

# Episode #215 If We Can Do Good

## Max MacGillivray

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[00:00:00] **Susan:** Well, today I am delighted to welcome Max MacGillivray to a life beyond the numbers Max. You're so welcome.

[00:00:07] **Max:** Susan, it is an utter pleasure to be on here today with you. I've gotta ask you a question. What's your favourite fresh produce?

[00:00:14] **Susan:** Ooh, something green well, actually, do you know what? It's probably spuds.

[00:00:19] **Max:** Is it Oh, yeah. Okay.

[00:00:21] **Susan:** Potatoes for those who don't know what a spud is. But yeah, I mean that is my go-to comfort food

[00:00:27] **Max:** Yeah.

[00:00:28] **Susan:** and just, it's so Irish. There's something, so I know that you probably say it's so British, but it's so Irish.

[00:00:35] **Max:** No, no. Guess it.

[00:00:36] **Susan:** identify with spuds.

[00:00:38] **Max:** Actually, it's a really good point, and, and the reason for sort of taking you down this route, I've been doing a lot of, broadcast about a big show that we're covering in California. So I've been, I've been broadcasting with lots of people from the states, and I'm opening the gambit with what's your best fresh produce rather than trying to be too serious from the get go.

And, actually I hadn't thought about this before, Susan. I suppose it's symbiotic as to the answer that people give is a good understanding as to where they come from. You say potatoes because of perhaps your fantastic heritage. I was speaking to a, a chap from California yesterday, and his, retort was that, it was pineapple.

And I said, oh, describe Brian, describe me this, this pineapple. He said, well, I was on the beach in, in, in Hawaii, with my girlfriend at, at, at the time, and we were eating this pineapple, and it was the most delicious thing. The, the waves were crashing, but max, it was slightly rude. Brian, how is it slightly ruined eating this amazing pineapple?



Well, halfway through my girlfriend at the time asked me to marry her and I said, can I finish the pineapple first? so it is quite, interesting one when you ask people I know there's another lovely chap. where was he from? He was from.

New York, and he was talking about being in Ohio with his parents on the veranda, eating papaya. and you could just imagine that sort of white picket fence veranda thing, mom and dad and then, and the rocket chest. And it, it's, it was just the, the whole ambiance of the way that he, he described it.

So you, you, you know, I'm settled out with potatoes. They've got papaya and they got they got pineapples. But no, I love your potatoes.

[00:01:55] **Susan:** Three Ps and what about you then Max right back at you.

[00:01:59] **Max:** Mango Mango because, I have, been so fortuitous to have been stood, under a mango tree in Ghana, with one of Ghana's best mango growers, and he looked through this quite, quite large. Mango, orchard Plant, plantation, farm. And he, he picked the best mango for us that was just coming ripe.

And he had this night that he must have had for, I dunno, 30, 40 years. And he cut it and these amazing, amazing hands, these hands of the soil and he opened it up and we eat this mango. And so that whole, ah, and so I, I, I love mango and so I've, I've, I've, I love Mango Ev ever since, but it's, that's that tangibility that every time I eat mango, I, I see Mauritius.

I think his name was. I, I see him and I see his slightly bl bloodshot, eyes. 'cause he was in his eighties. But this big smiles, I enjoyed this produce and this tree that was 20 years old. So yeah. Mango every time.

[00:02:50] **Susan:** I mean, you've just brought me down a, a road of fresh produce now in my head, because when I went to live in Africa, and speaking of Africa as well first, which was back in 2003, it was the first time I ever tasted passion fruit. And oh my God, I didn't even know things like that existed, And actually I began to realize that fruit and veg had a taste.

[00:03:17] **Susan:** so distanced from that. just to finish the potato before I hand back to you, I used to go to the market and in Uganda they would call potato Irish, and I always got such a kick about asking for a kilo of Irish.

[00:03:32] **Max:** Oh, that's fantastic. Yeah, a kilo of our, make it a ton more than Marion. There. There there's a fantastic chap in our, sector called Richard Diplock and he runs a very large tomato business, down on the south coast. And I actually had him on tears once. He'd probably be brows me say this.

but he was describing about the first time, he sees children eat tomatoes off the vine in their greenhouse. And the greenhouses are very, very, very big entities. Now. They're sort of like 15 hectares of glass, all for grain, magnificent tomatoes, and they do lots of, school, tour. So you can



imagine these, school, school kids come in and they just see the shape and size of this thing growing amazing tomatoes.

And they'll say to the children on, on particular vines, go, choose your tomato. And, and it's that taste of a tomato. And he's absolutely convinced, I'm convinced with him that if you can guess, a young individual at that sort of age, eating a tomato, you've got 'em for life. It's all about the taste.

It's all about the flavor. And, and he and I always say, what in comparison to a pop tart, something horrible from the world of, ultra processed foods in, in comparison, having a tomato, if you can get that younger individual, having a, can I, can I tell you another story?

