



INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Farmer's Name: Cara Kemp Age: Location: Lower Hardres Farm Size: 14 acres Type: Mixed: Farm shop, butcher and pick your own (soft fruit); plus livestock

Interviewed by: Joe Spence and Baely Saunders Filmed by: Joe Spence Date: 25th November 2015

Cara: My name's Cara Kemp. I run Lower Hardres farm shop. We took this on about eight years ago. The idea was to make a bit more money out of the meat that we get from our own farm. So we've got a farm shop here, so we sell local vegetables, if it's not our own meat we try and get it as locally as we can. We've got own hens, laying hens, at home, so we've got all our own eggs as well. When we took this on it was a total shell so we've had to redo it, and then we've slowly just built it up over the years. We've got quite a few people coming in now, quite a good following coming in as well, 'cos people want traditional meats – they don't want to go along to the supermarket and have pre packed stuff. They to be able to see what they are, get the cut that they want, and that seems to very popular. So we've also got 'pick your own' here as well - so we have raspberries, blackberries, tayberries, pears, plums, redcurrants, blackcurrants, white currants and gooseberries. That's reasonably popular, I'd say the raspberries are probably more popular than say, gooseberries gooseberries tend to be bit more of an old, older fashioned sort of thing. Modern people don't tend to eat gooseberries but that's what was here already when we took this farm on. We also on our farm we have, we farm sheep, pigs and we've got the free range hens of course. We have pedigree Texels [sheep] which we sell for breeding, then we have all the fat lambs that come through the butchery, as well as our pork and the pork comes through the butchery [Cara gestures towards the butchery situated behind the farm shop]. We tend to lamb twice a year, so we have Dorsets which are lambing at the moment, they then come through so they're ready March time, ready for April, so people can have milk lambs for Easter. Then we lamb again in February where we have fat lambs, so when one lot has finished then next lot is just ready to come on to keep continuity going. The pork, we have rare breed Saddleback pigs, there tends to be bit more fat than the traditional pink pig and there's lovely crackling, very, very tasty. We've had our butcher - he's been here, oh,



quite a long time now. He's a master butcher, so he's very good and he knows how to cut up all the different cuts of meat. We make all our own sausages for here as well.

Baely: When did you take this...

Cara: About 2007 we took this on

Baely: And what was here before?

Cara: So there was a shop here, but all it was just this little bit here and all of the front was open so we filled it in so we can put all our veg and fruit out the front, give it a lick of paint, cleaned it right up, and just kind of like modernized it I suppose, and made it a little bit more respectable.

Baely: And it was a fruit farm?

Cara: It was a fruit farm. There was an orchard here a long time ago, long before we took it on. They used to grow apples all the way through, where the soft fruit is now. But I think, years ago I think there was a grant to take out the orchards and I think that's what happened, that's why they all came out.

Baely: Ok, one thing that...

[Cara's phone rings and she speaks on the phone]

Baely: What I was going to say was, I think its interesting, because you've got soft fruit, we've been speaking to other farmers who perhaps used to farm soft fruit – they've all been taking it out because one of the problems they've been talking about is they can't get people to pick it, and 'cos it ripens and then spoils there's not the labour force unless they bring people in from, very often through agencies in Eastern Europe, whereas you do 'pick your own'...

Cara: Yes that works quite well. But yes there is some spoiling on there, but it's not quite so important - people like to be able to come along, and it's amazing the amount of people who have never ever done it, and don't even know what 'PYO' stands for! Yes, so it is really, really popular and we do pick some fruit and sell it in the shop as well for people who don't want to go out and pick it. But we don't need the labour force there to pick it. We have one person who tends to all the bits and makes sure it's all growing properly, we hardly use any sprays on anything as well. Yes, it just seems to be really popular, a nice thing for families to come and do on a nice sunny day, to come and pick some fruit. It makes sure some of kids come out and see a bit of the countryside, and actually see how things actually come, rather than just being in a punnet on a shelf.





Baely: Has that got more popular?

