Handpicked: Stories from the Field

Season 3, Episode 1: "There's Beauty in Diversity": Connecting Food, Biodiversity, and Sustainability

Featuring Dr. Alison Blay-Palmer

Transcript

Speakers
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{[Intro music]}

AD: Hi and welcome to season 3 of Handpicked: Stories from the Field

LY: We are SO excited to share this new season with you and to tell more stories of researchers in the food system.

AD: Hi Laine!

LY: Hey Amanda! It's nice to be back in the studio with you.

AD: Yes, I am really looking forward to this season.

LY: Me too! What can we expect from the episodes coming up?

AD: Oh, We've got a good season lined up. First we will be presenting 2 episodes from the Indigenous Health and Food Systems Podcast out of Carleton University, hosted by Dr. Marylynn Steckley. The first is called "what are Indigenous foods?" and it covers just that, through a variety of voices and perspectives.

The second episode is called "Environmental Dispossession" and focuses on Indigenous people's connection to land, traditional Indigenous food systems, and some of the conflicts around stolen land and the current food system.

LY: This is an interesting partnership for us, we've never "presented" another podcast before!

AD: Yeah! It's a real cool way to share the stories of other researchers, and to get more people listening to the great food system podcasts out there.

LY: Great, what else are we covering?

AD: We will have an episode with Dr. Erin Nelson from the University of Guelph and her community partners talking about the Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario and their farmer-led research program.

LY: Oh, that sounds interesting!

AD: Yeah, it's a great episode. We will also be talking to Dr. Evelyn Nimmo about her work on traditional agroforestry production systems in Brazil.

LY: Oooh, the Erva Mate!

AD: Yes! For our listeners, Erva Mate is a tree that produces leaves used for a traditional tea, first consumed by Indigenous peoples in Brazil. It's critical to the traditional food system there.

We'll round out the season talking with Naomi Robert to talk about her PhD dissertation research on moving beyond the Gross Domestic Product or GDP as a measure for well-being and how that movement has potential to impact food policy.

LY: Wow – what a diverse season! I am so looking forward to sharing this with everyone.

I am disappointed though, it's your last season with Handpicked.

AD: Yea I'm sad too! I'm going to be moving on from Handpicked and the LCSFS to a new position.

LY: We are going to miss you, you've been so integral to what this podcast has become and you'll have huge shoes to fill!

AD: Yea I'm going to miss you all as well, and I am looking forward to hearing more from Handpicked and I'm going to be following along!

LY: We will make you proud!

AD: I have no doubt!

Okay, so we talked about the rest of the upcoming season, what are we covering in today's episode?

LY: Ah, yes our first episode of season three is with Dr. Alison Blay-Palmer, and we will be talking about her role as the UNESCO Chair on Food, Biodiversity, and Sustainability Studies.

AD: Great! Maybe we should give the listeners a bit of an explanation about what it means to be a UNESCO Chair?

LY: Yes, of course. So ,UNESCO is the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. It aims to promote global peace and security

by promoting international cooperation in education, arts, science, and culture.

AD: I think that most people probably have heard of UNESCO when it comes to world heritage sites. Like the Great Barrier Reef, the Taj Mahal, the Great Wall of China, Stonehenge.. Those types of places.

LY: Yeah, for sure. So, the particular branch of UNESCO we're talking about today is the "Chairs Programme" which brings education and research institutions from around the world together to share knowledge and resources in addressing collective global challenges. A UNESCO chair is a project or team at a university that partners with UNESCO to tackle particular issues by conducting research, informing policy, teaching and building relationships, particularly between the global South and North.

AD: So, Alison is the Chairholder, but the actual UNESCO Chair on Food, Biodiversity, and Sustainability Studies includes a whole network.

LY: Exactly, so the Chair operates as a "platform for change" and includes the Chairholder, Alison, as well as a whole bunch of diverse partners within the Chair's network.

AD: Okay, that makes sense.

LY: Yeah, so in this episode, Alison will describe the issues that this particular Chair is tackling, and will tell us about some of the partners in the network as well.