[00:04:39] **Susan:** Well before you do, I wanna come in with the tomatoes because this is amazing because my father grew tomatoes. he worked for a, an organization that grew tomatoes, and he was the manager. Of the, the glass houses and we, I can still smell the tomatoes and I didn't like them then because I think we were, inundated with tomatoes, but now we have some growing in our very wee back garden here in Oxford.

We have a lovely little tomato plant and the tomatoes are delicious.

[00:05:13] **Susan:** So please go ahead with your story.

[00:05:15] **Max:** I went through Africa. I, I went through, I rode a, a motorbike from, from London to Cape Town to promote, agriculture and, and fresh produce. It was, 18,000 kilometers, 18 countries, but the, but the two motorbikes that we did it on, they did 19 countries, which is a story for another time.

And I got very kindly, if it's okay to, to name the company. I very kindly got sponsored by Pink Lady Apples. And when I came back, I, I would do this Madcap, school presentation with my bike. I did it to 50 schools and I performed at Chris Evans calf s about one particular school.

at the end of the presentation, if I was lucky, pink Lady Apples would, have a little white van come up with, a couple of cartons of, of Pink Lady apples. And at the end I would be handing out segments of them. Of apples and there was a, a 12-year-old boy who's loitering in the corner, and he wouldn't come up and, and join all, all this mates and have a piece of, apple.

I spotted him and went up to him and said, young man, would you like a piece of apple? And he said, here it comes. 12 years old. I've never had any apple in my life. and this was in Huntington, a relatively middle class, area. So I said, try some. And so he had had a bit of this zap on and, to me it's a bit like Susan.

It's a bit like, if, if you've been, colorblind all your life and then someone puts on those, those magic glass say he, he at this piece, piece of apple and, and pink lady apples are, are, I've got one here are fantastic in the way that they, I I think they're sort of creative for, for kids.



'cause there's a slight fizz to them and, and they're gorgeous. And he said. Could I have an apple? Said young man. You have the apple. And I spoke to the headmaster afterwards and said. What, what's the makeup? He said, yeah, There's a, there's a bit of a story here and I said headmaster, could I ask a favor?

There's obviously he's never had an apple. I bet he's got brothers and sisters. Likewise. If we sent a, a carton of apples to you, could you forward them onto the family? Yeah, no problem. So we did that and then the headmaster phoned me up a, a week later to say that the mom had come in, in tears, because she knew that she wasn't feeding her kids correctly.

This carton of apples had turned up right by the school. They had friends round, and they all thought, well, what do we do with these things? Well, shall we? Now they're addicted to Pink Lady apples. And again, it comes back to that thing again about, about that little individual that, that 12-year-old, having that slice of apple.

Susan, you know, this stats as well as I do six outta 10 kids, dunno where, where fresh produce comes from. And we've got this huge monster of, as we intubated earlier, ultra, processed foods and, and the whole burden on, on, on the NHS. But I do think, see what you think. I do think. it is changing because people are now awakening to the fact that ultra processed foods are bad and that the TikTok generation know this and they want to have, healthier outcomes, and they, they want to have whole foods rather than food with ingredients.

Some, some, I'm quite, I'm quite, quite positive. I'm quite excited about the sector. Hopefully I don't have to thump my way through Africa to, to get a 12-year-old kid to eat some apple again.

[00:07:59] **Susan:** Well, it sounds like it was a pretty good trip, but where. When has this disconnection happened? Because let's say for example, max, I mean, I grew up in rural Ireland and my uncle had a farm. We drank milk straight from the cow. It wasn't pasteurized. a lot of kids now don't even know milk comes from a cow.

And we were also lucky enough to grow much of our own vegetables and so on. We had our meat directly. Everything came from the land and then we were surrounded by sea. So also we had all of that, but I suppose that's part of me and my story

[00:08:41] **Susan:** and. I'm guessing in the UK and many other countries, it was always like that too. But somewhere along the line, we drifted away from

[00:08:51] **Max:** I, I have the su, Susan, Susan, I have the date. It is, I need, I it is 1851. It was the year of, the poisoning ban coming in to stop arsenic poisoning in the, in the uk. Why do I say that? Something like 1851 or 1871, because that's when the, the split between. the majority of the UK population were living rurally to then living on an urban, basis.

And we're now nine generations on. and that's when that disconnect happens. That's when we lost the connection, with the lands. And if, if we wanna be critical about the. About, about the agricultural sectors. We've then created this sort of, them and us type thing. what is great about



here, here comes drum roll, with the likes of, Jeremy Clarkson as the word ology goes, he's opened the gate, to, to what we do.

and I, I feel that the general public, I, I. A lot more receptive to finding out what we do now within the farming community. so yeah, it is 1851 when that divide happened and, and now whatever the FI figures are is some, something like 92% of people live. Don't quote me on that.

live on an urban basis and so have no, no understanding. And likewise, most teachers come from an urban background, so they don't have a, an understanding. But the, the agriculture sector does do some fa fantastic things. We have the likes of Leaf Open Farm Sunday that once a year, I think it's about 4,000 farms will open up their farms to allow, but the problem that with that is it tends to attract rural families and, and not, not FA families.

