



## **Birds of a Feather: Chicken Farming, Mentorship and Community**

### **FCC Knowledge Podcast: Talking Farm and Food**

#### PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Interviewer: Marty Seymour

Guest: Doug Bryson

MS: From FCC, it's the FCC Knowledge Podcast, a show that features real Canadian producers, real stories, and real good conversation about the business of farming. I'm your host, Marty Seymour.

DB: My neighbour kind of stepped in when my father got sick. That man's worth his weight in gold for all the times he's gotten me out of trouble. And I don't know how many times I've gotten a tractor stuck or done something silly and he's been there to save me. So, he's always very much appreciated.

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MS: Today on the show we are going east. Doug Bryson from Brysonwood Farms is a new chicken farmer from Ormstown, Québec. He's a pretty young guy. He actually just celebrated his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday just shortly after our interview. But he's had a dream of raising chickens for quite some time. Doug was selected to participate in a new start-up program to help get his farm off the ground. He had the very good fortune to win what I affectionately called the chicken lottery, which allowed his dream to come together and become a reality. What makes this podcast special is how Doug used the support in his community and the special mentorship that he had all along the way. Doug's story is inspiring, and it involves intergenerational farming and community mentorship. We're going to sell you the whole seat, but you're only going to need the edge. Stick around.

Welcome to the FCC Podcast. On our show today, we've got Doug Bryson. Now, Doug, put your town on the map. Where are you from?

DB: I'm from Ormstown, Québec, which is about 45 minutes southwest of Montreal.

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MS: What's the farm country like there? My vision of Québec is lots of trees. What does it look like in your area as far as farming topography and what's on the land?

DB: Well, the area I farm is called the Chateauguay Valley. We're at the very bottom of the valley alongside the Chateauguay River. And it's fairly flat land pretty much for as far as you can see. Little to no stones. So, just overall, really good land as far as I'm concerned.

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MS: Oh, man. So, I'm from Western Canada, and you talk about rocks. We could probably send a few your way if you needed to have some work on the weekends, for sure. Tell us about the price of farmland. You're from a region that lots of people wouldn't be familiar with. What does land cost out there?

DB: The last farm I know of that sold was for \$20,000 an acre but those prices in this area fluctuate too. If you're a little bit further away, or if you're on the other side of the river from a big buyer, well then land can drop off \$3,000, \$4,000 an acre. But for the most part, it's around \$20,000.

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MS: What's driving this higher-than-a-lot-of-regions price of land? That's the kind of numbers you see in the Fraser Valley, Southern Ontario. Why is land so expensive?

DB: I think there's a big rush on right now that's been motivated almost culturally around the idea of they're not making any more land. It's a big buying frenzy right now. When is it going to stop? I wish I could say. But there's a lot of places that are completely selling out in order to cash in on the big price. And there's a lot of places that two, three years ago were the same size as me and now they've doubled or tripled. So, it's hard to say what's motivating people.

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MS: You actually just summarized the conversation in coffee shops from coast to coast. Tell us a little bit about your family history in agriculture and farming.

DB: The family farm was originally purchased in 1823, and from there, my parents grew it to the size of 250 acres to when I took over. So, not a huge farm. Up until 2007 it was primarily a dairy operation. And for health reasons and stuff, my parents decided to sell out in 2007 for the dairy cows. And I more or less took over the farm in 2015 with the farm transfer shortly after that.

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MS: Doug is a sixth-generation farmer. But before taking over his family farm, he attended McGill University at Macdonald College where he completed his Farm Management and Technology program. He went on from there to work as a poultry rep for the MacEwan Agricentre in Eastern Ontario. Even though Doug was already heavily involved in the

chicken industry, the family farm wasn't raising chickens when he came back home from college. So, what were they up to?

DB: When I came back from college, organic prices were still really strong, and it seemed like the right move to make in order to be able to buy out my parents and still have some money left over in order to invest in the farm and stuff like that. So, we went to organic cash crops. And then as of last fall, well, we became a chicken farm.

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MS: So, this is where the story gets interesting to me. Tell us about your chicken farm, then.

