

Appendix 3: Descriptions of “Paradigm Shift” -- Interview Data

"There's actually a shift in the thought process and I really believe it boils down to spirituality as much as anything else. It's almost like you have a uj kw'kp}{ qwt 'faith and then you understand that the other way wasn't the right way to do it. That's not the way Mother Nature wants things to be done."

"This production system isn't just about taking everything for your own benefit ... it's a way of farming things but still leaving something."

Farmer: My intention has changed from making money to growing good quality healthy food ... and that makes a big difference.

LC When did that shift happen?

Farmer: About two years ago.

LC: The same time you said you started thinking about the soil as a living organism.

Farmer: Absolutely.

LC: What precipitated it?

Farmer: I think it was just a natural progression. It's just an evolution almost. It's kind of like you were talking about, you focus on one thing, you don't see some of the other things I've learned a lot and things sink in now. It's like I understand the big picture more.

LC: What has been your most valuable lesson in trying to farm the way you farm?

Farmer: That's a hard one. I guess, keep trying. If you try something and it fails, you just learn from it, but keep trying, and always consider soil health; don't concentrate on which crop is the most economically valuable. Do everything for soil health."

"It's really fun to work on the soil, to see how it invests in your future, after coming from the conventional mindset of an annual crop with annual payoff."

"We should be building stronger root systems, wider leaves, longer leaves, better nutrient cycles and water cycles over time. Leave things greener longer [using cover crops or perennial vegetation] and you're harvesting more sunlight and you're having more blossoms. The whole thing works on itself."

"I have a feeling that the more you take off the land, the more's not in the land. The land's got its limits on what it can make, so if I have a bad crop it doesn't really bother me."

"Most of the plants are multifunctional – how they feed microbes, put nitrogen in the ground, utilize phosphate. That's why rotations work, I think – each plant has a different function."

“Take care of the earth and then the earth will take care of us.”

“Everyone is not going to go out on the ledge all the way to organic, but getting them on the continuum of organic/sustainable/stewardship/conservation, then they would start to move down through all of those. Once they figured out, ‘I’m not having as much evaporation of water in the summer, I can keep my soil covered with a nitrogen fixing crop, I have all this biomass’ ...their brain couldn’t quit after they had taken one step off the entrenched conventional wisdom. They began to have fun with farming again.”

“In organic systems you have to be playing the long game. There are no short-term fixes, so you have to be patient. Like with the spurge, the easiest way to take care of it is with herbicide, you know, burn it down and be done with it. But that’s not how it works in agriculture. You have to be patient, everything is not going to happen this year.”

“Take care of the bird population and you’re doing good things. That’s a good measurement. When your bird population comes up, everything’s working in harmony.”