So. But the messaging is getting there and, so many people within our sector are so good on, social media and getting that, and, and coming back to the likes of Jeremy Clarkson, a number of agricultural institutions, universities have seen a huge peak of, people wanting to get into agriculture because they can see it's fun.

there's nothing wrong with being an accountant, Susan, but actually coming into, into the sector of, of working on the land. you might not earn a fortune, but it might be a bit more fulfilling than, sitting by sitting behind a desk.

[00:10:43] **Susan:** I suppose it depends on what you want and what you value in life, max, but also what you're aware of. Because if you grow up urban, then you're not even aware that these opportunities exist, are you And I do think there's, I know you say it could be very fulfilling and everything. It is hard work.

I mean, people that live off the land or work off the land or depend on the land perhaps for a living. That's also a lot of effort.

[00:11:11] **Max:** It's It's a way of life. It is.

[00:11:13] **Susan:** Yes, it's a vocation.

[00:11:16] **Max:** It is. Yeah. and they're doing good. Of course they course they do good. 'cause they, they're conserving the land. they are, are such, great, caretaker is wrong word. shepherd's wrong word. they're so good at looking after their land and, and their livestock.

we are some of, the best farmers in, in the uk. but it's not, especially at the moment where we've got, a couple of things that are, are battling against us, whether that be income, so, so farmers aren't getting an in income from, from the product and also the weather.

We've had such, bizarre weather over the last four or five years. We've just recorded a very, very poor harvest, this year. So, yeah. So you need to be very brave to be a farmer or, or very rich. what's



that joke, Susan? how, how do you make a fortune. Start off with a large fortune of buy a farm and then you'll have a fortune 'cause you keep on having to invest into it.

[00:12:02] **Susan:** having said all of that, we need them. We need people to use the land for what is. It's there for as well to help produce fresh produce.

[00:12:13] **Max:** Yeah. Yeah. when I was at Agriculture College, they, they always used to say about the best crop rotation of them all. Was the four bees. So as a farmer, you would work out, if you're an arable farm especially, you'd be working out what you'd be planting in the same field for the next 4, 5, 6 years.

they used to say in a juggling manner that the best crop rotation was the four bees. So one year barley, next year barley, the next year bungalows, and the next year Bermuda. The four bees, barley, barley bungalows, Bermuda, or the unfortunately, slightly sad joke now is if you're gonna buy land, buy it where you can see street lamps.

'cause that means that you're more likely to get planning permission to convert that backfield into chimney pots. So there's a, there's a, a loss of appetites, and pressure. For, for building or for renewable, solar panels or for ad. But it's, it's, ugh, Susan, it's evolution.

Not, not revolution. it is the way that it's, it's changing. but then again, I'm a, I'm a globalist. I'm not sure what that really means, but, but in the respect of, I've. With my, my travels, let, lemme go back to my mangoes, situation. there's an amazing British run business based in Ghana, and if you buy any slice and d fruit from m and s, wait.

Sainsbury's, it's very likely to have come from this amazing business. Blue skies in blue skies in, in the factor unit they employ. Four and a half thousand people, and there's 35,000 people that work off the ecosystem of, of that business in an absolute powerhouse. And the, and the amazing British chap who set this business up 25 years ago by chopping pineapples under a palm tree and Accra, he says, max, we're like a social enterprise before social enterprises set up.

So they've got that one and they've got a business in Benin. Brazil, Egypt and South Africa. so that's all good. But what's the downside of that? all of their product is air freighted to us every day from all of those countries. and there's a lot of people who are very, an anti that. but their argument is actually they've got this community of 40,000 people in one country alone, let alone in the others that they're supporting, by sending this product over.

And those planes are in the air anyway. And those planes are getting more efficient. and so if overnight, if we stopped, taking their product, that whole community in all those countries I've just mentioned, are probably gonna be in, in a very, very poor state. So can we, coming back to that bit?

Yep. British farming, we ha we have to support, but I, I think we need to support farmers, globally. Susan.



[00:14:32] **Susan:** Globally. Absolutely. And the food systems, And what goes around the food system? Because I think everything's related. And when you don't know where your food comes from or how food is produced. You just don't see the unintended consequences perhaps of, of what you've just spoken about as well.

And I was thinking about education there. You know, the 12-year-old kid who's never had the apple that suddenly eats an apple. And that's the future too, isn't it? And I don't, I don't even know what the question is, but it's

[00:15:11] **Max:** So, so Susan, let me let, let, let, let me inter interact 'cause it's it's Jack 'cause there's quite a good point, point here. Wherever you go in the world, two people have been there before you. The guy selling Michael Jackson t-shirts and the guy selling Coca-Cola. I was at a conference recently and, and I, and you'll see this, I see this all, all, all the time within our sector of, of farming and horticulture fresh produce.

