



Redefining farm roles: Let's talk women in ag FCC Knowledge Podcast: Talking Farm and Food

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Interviewer: Marty Seymour (MS)

Guest: Aimée Ferré Stang (AFS)

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.

Aimée Ferré Stang is a woman in agriculture. If you met her in a social setting, she would never describe herself as a farmer. She married into a farm family and humbly admits she still doesn't know how to drive a tractor. But there's no question she contributes to the family farm, so why does she struggle to call herself a farmer? I think it's all too familiar of a story. How do women working in agriculture carve out their place on the farm, yet find stability in their off-farm income? Today, we talk women in ag.

AFS: And Sheldon said to her, well then you hire that out, like, what's the problem? It was so simple to him and I think that simplicity needs to be applied to everyone. Or when you're thinking about what you can and can't do, there's only 24 hours in a day, what can you do in that 24 hours?

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MS: Welcome to the FCC Knowledge Podcast. Today on the show we've got Aimée. Welcome to the show, Aimée.

AFS: Hi, Marty.

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MS: I think we need a disclosure moment at the start of this podcast. Aimée and I actually work together. So, you work at FCC, what do you do for us?

AFS: I'm a social media consultant, which basically means I am managing our social media accounts at FCC, so Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram. So, if you direct message our account or see a post on there that you like, or if you don't like it, that's me.

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MS: So there's a real person on the other side of social media. I think this is super cool.

AFS: There's actually three of us.

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MS: So, you know what's next. I ask everybody the same thing.

AFS: Absolutely. You ask us where I am right now and what land is going for it in our area. I did my research, Marty.

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MS: So, where is the farm? Let's start with that, make your town famous.

AFS: I live on a farm outside of Major, Saskatchewan, which is in west-central Saskatchewan. I think at the last census the population was 68 people, so I don't even know if it's a town. I think it would be called a hamlet, actually. We're right on the border between Saskatchewan and Alberta. I think I'm about 20 minutes from the Alberta border. We grow wheat, barley, canola, peas, lentils, and flax. And right now, according to my husband, farmland goes for about \$2,040 an acre.

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MS: OK. Wow. So you got some cows.

AFS: Yes.

MS: Today's episode is about women in agriculture, so not only are you growing cows, you're growing little boys and you're part of a farm family. So, paint a picture for the listeners of what's the dynamic of how you're integrated into the farm.

AFS: We moved to the farm in 2011, so I guess nine years ago. My husband and I own a corporation. We started off as a partnership and now we're incorporated, and my in-laws are incorporated as well. So, between both corporations, we have 8,800 acres of rented and owned land, which sounds like a lot but it's actually, probably, I would say, a mid-sized to higher mid-sized farm size for our area. And then we also have, as you mentioned, cows, so we have a cow-calf operation with about 80-ish cows. It fluctuates between 80 and 100. Again, that herd is probably half my in-laws and half ours. I kind of chuckle because I'm often referred to as a farmer but I don't actually do a lot of the farm labour. So, I don't know how to drive a tractor and I don't do the farm books right now, my mother-in-law does it. I work full time and our kids are still young, they're eight and five, so kind of managing that is where my big role is. I get involved a little bit with farm meetings and in terms of communication. I'm interested in nature and that kind of stuff so

I provide my input where I can, and in the day-to-day operation of the farm, I'm more of a silent partner right now.

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MS: Well, I think what you just described is a pretty relatable model to lots of people listening to this podcast. You have some formal education as well. Tell our listeners what that looks like.

AFS: I went to the University of Saskatchewan and I have a Commerce degree. Actually, I wasn't really thinking of going into ag. I remember when I was in university in the late 90s and I think everybody was planning on moving to Alberta to work in oil and gas. That was their career plan. That wasn't necessarily my career plan, but I didn't expect to be working in the ag industry. Fifteen years ago I had the opportunity to start working at FCC and I kind of fell in love with what I was doing. I was raised on a farm. My dad is a grain farmer. Well, I guess I wasn't raised on a farm, I was raised in town. My dad is a grain farmer, so I get the ag lifestyle and the family dynamics that are involved in that. When I started working at FCC, this is when things started falling in place, and then I met my husband and he decided he wanted to move back to the farm.