DB: It's still in its early stages. I only became a chicken farmer because of a start-up program that's offered in Québec right now to get new people who have never had chicken production in their family, started up. So, I applied to that in the fall of 2019. And then through hiccups, and thanks to COVID and all kinds of other stuff, they finally drew names out of a hat last fall. And I was the lucky winner.

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MS: I think Doug's being a little bit too humble here. While the final selection for the Québec poultry farmers' start-up assistance program is a draw, he actually had to work super hard and put business plans together and do lengthy interviews to set himself apart from some of the other applicants. So, what I'm saying is, it's a pretty big accomplishment. So, what did Doug get by winning the chicken lottery?

DB: That gives me a loan on quota for the next 20 years of 1,500 metres. In Québec, it's all square metres. So, I'll have that loan for 20 years. And I'm able to buy it back over those 20 years. So, that kind of gets me up and going, and then for anything I'm missing for metres in the barn, I can rent from my feed mill.

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MS: I have a little bit of background in this because in, of course, over my 20 years in the industry I remember applying for some of the, I call them the lottery, the supply-managed lottery. In your case, this is broilers we're talking about, correct?

DB: Yes.

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MS: And so, for those of you who don't understand the broiler industry, in terms of 1,500 square metres relative to your neighbours, is that a viable farm size for the amount of quota you have? Or is that kind of a starter package that you need to invest in more to be scalable?

DB: That's a great start-up size. Fifteen hundred metres is roughly about 20,000 birds per batch. And on the system I'm set up on, I'm going to be doing six-and-a-half batches a year. So, it's a viable size. You're not rolling in cash with it. You're getting the next generation going is the way I always look at it. For me, I'll have all the work into it, and then Junior, he'll be the one out buying the bass boat and the new truck and all that by the time it's set up.

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MS: It's not hard to figure out when you meet Doug that succession is already on his mind. But there's actually a good reason for this. Doug and his fiancée Stephanie are expecting a baby this summer, so it makes sense that Doug is already planning to pass this farm on to the next generation. His fiancée is also a pivotal part of the operation. You might even say she's the glue that holds the whole thing together.

Now, you have a partner in this, Stephanie. Tell us about how you guys. Where does she fit into this whole equation?

DB: Without Stephanie I'd be dead in the water. She does all of the paperwork with the exception of I take care of the organic certification and any paperwork pertaining to the operation of the chicken barn. But anything financial, Stephanie takes care of. And then above and beyond that, when we're in the busy season, she's there to jump on a tractor. There's not a piece of equipment around here she can't run, that she won't run. I'm pretty lucky. She says no to very little for work around here, so I'm pretty spoiled. Like I say, I lucked out in terms of having a partner who, she came from agriculture. She understands it, and she was willing to jump in the ring with me and get her hands dirty.

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MS: I'll give you an insider tip. When this podcast is over, you need to package this up, gift it to her on Christmas as your declaration of how much you care and appreciate her. Because you're going to need it at some point in your relationship. Everybody knows this. Someday, somehow, you're going to have to cash this in. But yeah, it's great. I always love to hear couples that are building this stuff together. And I want to try to tie things together. You told us that you have an organic cash crop. In terms of the broiler side of your business then, have you looked at it with the same lens of looking at some sort of organic bird line? Or is it completely independent in terms of your decisions, how you're running both sides of your business?

DB: Both are independent of each other. On the ecological side of it, I try and look at what works in which ways and stuff. And in this instance, the chickens, I had a neighbour who retired from the chicken industry. He had sold his quota on the market and his barn was available. So, I took over his barn which is a three-storey chicken barn, and it's set up for conventional-style production. So, I'm not out to reinvent the wheel. The barn was available for the right price. And now, with construction costs of chicken barns due to

the shortage in construction materials here right now, you're looking at \$60.00 a square foot. Compared to when he built, he was around \$18.00 a square foot.

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MS: So, you threw me a curveball here. I assumed when you won the chicken lottery that you had to build a new infrastructure. You were able to go and rent that from your neighbour, or did you have to buy that out in order to fulfil the conditions of the contract?