I got to, there's a, I've forgotten his name, but there's a professor from Chatham House, so those that dunno. Chatham House is a, is a think tank in London from. Full of the most amazing intellectual people that steer strategy in certain areas. And we'd had this very, proficient, eloquent speech from this professor just, just laying out on a neutral basis as to the lie of the lands, in respect to food globally.

And this chap stood up and he said, why can't retailers pay us growers more money? and it's a very valid question. And, he sort of rocked on his feet a little bit in front of it must be 700 people at this, this event. He said. Actually, it's not, the retailers are at fault that the people that are dominating, food globally are the multinational grain companies and the multinational, food businesses, it's them, sir, that you need to tackle because they created this cartel globally.

they are the ones that are forcing this, this scenario. They're the one and it, and he didn't say this, it, it, it's reminiscent. Susan, you remember the whole tobacco, scenario where we would, it, it was just a thing to smoke tobacco and thank the Lord we got that, that change. And, and there's so many people from the tobacco sector moved into those food businesses and they used everything that they learned on a marketing perspective from selling fags, tobacco into.

ultra processed foods and, other foods. So those foods, and companies, have, have sort of got control of our food system. But I do believe that there are, that there's light at the end of the tunnel that they're realizing that they can't continue like, like this because sales are dropping.

We won't even start on weight loss drugs 'cause that's affecting, cell cells with them, significantly. So I'm, I'm sort of hoping that they will. Into our sector, start investing in our sector. But, three years ago at another conference, they had, a vice president of, we won't name him, but a, a very, very big, food multinational.

And he did his, PowerPoint presentation about how, great they were. And, and someone stood up and said, sir, when are you gonna start investing in a banana business? And he, he took all of two, three seconds to, to, I look and think and say, when you could show me how to make money outta bananas, we'll invest.





So this is the point just for, people listening in, that the, the food multinationals, they're making double digit margins, from what they sell. a banana company, might have a turnover in the UK of 500 million, but they'll be making sub 1.5% margin on, on it that they're not allowed to have a brand in it.

they can't do anything to leverage, the return. So there's this, Co complete, skew towards the, the, the branded companies that, that are allowed to collect that margin and to continue to, present us food that's not too good for us. Whilst the Whole Foods, sectors, the, these sort of guys, they, make so little margin that they can't invest in marketing.

They can't invest in product development. they're just surviving But let's try and find a. At Silver, silver Cloud, it is changing. people want to eat more, more Whole Foods. So I'm just hoping that those multinationals will realize that they're gonna have to give up their poptarts and invest in a, in a banana company or Susan, a potato company.

and be because that does more, more for us. and it's gonna gonna help us in the respect of, not being a burden on our various health systems.

[00:18:32] **Susan:** Think the point is so well made, the health systems, and you've brought it in in a couple of different ways. you've mentioned the diet pills or the, we've got an obesity epidemic in the world and malnutrition, because malnutrition is, is overnutrition as well as under nutrition.

It's both. And, and.

[00:18:50] **Max:** but

[00:18:51] **Susan:** I keep going back to legislation Max. Like do we have to legislate? Common sense has long gone out the window. It seems in a way we're eating foods that our grandparents would turn in their graves.

[00:19:04] **Max:** it's like you go back to pictures of people in the fifties, you never saw a fat person. personally, I don't think legislation works within the uk. There, there's all this talk about, a sugar tax. Say it. I think the thing that works is creating societal change. if, if my little drop in the ocean of getting that 12-year-old to eat an apple, it's gonna get that family to put down the mechanically recovered burgers that they're having a, on a, at a barbecue and start eating.

If, if we could all, do that I, I look at my, kids, so I've got, Susan, I've got too many kids. I've got three. Have I got three? I got three, three, sorry. I, I've got three, three kids with three dogs. I always get confused. and I, I look at what they eat and they're all gym bunnies and it's fantastic.

And they're all very pan. I feel guilty when I go out with them. 'cause it's like, father, that's your second pint of beer. Should he be doing this? So, no, no, I need that 'cause I got you three. I need something to, I need that sensitive. But just watching them and watching their peer group, they're not interested.





I'm being optimistic. I do think there's hope and creating that societal change when the makers of let's pick on Poptarts, realize that no one's buying the poptarts. I'll think, oh my God. what we're gonna do, we're gonna have to go over here. We're gonna have to, oh, right.

What's all this healthy stuff over here? Let, let's investigate that. Let's get, get into it.

[00:20:12] **Susan:** I mean, that's again, another point well made it. It comes down to the power of the people, the power of the consumer, and that is going to change the market more than anything else. Going to change.