Cara: It has a bit, so we used to grow lots of strawberries as well for pick your own, but the problem we had with those is that a lot of people would come along, and we've had people before that would come along with their little pots of cream, get out of their car, they would go and sit down, they'd eat their strawberries and cream and then leave without paying for anything! So we ended up losing lots of money, and people would get quite nasty because they think it's their right to be able to go and eat fruit without having to go and pay for it, so we've taken all those out now so (laughs) that got rid of that problem. We don't' have the same problem with raspberries, that hasn't quite got the...people are...you know when you have the kids and they'll come in and they've got all, it all round their mouths...but yeah, it not quite the same problem.

[A customer comes to pay at the till and Kemp serves her]

Baely: So just earlier to mentioned that now you've got quite a good following, people appreciate the fact that they can see the meat, they know where it's come from. In the years that you've been running this shop have you noticed the attitudes to local produce change?

Cara: It has changed, yes. A lot of people want local. It has changed when we've got thing like the horse meat scandal and all bits like that have all helped just to focus people's minds on that you don't necessarily know where all the food is coming from. It might look very nice in all the packaging, but it's a lot nicer if you can talk to the person where it's come from, and you just see it being got ready...having all the sausages 'cos all of our sausages have got so much meat in them, they taste so much different to a regular sausage, they're not processed in the same...like...extent as everything else. Yeah, no, it's definitely more popular

Baely: The farm that you have with the livestock – did you have that before you took on the farm shop?

Cara: Yes, yes we've had that quite a long time, and my husband works on another estate as well where they've got quite a few livestock. Yes the only reason we took this is because the prices were so poor, just to try and get that little bit extra out of the animals, just to try and make the farm that bit more viable, cos I know the prices, especially at the moment, are low that it's not viable. There are so many farmers going out of business, there's so many rules and regulations coming in, but the prices don't pick up to help cover all of that.

Baely: So before you had this farm shop where was your meat going?





Cara: All through the local market. We didn't have any pigs then, and as I say if we didn't have the shop then we wouldn't have any pigs again either because there's just not the money in them at all. We used to have cows then as well which we don't have now. And yes, everything just used to go through the market. And then that's the seasonal fluctuations and it depends, if it's a bad year you don't get a lot, if it's a better year you might get a little bit better

Joe: It's interesting that after...we spoke to Jon Garner who's a pig farmer, retired now, and all the pigs have gone and they've put the land out to arable. But he was saying that the way that small ...and he was talking about pigs in particular... and the way those small holdings have survived is effectively cutting out the middle man and selling directly.

Cara: Yes that's the only way you can. Now we'd make a lot more money, the shop would make a lot more money if I bought all the pigs from the market because they're just so cheap, but I want to be able to produce, you've kind of got...I want to be able to produce my own pork and I know how my pork's been treated...and its consistent – whereas you don't know what you're buying in all the time. So no, there's a lot of being out there struggling, it's just nice to have got this, and a little bit better margin.

Baely: So the livestock that you have – you said like to know how it has been treated. Is it like what people would refer to as 'happy meat'?

Cara: Well I don't know – as happy as I can yes. All the pigs are all reared outside in the summer, they're inside in the winter which some people don't quite understand. Some people think they ought to be out all year round but I usually say to them – "if you're happy to sit outside in the pouring rain when it's minus 3 and eat your food, then it's Ok for a pig to be outside"! But I like my pigs to be comfortable, they don't like it outside when it's cold, it's just too muddy and then just come out and they shiver and shake, so they come inside, they've got big deep beds, it's in our old cattle barns they house, so they can still wander round, they can still root around in all the straw and they're happy. And in a cold morning you can't even see them because they're right underneath all the straw and then all come up once you...they go along and get fed. They're happy.

Baely: How big is your farm?

Cara: Our farm what we own is only about 14 acres and we rent other grass as well for our sheep. So yes, what we own is not massive.

Joe: Is that land that you lease off another farmer?





Cara: Yes. There's only grass that we lease. And we don't do any arable at all. We do make all our own hay and haylage and we lay that up at home for sheep for the winter, and then we usually get straw off one of the arable fields roundabouts, depends where we can get it from so...

Baely: So I don't know how many pigs you have but when we spoke to Jon Garner who kept a lot of pigs, he had a big bacon contract. One of the things we was saying that made him decide to eventually get rid of them was that he had too many pigs to produce all their food and the food prices became so expensive that...and it's just interesting that you were saying...there were a couple of other people that we spoke to who had pigs, most of them place a lot of emphasis on the fact that they grow their own, they have a certain allocation of arable land to produce the feed for their livestock. Is that something that's difficult for you?