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MS: So, what did all of your college friends say when they heard you were going to ... I'm not going to say 'the middle of nowhere' because there's clearly 68 people who live there, but it's a pretty remote part. I'm glad the internet has found you. What did your friends say? Like, oh my gosh, you're going to be a farmer.

AFS: Yeah, a few people actually shook their heads, and I don't think they said that to me directly, but they're like, she's so much of a city girl, how is she going to handle the farm life? So, that was kind of a concern of mine as well. And then we had some friends that were really excited for us. Actually, a lot of friends were really excited that we were taking this opportunity, we were taking this leap to manage our own business and to go off on this adventure.

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MS: Let's talk about your community, then. I still think you have a rather unique job in the industry. But even more so, in Major, Saskatchewan there's probably not a lot of your peer group that would work for a large company centralized in Regina, Saskatchewan, so who's in your social circle in terms of other farmers? I'm going to say, let's focus on those women farmers. Describe your social circle.

AFS: I would say my social circle out here is a lot of my husband's friends because I grew up on the other side of the province, so I kind of had to adopt his community and they welcomed me with open arms, so that's been awesome. There's probably a handful of my friends that are the spouses of farmers. Some of them, I would say, are more active on the farm

than others, and they have ranging backgrounds from farmer veterinarians to nurses, teachers. I feel like I have a larger network, too, of friends that are, for lack of a better term, farmer wives, and those are the people I could really relate to in terms of what's going on in my life right now, and I know you feel the same way. So, that's kind of my support network, especially during seeding and harvest when it's crunch time.

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MS: Yeah, that's where I was going with that. I'm not going to lie, I'm the one guy on this call right now and I'm just hugely interested in, I'm going to say 'women'. Your women friends gather ... I can't even pick the right words on this without worrying about stepping on a rake. So, your group of women friends gather, it's seeding time and you're the new person in town. Like, take yourself back to your 20s when you moved in. Does it take this huge amount of courage to be the first person to put their hand up and say, I know I'm new here but do we have to talk about farming all the time?

AFS: Yeah, like, I don't know. I feel like, as women, and maybe that's not the case everywhere, but I feel like, for our outlet, we don't necessarily talk about farming all the time, among women. I feel like we might talk about the challenges and our frustrations in terms of food or getting meals out to the field or seasonal solo parenting, as I heard someone call it. But definitely, if we're in a group of mixed company, definitely the conversation turns to ag all the time. I don't know if you saw that meme that was going around a few years ago. It said something about, every single person ... I had a long day at work, I don't really want to talk about work right now. Farmers, on the other hand, would be like, do you want to quit working so we can have a beer and talk about work some more? Which is so true.

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MS: Yeah, it absolutely is. So, as the self-declared guy on the call, what are those non-farm issues that women in agriculture are talking about? What are the big three things that come up? You talked about parenting, what else is in the mix?

AFS: I think, just the mental work that goes into raising a family, like parenting again, but a relationship. Women take on a lot of that mental planning role and scheduling and ... not to say that men don't do that, but I feel like we're in our heads a lot in terms of, here's what's happening at school, here's what's happening with our weekend plans, like, they tend to be really heavily invested in their operation. I've had a lot of conversations with my friends in farming and outside of farming, about the mental work that goes into being the female side of the equation in a couple. That's one thing that we're talking about. I think for sure 'parenting', it's like all parenting, all the time.

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MS: Well, at the age of your boys, it totally makes sense, too, that that's going to dominate the conversation, for sure. You've got me thinking a little bit about breaking the mould a little bit in terms of, if you think about when you grew up to the conversation, or where women

in agriculture would have fit for your parent's age versus now, do you see a difference in your community?

AFS: Yeah, I absolutely see a difference in how, I guess, the woman's role is in agriculture. A lot of women were staying home and raising kids and I think there's still quite a few stay-at-home moms where I live, which is great, it's awesome. And there's also a lot of women that are coming back to the farm with education and a university degree and applying that to the farm, or using the knowledge and the skill that they've learned to help on the farm or in a separate career. I feel like we're moving ahead in terms of the family responsibilities have to be shared a little bit more. My husband reminded me that we've come a long way in the last generation. I think there's still more ... there's definitely more steps that we can take to even the balance a little bit. Does that answer your question, Marty?