AD: And we'll be speaking to some of these partners in the rest of this season right?

LY: Yea! Both Dr. Erin Nelson, and Dr. Eve Nimmo are part of the Chair's network so it's great that we get to tell their stories in more detail later in the season.

In today's episode we will also speak more specifically about the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity's COP15 in December 2022, and the resulting Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework or GBF as it's commonly referred to.

You went with Alison to COP15 right?

AD: Yeah, Alison and I were part of the meetings in Montreal where the development GBF was developed so I am really looking forward to hearing your conversation with her.

Before that, I think we need a bit of a primer on biodiversity and agroecology, because we will be discussing those a LOT in today's conversation.

LY: Yeah, I agree.

AD: So, while Alison and I were at COP15, we interviewed some of the attendees, and asked them why agroecology was so important to biodiversity. I wanted to share one of the responses, from Mariann Bassey-Orovwuje as she so clearly explains these ideas. Here she is...

MB: Agroecology is, as we know, agriculture that works in harmony with nature, not against it. It builds on existing practices, on traditional knowledge. Well, it works with nature. It helps I mean, does not eliminate like the industrial agriculture. It's does not even compete. It embraces diversity, unlike the infrastructure that once just maybe one mono crop, that's one thing.

Agroecology says no, we can coexist together. I mean, you can have diversity. You can have melon, maize grown together. You don't have to eliminate anything unlike this new industrial agriculture. They're saying, oh, we just want one thing. The ones when we have one crop no agriculture, you say, no, there's beauty in diversity.

LY: Ah, I love that.... "beauty in diversity!"

AD: Yes, it's such a poetic way to describe agroecology and biodiversity. And Mariann was only one voice among the many advocating for food system change as a real way to tackle biodiversity loss at COP15. We will share more of these voices later in the episode.

LY: Great, that's an interesting segue into the discussion today with Alison – as the Chair acts as a way to bring together and elevate diverse voices and perspectives.

Let's get into it.

{[Musical Interlude]}

ABP: My name is Alison Blay-Palmer. I'm a professor in Geography and Environmental Studies at Wilfrid Laurier University, and I hold the UNESCO Chair on Food, Biodiversity and Sustainability Studies.

LY: Okay, so you shared that you're the UNESCO chair on Food, Biodiversity and Sustainability. So, could you just tell us a little bit more about what that is, what that looks like?

ABP: Yeah. The Chair is all about trying to raise the profile of how food can help transition to a more sustainable food system. The food system that we have right now is very broken. The industrial food system is responsible for over one third of greenhouse gases. It is responsible for about 80% of biodiversity loss. It uses about 70% of fresh water. And it's an unhealthy food system for people because even though we have enough food to feed everybody a healthy diet, actually feed 10 billion people, a healthy diet... we have over 3 billion people who do not or who are not eating, can't afford a healthy diet. So, there's a lot of work to be done in raising the profile of alternative food systems like agroecology, which is one of the big things that we focus on at the Chair.

And so, flowing out from the idea of food and sustainability, which are very much interconnected in the work that we do, there is also the idea of how we can halt biodiversity loss through more sustainable food systems.

So, the food system creates these degraded systems that undermines our ability to halt biodiversity loss because ecosystems are degraded. If we're producing food on a large scale, ecosystems aren't coherent and biodiversity is lost. So, by addressing things in a more coherent

way, we can dampen down climate change, hopefully significantly, and by doing that, we can also help to address biodiversity loss.

LY: Okay, so the Chair itself focuses on three areas of expertise: and that's sustainable food production, support for Indigenous and traditional foodways and then transitions to just food systems. So, could you give us a few examples of what those look like within the chair itself?

ABP: Yeah, sure. Okay. So sustainable food production is really where it all starts, right? How does our food get? How is it grown? Under what conditions? Who's doing the food growing? What are the priorities? So, does the food look like- is it a field with just one crop planted that goes on for hundreds of acres? Or is it a place that has many different patches, with many different kinds of food that's producing different kinds of nourishment because different crops are being grown? So, the case of agroforestry, for example, in Brazil is much more like an agroecological project than the monoculture field that you would typically think of if you're driving around, for example, southwestern Ontario.