DB: I had to buy it out. In order to receive the quota, you have to be the owner. So, that's where timing was right for me and my neighbour. I'm getting into the industry. He was getting out and looking to downsize his operation. So, I was able to buy his farm. And then what we're doing is I'm actually leasing him back the land until he decides he wants to completely retire.

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MS: I don't think it's a surprise for many of you out there listening that starting a farm operation is definitely a tough job. Doug had quite a challenge ahead of him, trying to make his new chicken barn operation viable. This is where the help of his neighbour became extremely valuable.

Okay, so you said some math. I think you said a new build was \$60.00, did you say a square foot?

DB: Yes.

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MS: And so then, I don't know how far you want to go with this, but what did it cost you to go this route where you said, I'll go with an older unit? Could you do that for \$30.00?

DB: Well, being honest, the price I got wasn't the going price for land and everything around here. I got the neighbour price. So, it actually cost me around the \$18.00 a square foot, if the chicken barn only pays for everything, kind of a thing.

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MS: This is where I like to better understand the math for the people that aren't in the broiler business, for example. Now let's put this back in. You've got a 20-year-commitment to pay the quota back. Does it take this type of math that you did on the friends and neighbour discount in order to make this business viable? Is that how cheap it had to be to work?

DB: It's how cheap it had to be to work it where I was able to buy everything back and reinvest in the barn to make it a little bit more efficient. The barn is around 15 years old.

And what was fine and dandy 15 years ago has aged and now needs some updating. So, he was understanding of that, and quite frankly, he didn't want to sell on the general market. He was happy to make a deal with me. He's been a long-term family friend, so everything kind of fell into place. But definitely, even with the gift of the quota program, I still needed a bit of a deal in order to make things work. Because if I would have had to build at the prices going on right now, I could either afford to build the barn, or buy the quota back, but I couldn't do both.

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MS: And I don't think that's unique to your market. I think that's across the country, the same dynamic that's going on about just the viability of how to cash flow a brand-new build against all the escalation of costs. It's frankly the age-old story of agriculture.

DB: Yes.

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MS: Thinking about your barn, so you've got a 15-year-old barn, I have to think you're good for 10 years and then you've got to blow this thing up and do a rebuild. So, it makes me wonder about your business plan. So, you put a plan together. Walk me through how you're going to deal with this aging infrastructure as part of your business plan on your 20-year plan.

DB: That's the beauty of chicken barns is the rotation of animals in and out is so high that the style of chicken barn itself, not the technology and everything, but the four walls and the floor, hasn't changed since, oh God, forever, kind of a thing. So, in our area there's another chicken operation and they're running out of barns that were built in the '50s and '60s. As long as you maintain those four walls and keep a roof on it, that building, it's maybe not good forever, but as close to forever as we can get. So, as long as I keep up maintenance on things, and keep an eye on the floor, and don't let the waters leak just because I was feeling lazy and didn't want to change a couple nipples. Keeping up on maintenance, that barn can last me for a long, long time.

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MS: It's clear that without his neighbour, Doug would have had a lot harder time creating the infrastructure for his new business venture. It's a really good example of how the farming community supports each other and helps build each other up. So, staying on the theme of mentorship and intergenerational farming, I was also curious about what else his neighbour offered.

I want to talk about your mentorship relationship with your neighbour because you're kind of going down this path, you and Stephanie, engaging in a new business. You guys obviously have a good working relationship, but you can't do it alone. So, describe to me

the relationship you have with your neighbour and how you structured your mentorship around raising chickens.