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MS: I think it does. I think we're also going through a shift in society and I don't know if it's real. I just know where I'm from, the opposite corner of Saskatchewan from where you are, and I use the term 'traditional farm family'. That was my dad and myself, we did the work outside. My mom and my sisters, they kept the house going, and at the time I don't think I had an appreciation for what they did. Fast forward 30 years and I have, in retrospect, a ton of appreciation for what they did. So, I guess I wonder about the mom shaming that comes into play in your community – where you come home from university, trying to manage a career, and you're trying to keep the meals flowing to the field and keep the kids together with their hair combed, how others might look at that and say, wow, that's awesome. And others might look at that and say, well you're not being a good farm wife, from a traditional sense. Is that still happening? Is that conversation still alive?

AFS: There might be some online a little bit from what I've seen, but I feel like most of it is in our own heads in terms of the mom shaming. I go through this every seeding and harvest. My kids don't go to bed at the time I would like them to go to bed, and they're not eating as well as I would like them to eat, and we're probably not tackling the homework as much as we should be, and I have all this incredible guilt about not being able to do all that for them. But it's mostly in my head. I have a friend that I grew up with whose dad is a farmer. She lives in the city now and she came to my house just before harvest and she's like, I don't know how you do it. She's got a busy job and a family too, but it just reminded me that, I think in most cases we're just in awe of each other and how we can manage all these things. Sometimes, if we just get out of our heads and realize this is pretty incredible what we're able to do and what we can accomplish, or what we have accomplished already without going to what we haven't accomplished.

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MS: I think you nailed it. In all of our own minds is this guilt and shaming that comes with this. I know this, your kids are going to remember getting the opportunity to stay up late. Your guilt will be turned around when your kids in their 20s go: Mom, you were awesome

at harvest. Maybe a little short-tempered, but you were awesome because we never had to go to bed.

AFS: Yeah, I would say that. My youngest, he usually about one month after harvest is done, he's already asking when a harvest is going to be happening next year. That's a time of year that they thrive on and they're so excited to go out into the field. We have a little fifth-wheel trailer that we take out – we call it the Sask Hilton – and we feed our harvest crew and our feeding crew out of that. If that camper leaves the yard without them in it, they are severely upset.

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MS: Remember earlier when Aimée told me she didn't drive a tractor and she struggles to call herself a farmer? I didn't really get it so I wanted to circle back on that. Where does this hesitancy come from?

So, you have a phrase that you've used called 'impostor syndrome'. What does that mean to you? Explain that to those people that aren't maybe familiar with what impostor syndrome is.

AFS: Impostor syndrome is ... and it's not necessarily just for agriculture, it's for any type of sector. And it's not just for women either, I think it's for men and women. It's this feeling that you're not enough, that whatever you're doing you don't really measure up to what you're doing. So, that kind of goes with the whole concept of, yes, I'm owning the fact that I'm a farmer. It's like, well, I'm not really a farmer, I don't drive a tractor or I'm not doing books right now or I'm not contributing as much as I would like to the farm. So, that whole concept of not being enough is essentially impostor syndrome. Like I said, it's not unique to agriculture. I have a friend who is a lawyer and she said that she struggles with that too. As a lawyer, she's paid to be right all the time and she said to me that she's imagined herself in court thinking, I'm sure the judge and the jury and the other side are going to be like, she doesn't know what she's doing, she's a total fake. I think we tell ourselves that a lot, like, the voice inside our head tells ourselves that a lot, and we need to let that voice go and skedaddle, really.

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MS: Do you have a trick, a tool, a tip for our listeners on, when they hear that little voice creating that doubt, what to do?

AFS: Well, I'm not that good at it, Marty, so this is still a work in progress for me. When I hear that little voice I try to lean into the times where I've been told, where I've been reminded that that voice is not the truth. So, usually once a year or once a season I get a text from my mother-in-law saying, you are a farmer, don't ever let yourself believe otherwise. And my husband is the same way. He said to me, you are a farmer. Just because you're not driving a tractor or a combine right now, doesn't make you not a farmer. I lean into those

a lot because those are the people that are heavily involved in our business, and if they feel that way then I should feel that way too.