So, what we're aiming for is this kind of sustainable food production that relies on close-loop circles. So, we're capturing all of the benefits of compost from the food system regionally, and we're protecting intellectual property in terms of seeds. We're reducing fossil fuel inputs. We're managing water in a way that is viable and sustainable into the future, or we're capturing water because now we have flooding. You know, down in Vermont, an entire part of the state is underwater, basically, and farms are flooded. So, we're dealing with unprecedented circumstances in trying to grow food these days. So that's on the sustainable food production side.

But that's not all that's important if we're thinking about agroecology, because agroecology is about sustainable food production, but it's also about social movements and it's about having people working together, knowledgeable people in local communities who are using traditional or Indigenous knowledges in many cases, and they're working together in a community that values the people. So, it's not a food delivery system where a truck shows up, dumps a bunch of food off at a grocery store, people come in and buy the food and there's no relationship between the people who buy the food and the people who are producing the food. In an agroecological food system, there are direct linkages between the people growing the food and the people who are eating the food. And so, there's a sense of community and well-being and culture and responsibility as well for caring for the people who you're living with. Right. So, it's not just a food production system, but that kind of spirit is grounded in the approach to food production.

In terms of supporting Indigenous and traditional foodways, which is our second pillar, I mean, it's really hard to tease these things out into separate categories because everything's intimately connected and the work of Indigenous folks and traditional communities in terms of getting food to people and protecting the seeds and making sure that we have a future for our food systems, they're guaranteeing to the extent that they're able to they're guaranteeing a food future for us. On the Western science side, they're foreclosing our food future, because what they're doing is they're limiting the number of crops and the number of animals. And they're focussed on nine grains and a very few number of animals in very few breeds and varieties, whereas in an agroecological

system that's based on Indigenous or traditional food systems, the emphasis is on being as biodiverse as they can. And what that does is it builds food systems that are resilient to climate change because there's variability.

So, the knowledge that the people in Indigenous and traditional communities hold is really foundational to the future of our food system. And anything that we can do to support those communities that we work with is really central to our work.

LY: And then I know both of these are related to the transitions to just food systems. But if you want to just chat a little bit about that pillar as well.

ABP: Yeah, sure. Well, the transitions to just food systems is part of the work that we do on the bigger idea of sustainability. We're looking there at supporting projects that provide healthy food at affordable prices or that's accessible for communities in urban centres or for people living in rural areas or remote areas so that they have access to food. But there's also the social justice dimension of having a healthy food system that allows people to make a livelihood, that is a viable livelihood.

LY: Okay. So, can you just tell us a little bit about the UNESCO chair network?

ABP: The network is definitely international. We have a few geographic "voids" for want of a better word, and that's partly a practical consideration because it's really difficult to get people together around the world at the same time because everybody's in a different time zone. So, our work tends to focus on we have partners in Australia, we have partners in Africa, the EU, Latin America and primarily Canada, but also a few people in the United States and Mexico.

So, the idea behind the network and behind having all of these people involved in thinking about these things collectively, because that's really what we're trying to do, is understand together what the challenges are and what the solutions are. And many of the people who participate in the partnership or the network, or the expert advisory board for the Chair, and there's over 40 people who are members of the advisory board, are sitting there because they bring unique perspectives to the table.

So, we have people who are experts, for example, in South Africa, we have an expert advisor who does work on food security in South Africa and works in an African network on food security issues. We have people who are working in Brazil who are doing work on traditional food systems, including Erva Mate, that I mentioned before, and they're bringing a more ecologically-focused and community-focused perspective. So, they're not looking at things through the urban lens, they're looking at things through more the producer side of things, and they're looking at things more from a cooperative, sort of social economy model is what they're using to help support their community. In Melbourne, in Australia, we're working with folks there who are very focussed on policy and they work very closely with policymakers in developing regional strategies for food systems. And they've been involved in a city region food system initiative that I was involved in with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation.