DB: My neighbour kind of stepped in when my father got sick and wasn't able to transmit information to me anymore. I was kind of a late bloomer for coming back to the farm. I tried a bunch of different trades, thinking I was going to find easy money. Don't know what I was thinking. And what ended up happening was I realized one day when I was working for a plumbing company that I was using up all my vacation for planting and harvest season, so kind of slow. So, if I'm going to do that I might as well go back to school and get my diploma in agriculture and go at it that way. And then I just started working with my neighbour. He's organic as well. And often use the analogy, bought tickets to a fight and a hockey game broke out. So, I went there looking to know more about the chickens and ended up falling in love with the organic way of doing agriculture, getting to know his views on things. And he's been more or less kind of a second father for me. There's not a day that goes by now where we don't talk and discuss. And it goes both ways. He'll talk to me about what he's thinking of doing on his farm, and I'm talking to him about what I'm thinking about doing here. And while I don't have much experience, it's quite often, I'll propose an idea to him and he goes, yeah, yeah, yeah, I tried that 25 years ago and here's where you're going to get into trouble. But that man's worth his weight in gold for all the times he's gotten me out of trouble. And it also goes more than just the experience side. I don't know how many times I've gotten a tractor stuck or done something silly and he's been there to save me. So, he's always very much appreciated.

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MS: I think that part of your relationship is the fun part, is there's nothing like your mentor and your guide showing up to pull you out of a spot you got stuck in, with the I-told-you-so grin, but not actually saying, I told you so.

DB: Oh, yeah. I was just going to say, with the, like you say, the I-told-you-so grin after they say, well, I don't know if it's going to do that, but you can try if you want to.

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MS: After the break, we talk more about Doug's mentorship relationship with his neighbour. Doug also has some really great business advice to share. Don't go anywhere.

DB: The tractor dealer is in my yard, and everything he's saying, he's not willing to write down. Hmm. That's my first little red flag.

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MS: Are you enjoying our first episode with a Québec farmer? Well, if you want to hear more and you can speak some French, we actually have a really awesome French version of this podcast. My colleague Darlene McBain hosts conversations with people from

Québec and all parts of Canada. Check her out where you find your podcasts. If you find yourself relating to today's story and you're under 40 working agriculture, then the FCC Young Farmer Summit might be right up your alley. It's a great opportunity to get real world advice from engaging speakers, to network with peers, and to take control of your business. It's happening March 23<sup>rd</sup>, completely online, and it's 100% free. For more information, and to register, go to [fcc.ca/events](http://fcc.ca/events). And as always, if you like what you hear today, please like us and subscribe, and you'll never miss an episode.

Do you find in that mentorship that there's common themes that you're coming to him with? And what I'm curious about, I think about different mentorship relationships I've been in, and some of them are business centric where, hey, do you have some advice on buy and sell gain? Or I'm a cattle guy, so maybe some advice on the markets, or where the dollar's going to go. And then there's other stuff that's more around production agriculture and say, in the chicken side is, what do you think the best temperature to place the birds are at? Or you've got some nuances on lighting program. Is there a theme to which the mentorship has offered you the most value?

DB: I hate to give the very generalized answer, but it's more or less across the board. There's not much that me and him haven't discussed, or he hasn't helped me out with. For the chickens, the advantage I had was I worked for a feed mill as a consultant for poultry feed, so I was able to see a lot of chicken farms, a lot of chicken barns, a lot of different styles of doing stuff. Whereas as my neighbour, he had the one barn, and he was always focused on his own operation. So, he knows how to run that barn to its best capacity. And then I've always got these other ideas that some stuff he kind of looks at me a little funny when I propose them. And sometimes they work, sometimes they don't. But our mentorship relationship really goes across everything.

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MS: You've got an interesting background. And maybe I can identify in it because some of your work in the consultant was where I got my start in the feed industry as well. And I guess what it gets me thinking about, now, so you're consulting, you're in all kinds of different barns, you see different ways of doing things, and then you get your own. Was there some things that you believed to be true that once you got into it your own self that you realized just weren't?

DB: I was ignorant enough to think that it was easier than what it is. I realize now, I had worked for this neighbour for years, and he was on a system where he started at 8:00, worked until 5:00. And then for me that's when my day was done. He would go in and have supper. And I just didn't realize the hours he was putting in after supper, kind of a thing, where I was gone. And I always offered to come back and help after supper, and he never wanted me to. But I never realized how much more he was doing in the later hours. And also, the mental load that goes with, I think, any animal production. With crops, you put the seed in the ground, and you hope and pray and maybe sacrifice a goat or two to the rain gods, and you hope things go your way. Whereas with the animal

production, you've got a lot more power and a lot more influence. So, when things do go wrong, chances are it can all be traced back to you.

