

Podcaster seeks farm stories

By **DON JENKINS**

Capital Press

WHATCOM COUNTY, Wash. — Dillon Honcoop travels the state and sets up cameras and microphones and interviews farmers, ranchers and others connected to agriculture for his podcast, “Real Food, Real People.”

It’s unabashedly pro-farmer, but it isn’t agrarian pap.

In one episode, a dairy farmer talks about his mental illness. In another, a vegetable farmer warns that if Americans “don’t wake up — no food!”

Honcoop interviewed his father about retiring from growing red raspberries. “I feel great relief,” his dad said.

The podcast fits Honcoop’s background. He grew up on a farm and went into broadcasting. He said he thought a lot about becoming a farmer, but decided it wasn’t realistic. “I don’t think I could handle the pressure,” he said.

Honcoop started the podcast two years ago and has recorded more than 88 episodes. If one theme runs throughout, it’s pressure. The pressure to compete in markets, comply with rules and cope with weather.

The guests are eclectic and the intended audience is city residents. Honcoop said he wants to show that food isn’t produced by the heartless factory farms conjured up by activists.

“They have done a surprisingly good job of convincing people they need to fear their food,” Honcoop said.

“I want to show the human side of people in our food system,” he said. “Podcasting is well suited to that because it is so personal.”

The podcast grew from his job as communications director for Save Family Farming, an advocacy organization that spiritedly, sometimes pugnaciously, defends agriculture. The podcast is less political, more personal.

Honcoop goes on location, a one-man production unit. He often conducts interviews in fields or barns. He and the subject are on opposite sides of a folding table and sit on overturned buckets, hay bales, coolers and sometimes chairs.

Honcoop, 39, grew up in a county known for milk and red raspberries. He graduated from Lynden Christian High School, earned a communications degree from Trinity Western University in Langley, British Columbia, Canada, and was a radio reporter and station manager.

He hosts “The Farming Show” on Saturday mornings on KGMI in Bellingham, an issue-oriented program.

Honcoop’s podcast interviews move from personal stories to contemporary challenges. In episode 58, Wapato farmer Manuel Imperial talks about coming to the U.S. from the Philippines absolutely broke



Dillon Honcoop interviews Washington farmers and ranchers for his podcast, ‘Real Food, Real People.’

Listen to the podcast

To listen to “Real Food, Real People” go to: realfoodrealpeople.org

and not speaking English.

Thirty-seven years later, he’s “an American, owned by the bank,” he jokes. He provides a tutorial on the perilous economics of row crop farming. “If we don’t wake up, as Americans, no food — seriously.”

The podcast has insights into newsy topics. In episode 83, Luis Guitron, who manages farmworker

housing, talks about the stress caused by unrelenting COVID rules. “At what point do these guys get to relax?” he asks.

There are success stories, aspirational stories and nostalgic stories.

For episode 46, Honcoop interviewed his 90-year-old grandfather, Lawrence Honcoop, who was a dairy farmer in Whatcom County for 45 years. “I had four

boys who could really milk cows,” he boasts.

For episode 88, Honcoop interviewed one of the boys, his dad, Randy, who says that farming was scary but also thrilling.

“I’m very relieved to not have the pressure of having money at risk,” Randy Honcoop said. “I feel very blessed in my life to have had that opportunity to have my own farm.”

Honcoop said he plans to start season three this month and hopes for more seasons after that.

“It will come down to whether we have continued sponsorship support,” he said. “My pitch to potential sponsors is, ‘Hey, help us keep farming here in Washington.’”