So, really the idea is to bring together all of these different people who have expertise in different parts of the resilient food system, the food system that's sustainable and let them share ideas with each other, let them learn from each other and let them build their own networks together so that we can amplify the work that's happening in all those places and we can learn from each other and we can share what we know. And that's really the role of the Chair is this idea of amplifying our message across all the different projects that we are privileged to, to be associated with in some way, either very directly or indirectly. And then also provide a place where people can come together and talk about these innovations, really, and these new ideas and share scale appropriate technologies with each other, share knowledge about seed saving, share knowledge about livelihoods and equity, and all of the different things that are part of a healthy, robust food system.

Another thing that's important to mention about the title of the Chair is that it's sustainability studies and the studies dimension is very important to us as part of UNESCO, education is one of the mandates for UNESCO head office and we are committed to developing educational programs. We have a new program that we've just launched for September of 2023 at the undergraduate level that is being sponsored by the Chair, and that helps students understand why these interconnections are important and how paying attention to them can bring about sustainability transformation.

LY: It sounds like you're really like amplifying more diverse sources of knowledge, right? Like thinking about maybe less mainstream, you know, non-traditional methods of knowledge and really pulling it from people whose voices might not always be heard in these spaces.

ABP: Yeah, absolutely.

So, there' this, in the work we do there's this juxtaposition between Western science on the one hand and traditional or Indigenous or local knowledges on the other. And that's one of the reasons that it was really important at the COP15 meetings to be advocating for Indigenous peoples and local communities and to make sure that they were really front and centre in the final agreement. And I think if you have a look at the global biodiversity framework that came out the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity framework, you'll see that there is a lot of room and space for Indigenous peoples in local communities. And in structuring the follow up work to the COP15 meetings, there have been many calls for inclusion of those people in the committees and things that are formulating how the GBF is going to be implemented. So, that I think was a success of the COP15 meetings that we were able to get those peoples included in such an explicit way.

{[Musical Interlude]}

AD: Oh wow, we have a lot of acronyms this episode!

LY: I know right? Okay, so just a reminder, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (or CBD) held the 15th Conference of Parties (or COP 15) and the outcome of that was the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (or the GBF).

Is that clear?

AD: Clear as mud.. But don't worry, as always, we've provided a glossary of terms for this episode on our website, so hopefully listeners can find what they're looking for.

LY: Yes, perfect. Moving on, I asked Alison more about the UNESCO Chair network itself, and more about the diverse perspectives involved.

LY: Okay. And just to just touch back on the network briefly, I know you're a geographer, food studies in general is a very multidisciplinary field. Is this network itself interdisciplinary? And yeah, if so, is that important? Like, why is that important?

ABP: Yeah, well, I mean, as a geographer, we wear many hats. You're a geographer as well, so you know that. And it makes us very flexible, I think, in our thinking. And we don't think in a disciplinary kind of way, which is very much what food studies is all about. And it's very much what sustainability is all about. So, absolutely. And that's one of the joys of working as the UNESCO Chair is getting to work with so many experts in so many fields and bringing together all of that expertise and, you know, watching people learn from each other.

So, we have people from the natural sciences. So, for example, agronomists, ecologists, people who are involved in developing crops. So, we have very specific technical expertise sitting at the table, but we also have people from the social sciences. And the humanities as well, so we have people who are historians, anthropologists, geographers, people who work in communication studies, people who work in political science, environmental studies and environmental sciences-history. There's really a huge range of people who have different disciplinary expertise, but we also work across sectors. So, we work with the private, the public and the civil society as well.

We, because of the work we do. And the fact that we work within regions, with small communities, we tend to not work very much with companies. We tend to work with organisations that are in the social economy. We do work with a few firms, but they tend to be smaller because those are the people who need to have space to build sustainability.

But the idea of interdisciplinarity is critical. These problems are systems problems, and we have a food system- we don't have food and health and food and food production and agriculture and food and culture and food. All of those things are interconnected. And what we try to do through the Chair is to make sure that we're looking at all the different parts to the system because we know if we press on one thing, it's sort of like a Jenga tower. If you press on one thing, it's going to make something happen somewhere else. And in order to get as best understanding as we can about what those things are, we need to have as many experts as we can manage sitting at the table so that we can imagine a future that is actually sustainable.