Cara: We don't do that. We buy all the food in, in bulk which helps with cost, it keeps the price down if you can buy a certain amount in. Yes it would be a lot cheaper if we could produce off our own land, but we haven't got the machinery. We would need to be a lot bigger to actually have the machinery to actually do it in the first place...and then the time to actually roll the food for all the animals. But it would work out a lot cheaper by actually producing your own food. As I say, if we didn't have here (the farm shop) then we wouldn't have the pigs. Cos when I've worked it out before...and last year the pig food was quite high and then the amount of money we made was really less 'cos I couldn't put the price up in here to compensate that so...this year its dropped back down, so it's, we're making a little bit extra.

[Another customer comes to the till. Kemp serves her]

Baely: I was going to say, because you are in a position where...I'll let you serve these guys as well!

[Another customer comes to the till. Kemp serves her]

Baely: You are in a position where you're both connected to the land, but also directly to the consumers who are buying the produce, and there's no one in between – have you noticed people's attitudes towards prices...you said you can't put the prices up even though you know the food is more expensive and that production costs have gone up...but in the years that you've been doing this have you noticed any change to people's attitudes towards maybe spending a little bit more or...

Cara: People will spend a little bit more for quality - but only up to a certain amount. It's cause the supermarkets tend to keep the prices quite low, it's a problem then to...you can't put things up too high, because yes, you can have slight premium but





you can't go...you can't be silly, you've still got to be realistic on your pricing. Cos you've got to make sure you know that its paying for everything but you can't put the price up too high.

Baely: And you said you've got Saddleback pigs? Now I don't know for sure but I'm assuming a lot of the pigs in supermarkets isn't saddleback pig...

Cara: Now that would be a hybrid pink pig, which will have, it will probably have a lot more piglets than mine do and they grow a lot faster whereas mine tend to mature...over about six months they'll grown a lot, lot quicker than mine and be a lot bigger at the same time, so it's a lot more commercially viable to have those pigs rather than mine. That's why mine are quite a rare breed, for the reason that they take longer. And a lot of people well... over the years, they don't want the fat 'cos the fat's kind of always said to be bad for you, so people have gone for the really lean, which you have in the pink pig which is really lean and you don't have any fat there at all. Whereas ours you've got that little bit of extra fat but it's got extra flavour. It tastes a lot better.

Baely: So for what reason did you decide to have saddlebacks as opposed to pink pigs?

Cara: My husband, he bought a couple of pigs out of the market, really just to rear ourselves and put into our freezer and we kind of like fell in love with them. And then he went somewhere - had to shear some sheep - and they had saddlebacks. So I kind of got into those. And I quite like them, they're nice outside – pink pigs quite often get sunburnt when they're outside, whereas saddlebacks - 'cos they've got quite a lot of dark skin on them - don't. So they're just a good all-rounder, they don't have to have a lot of heat on them, we don't tend to put a heat lamp up for our piglets so they just cuddle up into mum. They're quite hardy – it suits our system.

Baely: And do people pay more for an English rare breed?

Cara: I suppose our pork is more expensive than the supermarket ones would be, so I suppose yes because they're paying for...cos it's ours, they know where it's come from, and well it is a rare breed as well. And lots of people, once they're tried our pork they don't go back. It tastes a lot different.

Baely: Just before we started the interview you were talking about rules and regulations. What has that meant for you?

Cara: They have changed a lot, ...especially after foot and mouth in 2001, when that came in, that has changed a lot. Originally a lot of people, they used to have...didn't bother tagging their sheep, they'd tag them before they left the holding so there was no traceability – whereas now you have to tag your sheep before they leave the



The second

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holding at birth, before a certain date when they're born. So you got that traceability all the way through, which I think is a good thing, and I think that's good to have the traceability, to put traceability there. And then there's a lot more...all of the movement forms needs to be done online most of them these days, so there's electronic movement forms for everything ...

[A customer comes to the till. Kemp serves her.]

Baely: You were saying about the regulations about moving, is that animals from your farm to...