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MS: Yeah, that's great perspective. And back to the nature of the question was, some of the surprises or things that you thought were true that weren't when you got there. So, yeah, that's a great share. Thanks for that. I'm kind of interested, as you got the quota and you got your arms around it and started to go through this plan to build this up, how much pre-work did you put into the business plan here?

DB: Well, the big joke is, this winning the quota has been about 12 years in the making.

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MS: Doug has had a dream of being a chicken farmer since he was a young boy and his father gifted him a set of chicks. So, you might say his whole life was leading up to winning the chicken lottery. However, it's only in recent years that the dream started to materialize.

DB: Since I got serious about wanting to become a chicken farmer, back, oh, it's been three years now. But before that, chicken quota sales were in moratorium in Québec. So, there's no options going on. So, even if I wanted to take the hard route of buying everything myself, that wasn't even an option. And then when the quota opened again, the big hurdle came with everyone was expecting quota sales to be around \$900.00 a metre and right away they started selling around \$1,850. Start asking yourself, is my dream still doable? Can I financially make this make sense? It's fine and dandy to want this, but it was one thing to work for the next generation, but there's also one to work yourself to death for nothing. So, that was starting to weigh heavy on me. And then the rumour of this start-up program started floating around. And so, I just started calling the Chicken Federation, maybe not every day. But they were getting to the point where I'm pretty sure they recognized my phone number on the telephone, and they were arm wrestling to see who had to answer me and get badgered by me this time for looking for answers on what the project entails. What do they want, and when do I have to submit it? And then, once I finally had those answers, it was about a year's work sitting down with everyone I could think of to get a real good business plan put together.

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MS: So, guess who stepped in again at this stage of the journey to help Doug with his business plan? It was his neighbour, naturally.

DB: Once again my neighbour, being the super guy he is, all the books were open for me. If I needed information, there was no hesitation. He showed me the numbers of what that barn can do, what that barn can cost. And I was able to put that all down on paper and submit it to the federation. And not only that, but when it came to interview time, I was

able to defend those numbers. So, I'd say I was a good year with my nose in paperwork and books, just to get as good a project as I think I could make done.

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MS: So, I heard you talk about your mentor. Obviously, that is critical to your success. If you had to give advice for somebody, who else do you think was super valuable in helping you get your plan developed? I'm thinking accountants, lawyers, your cousin Sally, pick a person. Who do you think really was the important people at the table?

DB: The accountant played a certain role just in confirming the numbers I had. I was lucky enough to have a lot of on-the-ground experience with the chickens. So, when I was writing stuff down, more so than a lot of other things I've done in my life, I had a huge amount of confidence in the numbers and what I was saying. I knew how to handle every single question and I was even able to answer above and beyond the questions that the federation was asking. Really, I've got to give credit, there's three groups of people. There's my fiancée Stephanie, there's Steve Lalonde who is my neighbour. I'll name him and give him the credit he deserves. And there's the team at the feed mill. They worked so hard for me. They wanted this for me. I mean, it works good for them too. They're going to be able to sell feed. But they were a real amazing crew, and I had access to all. Through the feed mill, I had access to lawyers and accountants and stuff as well. But really, if I can give any piece of advice, is before going and tossing a project, get as much experience on the ground floor as possible. Do the not-so-fun jobs, do the fun jobs, and really get to know the industry.

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MS: So, yeah, what I'm hearing you say then is, get to know the business, do your homework. And from your standpoint, it was that hands-on experience helped. But I also heard you say that maybe what was unique was, you don't need a huge robust group of advisors and supporters, but you need the right ones. Your group was rather small and condensed, but clearly you had picked the right partners. Did you get some bad advice along the way?

DB: Well, usually bad advice comes from people who are trying to sell you stuff.

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MS: Oh, tell me more.

DB: Any advice can be good advice or bad advice, it depends what you do with it. I'm trying to think of how to say it in the best manner. But it's just, when someone shows up at your door with a solution, always be suspicious.