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MS: Yeah, it's kind of foreign for me to listen to you, to think that you would have self-doubt or be an impostor, because I listen to you and I think about your comment about keeping the house together. It just strikes me that you're playing a very important role in the business. You mentioned that you're like HR. You kind of are the chief HR officer in the whole outfit, from making sure that everybody is where they need to be at any given time and that things are happening. So, I guess it strikes me as a very unusual response that you would think you're not a contributor at the farm at the same level as the person driving the tractor.

AFS: And I don't think I'm the only person who feels that way. I think we downplay a lot our role, and I want to say that's the typical female response. I don't know if I'm going to get in trouble for saying that. I know some women that are very empowered and own whatever it is that they're doing. Or maybe they have self-doubt and they don't show it. I know there are some men out there who have self-doubt too, but I just feel that that's a very typical female response, to be humble and to downplay whatever it is that they're doing.

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MS: What advice would you give an aspiring farmer, a female farmer in this space, who thinks they need to be like that powerful person you described or that powerful professional farm person, versus being the supporter in the business, to the person driving the tractor?

AFS: I think the first piece of advice is, you don't need to be everything and you don't need to do everything. If I look at my husband, that's how he operates, so why can't I operate like that too? We have a mutual close friend who would have taken over the family farm and she said to us, I didn't have the mechanical knowledge and I didn't have the physical strength to take over my farm on my own. Sheldon said to her, well then you hire that out, like, what's the problem? It was so simple to him and I think that simplicity needs to be applied to everyone. Or when you're thinking about what you can and can't do, there's only 24 hours in a day, what can you do in that 24 hours that's going to be enough and that's going to have a contribution to the farm? And what can you let go of? My mother-in-law, last year hired a caterer to cook meals two to three days a week for us. At first, I kind of felt bad because I'm like, I'm not living up to my end of the bargain. And then I thought, well, why not? I'm probably making more money at my job than it's costing the farm to cook these meals for us, and everybody is a little bit happier and a little less stressed at the end of the day, so why not?

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MS: I think that's a really good example. You see that in businesses all the time. You hire an adviser to ... we hire accountants for the technical side that we are not strong at or the tax code that we need to know. So, what's wrong with looking at food delivery with the same lens? What else have you let go? You've obviously figured out that there's a trade-off between my commitment to my job in town versus my commitment to the farm. Have you figured out some other natural things that other women in ag could look at letting go of?

AFS: I would say the childcare thing is a challenge. In rural Canada, we've heard time and time again that that's a challenge. My closest day care is a half hour drive away. So, if I wanted to take my kids to day care I would be on the road for two hours every day. Luckily, my mother-in-law looks after the kids when it's not busy on the farm. Now my kids are almost in school full-time so that challenge is kind of looking after itself. But when I was working, my kids either went to my in-laws or went to a sitter's or went to the day care, because I couldn't juggle them being around and putting in a full day's work. I think the same thing. I've seen other farmers do this too, like, if they need to tackle the book work the kids go to day care. Or if there's something happening on the farm that's probably not safe for the kids to be around, they hire a babysitter too. If it's a PD day at school and I need to get work done, I'm hiring a local teenager to come over and watch my kids because I just can't do it all and I can't be everything to everybody. I'm still learning that. I feel like I should add the disclosure, 'do as I say and not as I do', because I still try to take on too much. But, sometimes you just need to focus on one thing at a time.

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MS: What I hear you saying is, there's a shift from our parent's generation to our generation to say, I should outsource some things because I'd be a better bookkeeper if I could outsource the childcare for the day. I'm interested in, is this a trend that you think is going on, where this next generation has identified that they could outsource certain skills and this is becoming more common?

AFS: I think so. I can't speak for everyone, and I think women and men are still trying to take on too much, especially when you're an entrepreneur. It doesn't matter what kind of industry you're in, I think letting go is probably the hardest thing. But I feel like we're shifting towards, okay, let's specialize in what we are good at and what we're interested in, and we're going to be more efficient that way. A small example would be housecleaning. Maybe a generation ago that was only for rich people. I have a house cleaner come into my house and I have other friends that do too. It's kind of almost embarrassing to admit to your friends, but when are you going to make time for that? I make more money at my job than what I paid my house cleaners, so why wouldn't I choose to focus on where I'm generating revenue and outsource that? I think that's a conversation that's happening more and more and I think that's a positive thing because the more we can focus on our strengths, the stronger we're going to be in our business and as an industry.