[00:20:23] **Max:** And, and Susan, it's so quick, it's so reactive. I've done quite a lot with, with government of, of, of late and it's so slow and it's so, so politic and, and that's not a criticism of government, that's just the way that. government is, is, is structured and, and let's not even start on the, on the, on these big food multinationals and the lobbying that they're able to do.

But if, if we could get a whole tranche of a certain generation to be eating that rather than, than, than Pop-Tarts. if it's affecting the bottom line of those f large food multinationals, they're gonna go in a different direction and chase the buck where they're actually making money rather than trying to sell Pop-Tarts.

So, yeah, I don't think we should rely on government within the uk 'cause it's just too, too. Well, we're gonna cross another line. The National Food Strategy, that was set up by Mr. Dimbleby, at the bitter end of the Conservative Party. fantastic, strategy. It, it was, it was a lot of it was about, sugar tax, but it got kicked into the long grass.

we have our new government come in, they look at it, they say it's great, but they're not doing anything. yeah. So, we need to create the change with, from within, but that, opens up another, dilemma, Susan, that within our sector we're not that good at being able to have a coherent message to get that awareness that branding out.

Again, the food multinationals, they've got all that money, to be able to run mainstream adverts on terrestrial TV and, and,online. You don't see many adverts for Nanas. Do you, in that respect.

[00:21:44] **Susan:** No, and it's an interesting one about the bottom line, the money, the profit, the, the capitalism is capitalism at odds with agriculture, which I don't believe they are at all because I think. we can blame capitalism, but actually what we should be blaming is a short term focus on profit at any cost.

And the cost here is the health of people and the wellbeing of people, and, They're able to afford all the fresh fruit and vegetables that they want, the people in charge. And I, there's a disconnect there as well be between, you know, it's kind of very much like, well, it's your own fault if you're not eating bananas or, but it's not, it's the market's fault.

You could say.



[00:22:31] **Max:** Yeah. Let's scare your view, your viewers and listeners. I came across an example recently in Cambridge, in the uk. That's, what was he? It was a 56-year-old man that had, diabetes and, he, he'd. He was being informed by his doctors that he would have to have his left foot amputated because his, his, diabetes was so bad unless he changed his, health style.

he elected to have his foot amputated because he didn't want to change his eating patterns. 'cause he enjoyed the food that he was eating and that you can just, can you just imagine that Port I, I, I've got absolute sympathy for this poor chap. He's been so brainwashed, presumably for so many years as to, being a, a victim of eating this rubbish when actually, if you'd had a house moment, I thought this, I'm gonna leave.

And, and, and Susan, he lost his foot. he took that, that choice. I mean, that's a, a very extreme example, but you would hope that most people who, who have a wake up call like that, they'll think, right, no, no. Going back to my, my kids, I, I hope they don't mind me saying this.

one of them wanted a, a diet plan and, a diet plan and a a, a gym plan. What did you do? Went on to ai. sorted that out and he's been following for two years. And I, I can't keep up with him anymore in any, shape. And so all the answers are there for us. We've got so much information coming to us, Susan, but I suppose it's just, that mindset, again, I'm coming back to my, my, same thing.

it is a comment, not a question. How do we create societal change to, to get people do good, eat good? Do, good things, be be, ha happy and friendly with ev 'cause our world's a bit tricky at the moment, Susan, isn't it? And it, it feels like all we need to do is all have an apple together and everything will be fine.

There we go. We

[00:24:02] **Susan:** Or Banana.

[00:24:04] **Max:** but banana. Yeah. we just solved everything. We just sold world politics. I'm a banana.

[00:24:09] **Susan:** So what took you into this max, because this isn't your pure line of work, I would say. But the way you speak about all of this, you sound like you're a farmer who's like, trying to change the world one, one banana at a time, or one apple at a time, and, and I mean that in the nicest possible way, but it's not your main business.

[00:24:28] **Max:** no. our main business is we, we run a recruitment business, where we source mid-management to board level people within agriculture and horticulture, fresh produce businesses in the UK and internationally combined. a client of mine said, max, you are very much like a. Like, like a bee.

you go to all these flowers, agriculture companies, fresh produce companies in the UK and overseas and, and you are picking up pollen. You're picking up information, 'cause a lot of people, I think,



enjoy time with me because they, they could be sometimes just stuck in their, in their role in their company.

And because I'm, I'm relatively well traveled, I can tell them about what, what, and I suppose that's my problem. I've, I've seen so many. People in 18 different countries in, in, in Africa and all, all, all across America and Australia, that, I've got all of this information and to me it's, it's fair, fairly straightforward that we, we all, we're all one big global family within agriculture and fresh produce.