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MS: Oh, that's great advice. Because that's kind of what I wanted to ask you about. I got my career started in sales and I sometimes worry, on reflection, I was that guy that was trying to sell you something. And I guess only my customers 20 years later could tell you if that was the case. But everybody listening on this line is running into this in some capacity. What else runs through your mind as you try to sift through the noise of where to invest?

DB: Whatever they're willing to put on paper is worth more than what's their word. Let's say a tractor dealer. If a tractor dealer is in my yard and everything he's saying he's not willing to write down, hmm, that's my first little red flag. I've been caught. That's a big mistake of mine was when I tried to update our tractor fleet and it was in a hurry because the tractors we had were beginning to fail in major ways, and I bought in a rush. When someone's selling you something, they're always your best friend. But when it comes for warranty work, all of a sudden, they've never seen you before.

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MS: I actually found this point really interesting and in contrast to Doug's neighbour selling him the barn. Whereas the salesperson might be after your business for the sake of business, Doug's neighbour sold him the barn in a way that helped Doug get started without giving him an anchor around his neck so that he could take advantage of the opportunity. And it also seems like Doug has learned a lot about responsible investing from this too.

DB: I know how it feels to be looking at the tractor, or whatever you have, even sheds, or any kind of investment you've got to do. And oh, it's old, and it's dilapidated, and it's falling apart. And the longer you take time to find its replacement, the happier that you're going to be at the end of the day. It's as long as you can get as much of what you're wanting to get out of things, at the right price, something that works for your operation. So, when it comes to buying stuff, just pretend that there's a big cedar hedge between you and the neighbours. Don't look at what the neighbour has. Don't look at what everyone around you is doing. Focus on your home farm. Focus on yourself. What are your needs?

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MS: Yeah, it's a good point. I think we all get caught trying to keep up with the Joneses. My dad had a great phrase and he used to joke about it. He says, there's no use trying to keep up with the Joneses. We are the Joneses. And we used to laugh about it as just his diversion to say, hey, calm down everybody. We'll still march to our own drum. And I think that's really good advice for people listening for sure. And while we're on the advice track, what advice would you give your 20-year-old self? If you look back from where you are today to then, what would you have told yourself when you were 20 years old?

DB: Oh boy. Maybe have a few less beer on the weekends and put in a few more hours. But I can't really say that because every bad decision I've done in the past has brought me to make better ones in the future. So, just keep going. Don't give up. Don't get

discouraged. Agriculture is an industry where it's very easy to get discouraged if you let it overwhelm you. Always remember that your enterprise should work for you. You don't work for the enterprise. And yeah, at this moment, that's about the best advice I could give.

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MS: Well, I think that's real advice. I think lots of us would look back and say, the mistakes I made were learning opportunities and I've rebounded. And then your idea of take more risk and lean into it, that's never served anyone wrong that I know of. So, clearly, to run your cash crop business and the chicken farm, I'm interested, I love people's do overs or their fails. I think listeners always get inspired by someone else who just had a bad day farming because I think it makes it real. So, if you think back, was there just one day you wish you could have back where things didn't go right?

DB: I'd say my biggest regret is trying to do a project based solely on the numbers. I very much enjoy doing Excel sheets and stuff like that, and putting numbers on paper, and figuring it out that way. And sometimes that doesn't translate into what I want. For example, I built an implement shed two years ago. And I built it the same depth as the old implement shed I was replacing because that was always good enough. And I just made it longer. And what I realized was, okay, now it's longer, I can put more stuff in it, but I can put all the same things I put in the old implement shed, but now all the stuff that's been sitting out for years still doesn't quite fit because I only made it 30 feet deep. And it's little mistakes like that that, now it's concrete, it's wood, it's tin, it's a structure. It's sitting there laughing at me for the next 25 years at least. Once again, just take the time and really analyze what you're about to spend money on. My new model for spending money is, if I'm spending on the farm it has to do one of two things. It has to either make me money or make my life easier.