Cara: ...to the abattoir and even to fields because they're off our holding, they have to have electronic movement forms. So everything's a lot more traceable than it used to be. Yeah the pigs - everything is a lot more traceable everything has to be put down. I think from next year on the pigs, you've got to have all your medicines online as well which I think will be a good, good thing to do. And we're now having to do different forms for the sheep, the cows as well, to the abattoirs 'cos we're now exporting to China so it's more forms and things you've got to fill in. It can get a bit tedious filling everything in, but it is there for a reason which I think is...not everybody would agree with me necessarily but...

Joe: Even though you're quite a smallholding are you beholden to exactly the same rules and regulations?

Cara: I've still got exactly the same rules, yes. As I say, it would be easier for me moving sheep because I'm only moving a few at a time whereas some of these people who have got thousands or hundreds of them, I know you've got a stick reader so you can read them all but if one of them doesn't read you got to individually read the tag. So it's, yeah, I think you've got to have a good internet system which is one thing in the country which we don't have 'cos everything has to be put up online which sometimes takes absolutely forever.

Joe: And that's been one of the recurring themes, internet access. Which has surprised me you know, but it makes absolute sense. Quite a lot of these farmers, since these new regulations have come in, a lot of people have mentioned 'I don't have good internet access to it's a nightmare to actually...!"

Cara: Yes, everything has, everything has to be done, if you've got calf that has to be reregistered online, if you have...move your sheep that has to be done online, pigs have got to be online. All the...if you want your subsidy payments everything is online. You have to do a sheep and goat movement thing, annual inventory, that has to be done online. And the last time I took my internet it was 0.63, it takes absolutely



forever to do it! But yet we're expected to do it and we keep getting told it's going to

get faster but it never does. And I can't see it improving that quickly either.

Joe: it'll be interesting...if we do this project in another 50 years of change...to see where your internet speeds are at!

Cara: Well its different for the people who are making all the rules up in Brussels because they're sitting somewhere where if they just touch something everything happens really quickly

[Another customer comes to the till. Kemp serves her]

Baely: Just one thing, you said you don't have cows anymore...

Cara: Nope

Baely: Where does your milk come from?

Cara: Milk comes from Hinksden Dairy - that's the most local dairy to here. It's still Sussex, it's still quite a long way away.

Joe: We spoke to Hinksden Dairy earlier in the year, I mean to call them back 'cos we couldn't find a time that we were all available but hopefully I'm going to go speak to them

Cara: Yeah, they've got quite a big round they go around. Our milk is...I like it I could have quite easily gone to something like Wiseman dairy and got milk a lot cheaper, but I want to help them keep their cows 'cos I give them a better price for their milk.

Baely: We've spoke to a few farmers who are now retired, dairy farmers, who have just said that the prices they get from the supermarkets, it just makes it completely unviable

Cara: It is unviable. You know I used to relief-milk about 20 years ago and I think there is 1 farm left. I used to milk for four and I think there is 1 left now, all the rest have all closed down. 'Cos there's just not the money in it.

Baely: Do you find that people are happy to pay the prices that are here because they know that that money is going to...

Cara: Yes, and I think that the supermarkets are doing the right things where they've upped the price but I think they could up it even more and people would still pay



that extra money for it. I think it's something that everybody needs... else it's all going to come from abroad otherwise, if people are not careful.

Baely: With your land on your farm, you were saying that you lease the grass...how long have you had your farm sorry?

Cara: We've been up there for about 20 years, and then my husband had it and then his father had it before him...

Baely: Have you always leased that land or is that something that's become...

Cara: We've always leased different bits of land, the bits we lease now we've had for quite few years, it's just kind of like on a rolling yearly renewal

Baely: The farmer that you lease that from, for what reason are they...is it not of use to them?

Cara: It's not really useful as arable, it's got a few banks, so the ground's just not suitable for arable.

Baely: Ok, I just asked because some of the farmers we've been speaking to, some have either retired or have decided they can't afford to do it anymore, have become more like land owners, they're not farmers anymore but they lease it out. I was just wondering if, as you've been there for 20 years, whether or not you've noticed the geography of what the different farmers are doing and what the land is used for, has that changed?