We're all bad at marketing ourselves. These guys are the. I'm banging my drum again, with, with a large, food, food multinationals. have got the money and got the evil, and, and are doing bad. Whilst we could do so much good, but if I could go round and politely kick lots of people within our sector saying.

that amazing banana stick up on social media. take a picture of yourself with your daughter, with that papaya. People love it. And I, and I'm right. but they've never thought of that and that it's not a criticism, it's just 'cause I'm, I'm a bit, I don't have many skills, but I'm fairly open eyed as to.

what I see. And if I see something that I think is gonna be a real positive message out there, I'll tell them, or, or I'll help them, to get that, that message out. So I'm not, not really answering your question. And I, and I got no idea where I'm going, but we've got a couple of other big projects.

Coming along the lines that, photography, I love photography and love. I've, run photography all over the, globe with the United Nations and groups out in America and here. And I do think there's, there's a very strong case to be had of having, farmers, growers and our product, being shown, on a domestic basis to domestic clients or, or internationally.

So people can, can. This, this apple's great, but I, I want to see who actually planted it, who grew it, who picked it, who, who packed it, who, who tucked it away in the van to, to, to bring it here. So that's what I'm really keen to do, is to have that, that person, with the particular apple.

my view being. That people like to buy from people. If we could, get that, that magic dust of people being able to see where the produce comes from, that that progeny, it, it, it will, it will create that magic dust.

[00:26:53] **Susan:** And speaking of photography and the magic dust, we don't show the video Max. So all along when Max has been saying that he's either pointing to an apple or a banana, just so, but we are talking about this as well, but behind Max is this amazing photograph, I'm guessing of blueberries.

[00:27:11] **Max:** Yes. It don't tell anyone that this amazing picture is actually, it was a, I didn't take it. It was a, it was an award-winning picture from a, a photography competition in the sector. it just shows. how, how would you describe it?

it's sort of micro, imagery of blueberries that have got slight. Frost on them. and again to, to me, I love, love that picture, Susan, 'cause all you wanna do is you want to dive in and have that blueberry



and that, that, that lovely ding when, when you, when you eat it and you don't get that from a pop tart.

[00:27:39] **Susan:** Well, you might, if you don't know. What that lovely is when you eat the fresh, and I think this is part of the, the issue we have is that if you've never, if you're that 12-year-old kid who's never tasted an apple, then why would you buy an apple when you know the taste of the Pop-Tart?

[00:27:56] **Max:** Yep. Yep. Agreed. Yeah. so, so Susan, I'm positive about, about the future, but We don't have the money to create a big brand. And also I think just the, the whole dynamics of media is, is, is changing. Back in our day, you and I would've run a full page advert in the Daily Telegraph on the Daily Mail saying, saying, eat this Apple.

but now my, my kids don't watch the rest of TV and, and they're hardly watching. U YouTube, even e even YouTube is getting dated. So they're all over Snapchat and, and, and, and TikTok. So this, this market is, changes. So that comes into this other thing of, of influencers, that if we can get those sort of individuals, just as part of their daily routine when they're doing whatever they're doing, having an apple or having a banana, creating that positive influence, that that way, which is great because it is a cheaper method.

Apart from having to, buy the, the influence of an influencer. but again, if we're, filling our, our sectors with fantastic imagery of apples or blueberries or what, whatever the product is, it would do no, no harm.

[00:28:54] **Susan:** And so then what's recruitment in that sector like? Because when I asked you what you wanted to speak about today, you said people, people, people. So I wonder are there lots of people wanting to work in that sector? Is it an easy sector to recruit into? Is it. Is it seeing people moving around?

Do you look for cross pollination because you're the pollinator? what is it like for people?

[00:29:19] **Max:** Well, well done. So traditionally the, the sector of farming and, horticulture fresh produce, if a company was looking for a commercial manager to, to, to work with a retailer, most companies would not look at anyone from outside of the sector. So if someone came in from Vodafone.

Or Clark shoes, they'll get dismissed outta sight because they have no understanding of the sector. They dunno what we're talking about, but we're, we're seeing that's actually changing because there's better appointed, companies realize that if they bring someone in from a slightly more sophisticated sector, they can learn.

About apples, it's, we're not talking medical devices here. You don't need a, a, a PhD in colostomy bags to know what an apple is. and actually if you could bring someone in from, say, let's go for extrapolate example for Vodafone. You think of all the training that individual's going to have had.



even better. there's been some amazing successes in our sector of people from the military coming in. a standard, individual from the military pretentious had quarter of a million pounds worth of training development put into them. They are by far the best leaders in the world. and if you've got some, some folk from the military, coming in, there's, there's a chap I know, that, he, he came outta the military senior level.

and he really struggled to get a job. And he got a job as a, a glasshouse grower. And he did that for 2, 2, 3 years. And, and he is. Just about to now put down 40 hectares of, of glass on a big, project where a, a recycling center's taking all the black, bin waste from a particular county creating energy and, carbon from that, that's all going to be used to then grow, these tomatoes.