LY: Mm hmm. Yeah. I think this sort of leads to another question. In what ways does the Chair specifically look at the interconnections between science, like you were saying, is one of the

through points and in traditional knowledge. So how do you sort of mitigate between those two ideas? Because I know you do have to, you're talking a lot with experts and scientists of crop growing and all those things. So how do you sort of take that science and take that traditional knowledge and bring them together in an equitable way, I guess?

ABP: Well, I guess what we do is we consider people in communities as experts. So, when I say experts sitting at our table, I'm not just referring to academics. I'm referring to community knowledge holders, and elders, and people who have lived experience that is critical to making sure that the planet survives because those people have traditions that allow them to understand the places that they live in. And they've been managing those places and living in them for millennia, very successfully. And it's only in the last decades that things have been going off the rails thanks to the so-called scientific experts, in large part.

So, the people who, the academics who we work with work very closely with their communities and with the Indigenous and traditional experts in their communities. So, we're either having those people sit at the table and participate directly or they're by proxy at the table, because the academics who we work with work very closely with people in their communities and work in service of and in support of those communities. So that's on the practical side of things. We're also involved in writing papers and book chapters and things about the importance of doing this kind of community-based work about valuing the knowledge and honouring the knowledge that Indigenous, local and traditional communities bring and we take direction from them in terms of the research that we do. They are the experts, they know their communities. We're not the experts, they are.

LY: We talked a lot last, I think, in our first season and a little bit in our second season about food as a lever for change. And I think that works here in that, you know, the food is the connecting piece between a lot of these different concepts that you're working in.

So, can you just tell me a little bit about how food, biodiversity and sustainability sort of intersect and where those connections are and what's important about them?

ABP: The connections between food, biodiversity and sustainability are really, really obvious, I guess, at the community level or at the regional level, which is where food systems are activated. At the policy level, globally or internationally or nationally, that's where the blockages exist and that's what we're trying to change. So, we sort of operate at two levels. We operate and think about global governance. So, the United Nations is important in that context. We're very involved in the Committee on World Food Security, for example, and we attended COP15 for the biodiversity conference in December in Montreal, where we were advocating for agroecology and for human rights and for the participation of Indigenous peoples and local communities in that agreement so that the people who are actually the stewards of the land and who are practicing agriculture and food production in a way that helps the planet as opposed to detracts from planetary well-being, are able to direct the processes that are happening to protect biodiversity and halt biodiversity loss.

What it looks like on the ground in terms of how we have an agroecological project that brings together food, biodiversity and sustainability is really place-based. Every project is different.

{[Musical Interlude]}

AD: It's super interesting to hear how Alison sees the connections between biodiversity, sustainability and the food system. She really paints a picture of the challenges we face when it comes to our food systems.

It's also really neat to see how the key priorities – sustainable food production, Indigenous and traditional food ways, and transitions to just food systems are all connected and linked and work together to make positive changes through the Chair network

LY: Yeah, totally. And how the Chair provides space for the network to think collectively to better understand the challenges and potential solutions, how it focuses on valuing traditional knowledge and bringing diverse perspectives to the table, and how it's filled with diverse locations, disciplines, and sectors.. But it all comes together to imagine a more sustainable future.

AD: I think that this is a good time to share more of the thoughts of the folks we spoke with at COP15. I asked them the importance of agroecology to biodiversity in general, and to the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) in particular. Take a listen.

SM: So, my name is Sabrina Masinjila, and I work at the African Center for Biodiversity as a researcher and Advocacy Officer based in Tanzania.

Our current food system is not conducive for the environment at the moment. It's you know, it's relies largely on industrial farming and industrial agricultural systems, which have been- there's a wide consensus that they have resulted in the increasingly loss of biodiversity that we are experiencing. And this is why the GBF now tries to address some of those drivers, particularly caused by industrial agriculture.