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MS: Oh, you're preaching to the choir. I've been on that kick now for a while, just helping people understand that is that there's investments to make money, and there's investments to make our life better. And we actually had a previous podcast with a guy named Ben Campbell that talked about this a little bit too, about making decisions to make our lives better. And sometimes it doesn't always have to be about the money.

DB: Yeah.

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MS: And so, maybe you're kind of getting your arms around what that looks like at your place too. So, what I heard you saying, for all the salesmen listening, is when they come to see you, just don't show up with a solution right away. But I do hear that you've got a couple problems. You could use more tractors, and your shed's too small. So, it seems like a sales opportunity in all that somewhere for me.

DB: Well, you can try, but ...

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MS: Sort of my parting thought here. If you had one thing about our conversation today that you really want people to take away, or that you think people should really lean into, what would it be?

DB: I'd say take away the relationship I have with my neighbour. I don't know what it's like across Canada, but what I've seen in this area and in Québec in general, there's very few spots that are having corn roasts, or stuff like that, where the neighbours are all getting together, where the neighbours work with each other, where the neighbours help each other. Right now, it's when someone's having trouble, it's like vultures. The neighbours are starting to look around like, oh, he's going to go bust soon, so that's another farm we'll be able to buy. Instead of, you know what, so-and-so is having a hard time, let's hook on the plough and go help him get finished up for this year, kind of a thing. So, if there's one thing I can preach, and hope people take away from this conversation, is that the good old neighbour relationship still exists. And if they don't exist in your area, maybe ask yourself the question of why don't they exist, and is there something they can do change it to make things better? What I'm trying to say to the ag community of Canada is, rebuild those neighbourly ties and invite them over for a beer once in a while. Make sure everyone is doing okay.

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MS: Oh wow. What a great way to end the podcast, Doug. I appreciate you taking time to join us today. Thanks a lot.

DB: No problem. Thank you.

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MS: Well, as one would expect, I learned a ton about the chicken industry today. Doug's story was a really good example of the challenges that you can face when you get into this side of agriculture. But more than that, it's a really great tale of how a mentorship and supportive farming community can really help a young person realize their dreams. So, here's some takeaways that I have for you. Firstly, mentorship can be an invaluable tool in your toolbox to help you be successful. There can be mentorship on the production side, or it can be on the business side. In Doug's case, his mentor actually helped him in both. So, consider the mentors in your life. Do you have any? Do you need to be more intentional and create mentorship and support systems to help you? Don't be too proud to look for support. Secondly, past work experience, and what I would call ground-floor experience, can really help create a foundation for your success. In this story, Doug had both. He spent a lot of time working in the chicken industry and learning the trade and getting really smart and wise about the decisions he was going to

make. He highlighted how this prior experience really helped him take advantage of the business that was presented to him. I think the lesson is to put yourself out there and look for opportunities to learn and invest in your future. Thirdly, business plans are important even if they're not helping you win quota. They'll always be necessary and they're always going to help you in any financing that you're looking for. They take time, but surround yourself with the people that can help you make a strong and confident plan. Number four, take your time when you're spending money. Make sure you know what you want and why. Ask the right questions. Doug suggests to be suspicious of anyone showing up at your door trying to sell you something or offer you solutions. So, I think the main thing is not to dive in and make quick decisions that you might regret. That's worse than moving too slow. Doug also found unique investment opportunities in the community thanks to his neighbour. Sometimes you have to get creative with what and where you look. And lastly, do you know your purpose? Doug's very clear about getting this off the ground for the next generation, while also making sure that he enjoys his life. He's very clear about that. Get clear about your why. It's motivating and helps drive your business plan.

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Speaking of business plans, before we go, if you're looking for some help developing your own plan, check out our business plan tool at [fcc.ca](http://fcc.ca). There's a lot of valuable information you can use there to help you get started. Also, we want to hear from you. We want to hear what you thought of season 1 so far. Check us out on social media, shoot us a note, write a review wherever you listen. You can also send us an email at [podcast@fcc.ca](mailto:podcast@fcc.ca). We'd love to hear from you. That's it for now. Thanks again for listening. We'll talk to you next time.

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