Cara: Round us, up at home, not really no, we've always been...well we're surrounded by woods so no there's not a lot of change directly where we are. Some of the fields that we have leased in the past have now gone back into arable. So as I say we're mainly on ground that you can't, it's not really suitable for arable now. So yeah, I suppose there's a bit more arable being done than there was before, there's not quite so much...livestock's kind of up and down so...but yeah so now arable seems to be way forward

Joe: Just skipping back a topic a little bit, we were floating around issues which were effectively EU related, about EU regulations. Where would smallholding farms like yourselves position yourselves, are they happy. I mean, we've potentially got a referendum coming up...

Cara: I don't know whether it's better in or out. There's arguments for both, so I haven't really made my mind up about that. Being a small producer we're still bound by the same rules but depending on how the rules go, it might be that the small





producers then get swallowed up by the bigger ones because it's the bigger people that have got the facilities and all the equipment to actually do the bits that are...cos like here we don't do a lot of spraying, but the bits we do we have gentleman that works for us that works here. And there's a thing called 'grandfather rights' for spraying and now that's finished. So, next year we probably won't do any spraying at all unless we get somebody in to do it. So that's going to be problem, so then that'll cost us more money, having to get people in to do it. So that's one thing that has, he's very annoyed about it as well, can't see the problem with him going out and doing it.

Baely: That's been a recurring theme, farms that have got smaller acreage or farming on a smaller scale have talked about neighbours being amalgamated by the bigger farms - just to make it financially viable you have to increase and expand. But I think that, like Joe mentioned, cutting out the middle man and having your farm shop here helps with that?

Cara: That definitely helps - definitely, definitely helps. I think you've got to have a, 'cos we're quite small you've got to have a little niche market. If you can get that niche market and say, miss out on middlemen, then you can get more money for your product; a lot better than say, sending it to the abattoirs.

Baely: I suppose what you do here would actually be quite hard to replicate on a large scale? You couldn't mass produce it?

Cara: Erm, you probably could. You'd have to really increase your farm then. But you probably could do, and I suppose the way you could is to have, instead of an increase in one shop, you could have more shops around, but that's a lot more bigger, then you're getting into the realms of supermarkets and things then aren't you. But then you would have the buying power so then things would be cheaper ... to buy all the other bits in. So that's the only way. But I like small, small and niche is nice.

Joe: It's interesting to see. We've met a number of small holdings who are doing fine, that are just steadily going along, we've met enormous farms doing particularly well...it's the ones in the middle that seem to be struggling.

Cara: I should think that people this year have struggled as well if they're, especially if they're a mixed farm, because the prices for arable, even though it's been a really good yield, have been down. And then the land prices and things like that have been really awful this year. So I imagine people like that are really struggling a bit more. Not unless they can produce all their own food and feed that to the animals that's probably a bit better but I imagine...yeah, it's been a hard year this year for farmers.

Joe: is it organic, your stuff?





Cara: No, no we use as little as possible but it's not organic. I know organic does have its market, but I still, a lot of people think that organic has absolutely zero done to it whereas it will have a little bit. If a sheep's got worms I know you can control it by moving them around but at some point they will still have to be wormed and then the withdrawal period's a lot longer. I think some people have a bit of a misconception about organic, so that's my opinion.

Baely: Just out of interest, what is your best selling product?

Cara: There's lots of goods. It depends on whether you want something that's sweet or vegetables, it depends on the seasons as well. I sell a lot of strawberries obviously through the summer, we buy those in from a local farmer, ...erm at the moment cauliflowers are going well, leeks are going well, potatoes go well. In the butchery the beef's going well, sausages go well all year round. It just depends, depends on what the weather's doing, how people are feeling, what time of year it is. Obviously we're coming up to Christmas and we'll have loads of turkeys going out.

Baely: Has that changed, as either different cuts that come, certainly things that used to be unfashionable or that people would turn their nose up at, now it's becoming more popular again

Cara: Yes definitely things like briskets and all the slow cook meats. And the chefs help a lot, but it would be nicer if the chefs would give us a little heads up sometimes because people come in and it's been on the telly the night before, then they come in and everybody wants that cut of meat. And then it's not always easy cos you've only got a certain quantity of that cut of meat so sometime it would be nice to have heads up going 'oh well we're going to do this this week or we're going to do that next week' and then you can get it in ready for the people.

Baely: What's your butchers name sorry?

Cara: Dave

Baely: Cos he said something really interesting when he came in, he said 'oh you can probably talk about the changes quite well' and he said 'it was traditional and old fashioned, then it changed, not its traditional and old fashioned again!' Would you agree with that?