So, we needed an urgent shift away from destructive agricultural practices, corporatized through the use of corporatized farming that uses lots of pesticides, fertilizers, synthetic fertilizers, corporate seed that are homogeneous to a more diverse farming system such as agroecology. And that is why agroecology is important for that transition to more socially just equitable farming systems- that is agroecology.

TJ: So, my name is Tammi Jonas, and I am a small-scale farmer on the unceded lands of the Jarrah in southeastern Australia, along with my husband and a community of other wonderful

people. I'm also the president of the Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance and a member of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty.

Agroecology has agricultural biodiversity built into it in terms of farming in harmony with nature, because that's how nature works, is in a biodiverse way. So, for me, the relationship with biodiversity is fundamental and doesn't need to be explained. You know, because if you're if you're in harmony with nature, you will be in harmony with biodiversity.

LB: My name is Lauren Baker and I'm the Deputy Director with the Global Alliance for the Future of Food.

Well, we've been working on biodiversity, agroecology and biodiversity for the past ten years, and actually the way we entered into this work was through a focus on agricultural biodiversity and resilient seed systems. So, we held in 2018 a strategic convening in Oaxaca, Mexico on resilient seed systems. And there we developed a shared narrative actually on the importance of agricultural biodiversity. A key- a cornerstone for that, of course, was the CBD. And at that point, the 2020 global biodiversity framework was on the horizon. And so, thinking about all of those kind of connections between resilient seed systems, agroecology and various global fora and global conventions.

MC: I am Marie-Christine Cormier-Salem and I am the Director of Acropolis Foundation, which is the foundation for scientific cooperation located in Montpellier in France. That aims to support research, training and innovation for sustainable agriculture and food system.

Agroecology is and food system is a key component of the diversity. At the same time, biological and cultural diversity, that means that we have to have a systemic approach of all the components of our production consumption system and all the or all along the value chain to take into account all these way to produce but also distribute and consume and probably the products. So local produce is a very good entrance to catch the complexity of the system and the need to have an analytic approach on that.

And to do that it is not only a question of diversity, biological and cultural diversity, but it is also a question to adapt to the climate change, mission of resilience and once again, also a question of equity. That means to take into account all the people to be more inclusive, to be more fair, to woman, to young people, to vulnerable people. But because so you depend from the resources, from the wild species, but also for all the forms of nature.

MB: My name is Mariann Bassey-Orovwuje I work in Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria. I coordinate the Food Sovereignty Program for friends of the Earth Nigeria in Africa, and I also coordinate the Alliance for Sovereignty Land Working Group.

Agroecology, it's a form of agriculture that works in harmony with nature, not against it. It builds on existing practices and it respects the rights of small-scale farmers who actually feed and nourish the world. And it's saying I mean, we can coexist. It's we all depend on each other. You don't have to eliminate anything for me to exist. Everything can coexist. Unlike the industrial agriculture that believes in one crop, mono cropping that competes, that eliminates diversity in agriculture builds and it's compliments on compliments what's already existing. That is why we say it's in harmony with nature, not against it. And it also respects, most importantly, the rights of small scale for farmers who actually feed and nourish the world.

So, I mean, who would not want to promote something like that? And it has very good principles of participation, of synergy, co-creation, recycling, all the principles that you want, I mean, that promotes diversity, doesn't damage the Earth. I mean, talking of living in harmony with nature, not against it. So, it's everything you want in a full package, just everything. I mean, that is all we want to see. Also, it produces in a sustainable manner. And it's also a key principle of food sovereignty, which says food produced by the people, how they want to eat it, that is culturally acceptable, sustainable and it's appropriate, and the quality and quantity they want. So, for us, agriculture is like the silver bullet for everything and is the only thing. It's not even an alternative. It is the solution is the right answer. It's the main thing. We preach agroecology.

LY: Ah, I really enjoyed hearing the diverse perspectives on this. There were some recurrent themes throughout.. Our reliance on industrial farming and how that leads to loss of biodiversity, the importance of biological and cultural diversity, food sovereignty, equity, and harmony with nature.

AD: Yeah, I think hearing these voices helps to better understand the problems, and how agroecology can be the solution to a lot of the issues were facing in the food system.