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MS: I just did a podcast the other day with Ben Campbell who said, if I can pay someone \$17.00 an hour to do it on my farm, typically I want to outsource that to the person, someone else at \$17.00 because I can make more money doing something else. You're applying the same lens here, so what does the person at home that doesn't have a supplemental income, how do you see them fitting into this, or do you think they still can do it too?

AFS: I still think you can do it. I don't think it always comes down to money. I think it comes down to time and really looking at what is the most beneficial thing for your family and for your business and for your home. Sometimes it comes down to the money, but time is a finite resource as well. Using that lens on the value that certain tasks or certain jobs are bringing to the farm or the home, that needs to be applied as well.

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MS: I think you're onto something here. This is about, there's more to this conversation than just the money. There is the soft side of the lifestyle choices we're making that actually make us a stronger spouse, a stronger parent, a stronger business owner.

AFS: Yes, absolutely. I think even having a job off the farm is not always about the money. Obviously, it's an important argument, but I have a couple of friends that work part-time and they do that for their mental health. I have a friend who says, I work off the farm to complicate our lives because it is complicating, but she needs that outlet. So, it's just finding the right mix of what makes sense for your family and what makes sense for your own development and your own growth and what your objectives in life are.

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MS: Yeah, I think that's a great perspective.

After the break, I get brave and ask Aimée about living and working so closely with her in-laws. We chat about conflict, communication, and those quiet, 'judgey' little voices that live inside us that hold us back sometimes.

AFS: You're not any less of a person if you follow your spouse in their career choice. You can still live out your higher purpose and your dreams and your goals. You might have to get a little more creative about it, but that doesn't make you less of a feminist or less of a woman.

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MS: If today's conversation is really hitting you in the gut and is really resonating with you, keep in mind that FCC has a whole host of articles that dig into some of these exact challenges mentioned by Aimée. The ever-changing role of women in ag or how farm couples can stay happy working together are just a few great examples. Check us out at fcc.ca/knowledge for a full offering. Also I'm going to ask that you don't forget to hit

‘subscribe’ whenever you’re listening. We’ll be releasing two episodes on farm transition in the new year and we don’t want you to miss out.

So, Aimée moved to the farm with her husband. All of a sudden, now she’s living close to her in-laws. You can imagine, as a podcast guy, this is juicy conflict. I look for this stuff all the time. So, you can imagine, I’m hunting and fishing for ‘how crazy is the mother-in-law’? Well, the opposite is actually true. To Aimée’s credit, she celebrates her mother-in-law for helping to keep her grounded.

AFS: Yeah. We’ve had this conversation about me working off the farm and she has said to me, not that you’re a bad mom, but you need that intellectual stimulation, to think about things other than being a parent. She said, you would not be who you are if you didn’t have that, have your off-farm work.

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MS: She sounds like a wise mother-in-law, if there is such a thing, as clichés would go. But it does sound wise and, in a way, she’s granting you permission, but at the same time, you have to give yourself permission to say that that’s okay.

AFS: Yeah. And that’s the thing, too. I think about what my in-laws went through in the 80s. They went through a really difficult time when land prices were crap and interest rates went through the roof. She had to take on a job an hour away and drive, and she was billeted too, and it was really hard on her family. I think she knows that I got this really great job and I can contribute to keeping some stability in our home and that’s, I think, something she knows that that’s just a little bit of insurance for us. She had to live through that to appreciate that. I’ve gone through this whole guilt, like, well I should be at home with my kids? I should be contributing more. I’m missing out on all these things. And she kind of brought me back and said, this is the right choice for you, so it kind of gave me the permission to own that and to not feel guilty about working off the farm.

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MS: So, you still put value in if you wish you knew how to drive a tractor?

AFS: That’s a good question. My mother-in-law has told me, don’t learn, because the minute you learn you’re going to be put to work.