And, and this chat from the army is the project lead behind that and having a fantastic time. And as he says, he's doing, doing good. So there's all those little people are gonna be eating tomatoes on the back of it. So Max get back, back, get back on track. so, so there's so many opportunities within, agriculture, horticulture, fresh produce.

as we intimated earlier, the likes of Mr. Clarkson has excited a younger generation to come in, which is great, which means the pipeline is gonna get bigger. There's gonna be more people coming through the colleges and universities 'cause they

want to come into the sector and do something that's, that's fun, exciting, tangible do, doing good growing, growing good. That's where good SSH one t rather than working for, for Goldman Sachs or other, bankers So again, I'm positive. There's, there's so many examples I can give you, Susan, of, of people who've started off, at a low, level. Now one particular one, he is the CEO of, of a fresh produce business, Tony, over 250 million pound turnover. And they did all the fruit and veggie to Aldi in Northern Europe.

and, and he, he came from, from nothing. And it was all just about his personality and the fact that he has such a passion for, for fresh produce and Labradors always helps.

[00:31:59] **Susan:** Fair enough. And, oh, I've lost my train of thought, which seems to be happening to me a lot these days. Unfortunately. I think it's, it's the age thing, max. It's the age thing.

California, As we're recording. You're about to head to California to a show.

[00:32:21] **Max:** Yeah, so, so I'm in this very, very interesting position where I get commissioned by, trade shows in the UK and overseas. I, I seem to have, created this sort of, style. of video interviews. and Susan, the people that I, I can't believe this, they actually pay me to go to these shows and do what I do.

it is amazing. So I will rock up at these shows and I'll find the, I, either the interviews will be pre orchestrated or I'll just find random people and I've got a big, gimbal, camera and I'll just rock up, up to the stand. the show we're talking about is the International Fresh Produce Association, global Produce and Floral Show, which has been, in Anaheim.



It's the biggest fresh produce show for, for, for, for North America. Tracks about 35,000 people. and, and in, in the morning they have, a, a conference session with about 3000 delegates, and they've had the, at the conference session, they've had the likes of, is it was, or Oz, let's Go For Oz.

Co-founder of, of, of Apple. They've had the co-founder of, of Netflix on previously. The, these, big events, they tend to like to get a, a big name in, to, to, to draw in. So I'm very fortuitous that there's three, 4,000 people. I'm right down at the front on my knees with my, my big, press level, camera taking, photography and also my, my, my v video camera to get, get, sort of snapshots.

it's great as a photographer because you're seeing. as being, relatively invisible, which means you could just drift in and out and, and do you pick up so many conversations, Susan, just by 'cause No, no one's really. And then when the actual show, happens, I, so I've got all this sort of in intelligence, I've picked up for the first bit of the show, and then I'll go up to the, the Mexican avocado stand and find someone who looks vaguely important.

Say hello, sir. Hello madam. my name is Max. I'm being commissioned by by the show. can we have a conversation about your amazing, avocados? yes, max. So I then get my camera up. So sir, you know what I'm gonna say? What's your favorite fresh produce? Well, max is avocados. Why avocados? And off we go.

And we do it within 5, 5, 10 minutes and, and quite often, I'll get them to hold the camera. And they find themselves talking direct to camera about how. They love Mexican avocados, and I'm behind them with my cameras, my photography cameras take taking pictures and it's great.

I do about two, two dozen of these over 2, 2, 3 days, the interviews. and then we, we promote 'em out. We promote 'em out on LinkedIn and, and, and YouTube and and Facebook and, and the whole thing garners a hundred, 150,000 views and they're trade. U YouTube is, is, is, is great, but I'm, I'm always, not convinced of the, of the audience of that whilst love it.

Although that LinkedIn it is trade. And, and these people, love it because, you, you know what most corporate videos are like, it's, they're very formal. But then you, you got me, eclectic me turn, turning up and they just, they, they, we, we get a really human, authentic side, outta them.

And combined with the photography, it, it works very well. So yes, I, I, I, I'm very blessed to do, events like that and I have a great relationship with that team, the International Fresh Produce Association, 'cause they're, they're a force for good. They're, they're promoting, fresh produce and horticulture and agriculture, globally.

And they've all got really white teeth.

[00:35:18] **Susan:** Of course they do. Of course they do. And there's so much in that Max because the way you spoke there and you said, and they actually pay me. I always find that the people who love what they're doing are almost surprised when they're getting paid for doing it. And I think that's part of what you are showing.





Perhaps with the people you interview as well when you meet them because they love what they're doing, the avocado farmer or whoever. And the important point you made as well about conversation, because that was one of the things I noticed about being stalk global, which is this the global side of what you talk about and it's the create the conversation and not be part of

[00:35:59] **Max:** the conversation. Yeah. So what's the, what's the other terminology? Susan Ev. Everyone goes left. Go. Right. I think I probably, it's, it's also helped with recruitment. 'cause I've interviewed thousands of people. So I'm the worst dinner party, guest to ever have because I will get, find out everything about everyone and, no one will find out anything about me.