LY: So, when you spoke with the COP15 attendees, you asked them their hopes for the conference and the resulting Global Biodiversity Framework right?

AD: Yeah, everyone I spoke to shared really similar hopes for the GBF. Specifically, they were hoping that Target 10 would include agroecology and that the whole GBF would prioritize small holder farmers or peasants, Indigenous people, women, and youth.

Mariann Bassey-Orovwuje said it best:

MB: We hope that the delegates and the government or government people will come to this COP, will actually listen to the voice of the people. Because most times this space is hijacked by the powers that be and the voices of the people might've get drowned in the process. The spaces are seized and they are regulated to the background.

We hope that things that really matter to the people like agroecology, agricultural system that feeds the world, and also which will help in solving the problem of climate change, putting food on our table, in a sustainable manner would actually be at the front burner and that they will take decisions that will be for the betterment of the people not for corporations who will smile to the bank.

LY: And did they? What was the outcome of COP 15?

AD: Well, they successfully negotiated the Global Biodiversity Framework, which is a huge feat. And agroecology was included, is included in target 10, which again, is really, really important. But, one of the things that I took away from COP 15 was this real shift in language. At the beginning of the event, we heard agroecology in the hallways a little bit. But by the end, it was really a part of broader conversations.. Through side events, through discussions with delegates... And it was something people were talking about, and I think that that shift in narrative is a huge, huge deal.

LY: Ah, that's good to hear. There's lots more work to do though!

AD: Yeah, there always is, this work never ends.

Was there anything else to share from your chat with Alison?

LY: Yeah, to end our interview, I asked Alison what she wanted to leave our listeners with. Take a listen

ABP: I think one of the things that I would like people to know about the food system is that, first of all, how broken it is, that it's very broken, that it's contributing to many of the incredibly big problems and crises that we're facing as a world right now.

But the good news... so that's the bad news. But you need to hear the bad news and know the bad news to be able to understand the good news. And the good news is that we also have food systems that completely flip this on its head and that can protect the soil, halt biodiversity loss, reverse the climate crisis. I mean, sequestering carbon in farmer's fields, for example, is one way that happens. Provide better livelihoods for people through cooperatives and social economy type of businesses and organisations. And it also helps to build community, which is really in the end, what we need.

We need to be connected together with each other and food is a wonderful way to do that. So, I think I would want people to be educated and informed about the food system. And I think that one way of doing that is by looking around and seeing how they can participate in this alternative food system that's out there through farmer's markets, through paying more attention to what they do with their food, where their food comes from, who produces it, how it gets produced. So, asking lots of questions, educating themselves.

AD: That's some good advice!

LY: Yes! Thanks so much to Dr. Alison Blay Palmer for sitting down with us for this episode, and to our guest voices from COP15 – we so appreciate your time and most of all, your continued time and efforts to fight for change to make our food system more sustainable.

{[Outro Music Starts]}

LY: Thanks so much for tuning in for this episode of *Handpicked: Stories from the Field.*

This episode was hosted and produced by us: Laine Young [**AD**: and Amanda Di Battista] and also produced by Charlie Spring, and edited by Narayan Subramoniam.

This episode also features music from Keenan Reimer-Watts.

AD: *Handpicked* is produced with support from the Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems, Wilfrid Laurier University and the Balsille School of International Affairs.

LY: Please check out our show notes for a bibliography, teaching tools, and links to other relevant information that we used to produce this episode. Make sure you check out our website for other ways to engage with us.

AD: Parts of this episode of *Handpicked* was recorded in Montreal, Quebec on the lands of the Mohawk and Haudenosaunee peoples.

This episode was also recorded and produced in Waterloo Region on the lands of the Neutral, Anishaanabe and Haudenosaunee people. We encourage you all to check the land acknowledgement link in the show notes to learn more.

As always, I'm Amanda Di Battista

LY: and I'm Laine Young, and this has been an episode of the Laurier Centre for Sustainable Food Systems' podcast, *Handpicked*.

AD: Make sure to tune in next time, for more freshly picked stories from the field.

{[Music Increases]}