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MS: She’s best friends with my mom, clearly. My mom has the same philosophy to this day.

AFS: That’s hilarious. My mother-in-law’s dad taught her how to drive a tractor and she was, like, I regret that he taught me that.

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MS: It does mean you'll get the call to say that the combine is stuck, can you get on the tractor and come and give me a pull, right in the middle of some work assignment you really wanted to get done. So, there's some wisdom in your life choices. I wonder if you're comfortable sharing with us elements of conflict in your relationship that relates to the busyness you both have on each side. Are there common themes where you guys have these bumps? I guess where I'm going with that is, there's people listening on this call that have that going on in their house every day. Nobody is immune to it.

AFS: No.

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MS: Can you give me an example of what a common thing is you'd find friction over?

AFS: I think probably the common thing is balancing both of our careers. Because I am a salaried employee and because my husband runs his own business, and because the nature of the business is urgent and seasonal, that often takes precedence over whatever I'm doing. And a lot of times there's a sense it's rightfully so. There's a cow calving and she needs help. That's going to take priority. In the off-season, when I try to focus on my work, sometimes it's like, well, how come you're so busy? Well, because this is my job. So, I feel there's a little bit of friction there in the air in terms of, okay, I have a career and so do you and we need to find ways to work around that and to help each other advance our careers.

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MS: So, do you have a technique, because what I hear you're saying here is, you have a better understanding of your husband's farming career. It's probably a little easier to see it in real time. And he probably has no way to see into your world of emails and Zoom calls, etcetera. How do you help him see that?

AFS: I don't know if I'm the right person to ask for advice because I think, usually, when we have these conversations it comes out as passive-aggressive or snarky. Sometimes I think when we hit the sweet spot it's like, this is what I'm going through right now and this is what I'm feeling and this is not a reflection on you. It's just, this is what's going on in my life right now and I need to figure out a way to deal with that. So, I would say that probably the best success I've ever had is when you're framing things from a factual point of view rather than a victim point of view or an accusatory point of view. Which again, like I say, 'do as I say but not as I do' because I'm still a work in progress in that department.

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MS: I think your humility makes it easy for all of us to identify with. Yeah, I don't get it right all the time but this idea of victim language is a really good one. You seem to have your

head around it so what's an example of where you feel like a victim and then you reframed it?

AFS: I can't think of any specific examples, but it's like, rather than just saying, 'you weren't here to do this' or 'I had to take this on by myself', it's like, 'okay, we need to do this thing' or 'this is happening right now, what are we going to do about it'? And framing it more as a team effort or framing things more factually than one-sided.

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MS: So, you take it away from the 'me, this is impacting me', to the 'how do we get through this'? It sounds like maybe explaining you're probably feeling not heard, so explaining. But I'll bet you a steak sandwich that it comes right down to communication and just your ability to articulate why you're upset.

AFS: Yeah, absolutely. I had a professor in university that said, when we were doing assignments: don't say that the problem in this case study is communication because every single problem in business is communication, and I would say that that's kind of true in relationships too. That's part of, or the base of, the problem, but you need to dig deeper and figure out also what's going on beyond the communication too.

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MS: Yeah, that's a great point. I actually consider myself a communicator, that's the line of work that I really am in, and I have seven ex-girlfriends who would suggest that I'm the worst communicator in the world, so I think we're all a work in progress.

AFS: Yeah.

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MS: So, as a farm wife and a professional working in town, what do you think you're missing out on?

AFS: I feel like the thing that I miss out the most on with being a farm wife is that ability or that flexibility to really dive into my work. So, if you had a couple that was in the city and it's time to pick up the kids at day care, typically, depending on the situation, the parents would share that role. Whereas, if on the farm, there's a cow that needs help calving or it's September and the crop is coming off, I need to stop what I'm doing and, right now, I'll go pick up the kids or get that food out to the field, because otherwise we're not going to be eating until 8:00. So, I feel like there's a little bit of sacrifices that I have to make career-wise to be that supportive spouse. I don't think that's necessarily a case only in agriculture too. Like, if you were the spouse of a doctor or someone who works shift work or someone who works in policing or even in the military, it would be a similar type of circumstance. I think that's the sacrifice that you make when you're supporting a spouse that has that kind of job.