Cara: Yes. Yes a lot of people are...they're now learning...I think as I say those chefs and all those cooking programmes help a lot cause they bring what they're doing and that ... bring up and then... that helps our shop, cause people wants those cuts of meat which you can't always get from a bigger store so...yeah no that definitely...





Baely: I think...I mean I'm not a farmer, but certainly from eating out and television and things like that, when I was a bit younger everything was about exotic foods, it was Mexican foods, and exciting foods, whereas now there's been a shift straight back to local and seasonal produce...

Cara: And a lot of things like...yeah, so different cuts of meat and different times of year...years and years ago a lot of people wouldn't have had a belly of pork 'cos they would have said it's too fat, whereas now, because it's in lots of restaurants and things a lot of people like to do that themselves, so it's definitely gone back that way I think.

Baely: Do you supply any of the restaurants?

Cara: We have another farm shop we supply, and when the Hot Pocket [sic?] was open we used to supply them as well, they had quite a good, a very, very good business up there.

Joe: So shall we spend 15 minutes talking about the future?

Baely: We've talked about here, and what you have here and what it used to be like and how that's changed, what do you see happening from here onwards?

Cara: I don't know, it depends if there's any more rules come out or not and how that affects us, but as I don't...I wouldn't know what they're going to be and are likely too I'm not sure... I can see...I'd say the 'pick your own' is probably just going to carry on as it is...depending on where, how the markets going to go, you can't really look into future, it's like with the past and now, things go up and down and some things get popular and some things aren't. I think it's going to carry on like that so it's difficult to see how far it's going to....hopefully there's going to be more places like this, people are going to want more to know where their food is coming from, that's what I'm hoping. Hopefully that will go forwards.

Baely: do you have any plans to either expand or change anything within the shop, or have you found a pretty good model and you're going to stick with it?

Cara: I think we'll probably stick with what we've got. There will obviously be little changes because you've got to be able to change things just to keep people's interest. But no, generally we'll stick as it is. If this summer the exotic fruit comes in and people want that then we'll be doing that but no, as it is, keep it local as much as we can and I think that's the way forward at the moment





Joe: Are there any particular threats or dangers for local producers? Any particular regulation that would be particularly catastrophic for small holdings?

Cara: I'd say the only thing that I can see, depending on how food prices go up, is how the minimum wage – I know that's got to go up – that could affect us. If business rates go up, that's going to affect us...electric and stuff 'cos we just doing have the buying power of the bigger stores to push that down. I think it's going to be those sorts of things going up that's going to hurt us

[phone interruption]

Baely: what you just said about the minimum wage going up, how much of an affect will that have on what you've got going on here?

Cara: it will do, because I've either got to up all my prices which then might make me too expensive for people to come in, but if the food prices keep going up that will help as well cos then people won't notice it so much but if the prices don't go up at the same extent then obviously I'm going to have a lot more overheads, are going to be....I'm going to have much more of those and I'm not going to make much of a profit

Baely: how many people are employed here?

Cara: there's a few part time and two full time

Baely: I was just saying to Joe that it again seem to be that the middle sized businesses are perhaps going to suffer the most. We spoke to a few farmers who have particularly small acreages and who do most of the work themselves, so they don't actually have any kind of 'wages' to pay

Cara: No 'cos a lot farmers don't actually put their wages into the scheme of things in another company you'd right 'right well wages are this, electrics this, this is how much it all is work it out – farmers don't, they just tend to, just disregard that part. It's like up at home, I'm lambing at the moment and so I get up early in the morning, I do the animals, the kids come out and they help as well, my husband goes off to work, and then I'm here all day, go home and it all has to be done again. So its long days and hard work, but yea, generally farmers don't count in any hours of work you do, you just do...it's way of life, once you've got into it, if you didn't like doing it you wouldn't do it.

Baely: Yes it's one of the few places where you don't pay yourself an hourly rate!



Cara: No, no. There's no overtime or something like that no. You do it 'cos you enjoy doing it

Baely: *Are you from a farming family?*

Cara: No

Baely: Is your husband?

Cara: yes, he's got a bit more farming in him

Baely: *Is there anything else particularly that comes to mind, anything that you*

Cara: Not that I can think of no

Joe: That was lovely, thank you!