food is fundamental to being human.

**Here's my concern.** For the first time in history we are importing more food than we are exporting. We have become dependent upon foreign food like we are on foreign oil, and we're paving our farmland. Some refer to this as a suicidal economy, others refer to it as an issue of national security because whoever controls the food supply controls the people. The solution to this is a local sustainable food system, and we need farmland to do this.

The treasure is in your land here in Lewis County, not to be developed, but to be in food and food-related production. It has never made sense to me that we have so many hungry people here, and so much farmland not in production.

**Through my years** testifying at county, city and state hearings, along with other active citizens, we saved 50,000 acres of agriculture resource land here in Lewis County. This is good news for some, and not for others who were zoned agriculture and lost the development value of their property, their retirement or children's college education money, or who had hoped to build homes for multiple generations on their land. All of these benefits and consequences now need to be identified and addressed, one of my best wishes for Lewis County.

It's become clear to me all these years contemplating these very important issues that we are part of a whole. What each of us does or doesn't do impacts others.

We aren't independent and isolated, we are inter-dependent and connected. As we explore how to proceed from here, let's start living as if the life in all things matters, especially the land that feeds us and a planet that sustains us.

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*Susie Kyle has spent many years farming land near Winlock and has developed an entire brand line of ready-to-eat local artisan foods. Her plans for expansion are outlined in her [Kickstarter.com](#) >search> Local Flavors Market. Regardless of the outcome of the Kickstarter project, she will be expanding her brand line and her efforts to help communities build their local resilience.*

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