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MS: Yeah, great parallels. I think sometimes in agriculture we think it's unique, our situation is unique, but your shift work example is common in communities, the doctor example. So, why do you do it?

AFS: That's a good question, Marty. I ask myself that every harvest and seeding probably once at least. First of all, I love my husband so that is the first reason why I do this. I love my kids and I know that they love this life, and I love this life too. I have a friend who said to me, that just because you chose this life doesn't mean that you can't be sad about it every once in a while. So I try to remind myself that I can be sad about it but I need to pick myself up and figure out a way to get the thing done that I need to do. That's kind of why I did it. My husband is so passionate about agriculture, I've never seen anybody this crazy about anything in my life before, and I know lots of farmers are like this too, so he's not unique. When he told me he wanted to move back out to the farm, he told me that this was the only thing he'd ever done in his life that didn't feel like work. And I was like, wow, that's huge. At that moment I knew that that was something we needed to do together as a family because that was something that was going to bring us closer together and live this great thing and, even though it was his career path and his choice, I felt like I wanted to be a part of it.

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MS: So, what advice would you have for ... I'm 18 years old, I'm a young lady coming out of high school and I'm going to pursue a commerce degree, what advice do you have for those young people?

AFS: ...that are eventually going to wind up on a farm?

0:35:05.9

MS: Yeah.

AFS: I would say you're not any less of a person if you follow your spouse in their career choice. You can still live out your higher purpose and your dreams and your goals. You might have to get a little more creative about it, but that doesn't make you less of a feminist or less of a woman. When I think about when I was 20, 18 or 20, if I would have known that I would follow my husband out to the farm I would have said, oh my gosh, what is wrong with you? I think the 20-year-old in me would have been really disappointed with that choice and I would have felt like I was an anti-feminist, that I was moving the clock backwards in terms of women's advancement in society. Every once in a while, that little voice in the back of my head is like, seriously, this is what you're doing with your life, you're folding laundry, changing diapers, and running meals onto the field? And I need to tell that voice again to shove it, that this is an important job and somebody

has to do it. This is part of my life and that doesn't make me any less of a woman or any less of a contributor to society. This is just what my role is and that's awesome.

0:36:19.2

MS: That's probably the most inspirational statement I've heard in a long time. A couple of things I heard you doing is reframing the importance of the role and not taking it at face value, and saying that at the macro level I'm a huge contributor to this farm. I have a career that I've managed to work into the farm to achieve my greater purpose in life. I think that's inspirational in itself. I appreciate your time today. I think you've offered some great advice and thanks for sharing it.

AFS: Thanks, Marty.

0:36:49.0

MS: Today we talked women in ag. You can imagine, as the only guy on this podcast I was a little bit nervous. This is kind of outside of my comfort zone. But I think what Aimée taught me is a new perspective on what it's like to go through some of those struggles in the balance of being a great mom, being awesome at your career, and having a full life. This idea that we can dream, grow, and thrive in various environments is anchored to Aimée's DNA. There's a few things I took away from this. Number one, you cannot do everything. Let me say that again, you cannot do everything. So think about what you might be good at, put yourself into those places and focus on that. And it's okay to outsource some of those other things to free up time to focus on your priorities. Number two, communicate. It seems so simple but, man, how many times do we get frustrated at our spouse or the people in our circle about how poor our communication is. Framing your language with a team lens that 'we need to get this done' is critical. We work together. Avoid statements that place blame. Communicate, communicate, communicate. And last but not least, you also don't have to drive a tractor to be a farmer. We all contribute in different ways. Maybe it's our off-farm income, maybe it's how we keep the kids and the house going and do the books. Regardless of your role, your role matters. Find value in what you do. Tell that little voice in your head that says you're not important to this farm to shove it.

Thanks for listening, folks. I want to remind you that we're into event season this winter, so check out the FCC website for event offerings in your area. Actually, that's not true. They're in every area because they're all on the web. Everything this year is going to be done virtually, so check us out at fcc.ca. We've got a great Women's Summit event coming up this year. I think it's something you're really going to want to listen for. In the meantime, keep listening along and sharing your feedback, check us out on social, tell a friend. Bye for now.

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