'cause I, I don't really like talking about myself. but having that skillset to be able, able to go into. A farm in Swaziland, and just rock up on a motorbike. they know I'm coming, but, and, and say, this is amazing. Tell us about your farm. Hold my hand, let's go.

And you just get the best, best out outta them. 'cause again, it's all about being, hu human and, and authentic. But yeah, as, as you say, if you can find, I suppose that's a lesser for all of us, isn't it, Susan? If you can find a job that, that, if you can find a hobby that you love, and crikey, someone's very, very, happy to pay you for that, for that skill set.

Is, happy days. And if you could hopefully do a little bit of good along, along the way, it's even better even.

[00:36:55] **Susan:** And, and the point about human, I mean, that's what it comes down to, max, isn't it? It's no matter where you go and who you meet in the world, if you can connect on that human level you're in.

[00:37:08] **Max:** a lot of people were worried about us doing our, our trip through, a Africa because they, they, they thought we're all gonna die. and all we came across was smiles all the way through. Just, just two quick, quick, an anecdotes. When we were in Ghana, we were just coming in.

It was the, the presidential elections coming up and my, myself and my writing buddy, we were a bit silly. There was a VIP. but bunch of, four by fours and they're moving quite slowly. So we overtook them and then all the blue lights came, came up and, turned out we'd overtaken the vice presidential nominee and they thought we were, battens.

'cause we had British number plates and all the rest of it didn't know who we were. So we got pulled over and, and this vice president wound down the window and said, search them. Search them. Rightly so. 'cause we, we'd done it wrong. They sped off and they left us with the three, three big, SUVs full of, armed troops.

And so the chap said, who are you? Where are you going from? And, we must inspect your I luggage. in the morning we'd had to move out of our digs, pre pretty quickly and without, without crossing a line here. We pulled all of our little, little stuff that we had into our panas, and I put my dirty underwear in the, in the top of my, my pania.





Then, then locked it up. So what happens? He said, I need to inspect your luggage. I need to search and make sure you have nothing. So I opened it up. The first thing he says, says is my dirty underwear. And he says, you must go. We don't have anything to do with you. And then the, the other one was in, Zimbabwe.

We were on, on, east Coast of Africa. we were informed that we will get stopped a lot by, by the police. And it's not that they're, they're corrupt. They've got no money. So they're always looking to, to charge bits of money for, for speeding, as, as, as they would say to. So we, we got stopped about a dozen times and it'd be the same thing.

they'd go, where have you, so we're in Zimbabwe. He goes, where have you come from? we have come from London, from London. Where you going? Cape Town. Cape Town. You must go. And so that happened a dozen times. So again, it's, I think it's all about having a lovely positive attitude to life and all, all we found all the way through was smiles and made friends for life.

[00:39:05] **Susan:** So suppose where am I going with this one? If, if, I will say this to, to the kids. If just set yourself a challenge, people do walk up, Mount Mount Kenya. Is it Mount Kenya? Ro.

[00:39:15] **Max:** Thank you. Well done. or bike from, Cambodia to, to Vietnam or do something like, like that. It's such a good thing to do.

I, I went a bit extreme and did the theca thing, I think about Myca trip every single day. It, it, it was just gorgeous and I in contact with some amazing people. So that would be my, my challenge to everyone listening in, what is your challenge?

comfort begins at the end of your comfort zone. when I was in, I'll shut up in a minute, Susan. when, when I was in Morocco, on our trip, we stayed with an amazing, great family and above, the, the, kitchen on the door out. It's, they put it up there for their three kids.

I forgot what, it's all about am ambition. That if, just don't get stuck in that nine, nine to five, if you are as you are now, where are you gonna be in five years time? Whilst if you do something fundamentally that's gonna really push you and really challenge you, imagine where you're gonna be in five, five years time is is something I'm a huge endorser of.

[00:40:07] **Susan:** Absolutely. And I think as well, the thing that is coming up for me as you're speaking is so many people fear networking when actually all it is is, you could say it was a networking trip through Africa. I mean it wasn't, but it is because it's all about connecting on a human level. That's all it is.

And we, we have that within us.

[00:40:27] **Max:** And, and Susan, what I, I was surprised at is that when you do something like, like that, and I'm, I'm not unique in, in any of this, but when I asked people, they said, oh, crikey, yes, and you must meet Brian and you've gotta meet Sheila and you gotta meet Florence. because they could, see that we were doing something that that was of, of, of interest.



So, so absolutely just, just keep, keep pushing yourself. It's, you, you'll never know what will happen.

[00:40:49] **Susan:** You'll never know what will happen, max, if people would like to know more about you. Your recruitment, Beanstalk Global, what's the best way to get in

[00:41:01] **Max:** well, you and I are on the front page of GQ Magazine for the December issue. So, and then on the inside.

[00:41:06] **Susan:** Excellent.

[00:41:07] **Max:** if you go online and look up Bean Stalk Global, there's the, there's, there's, there's enough videos. Luckily not so much of me, I'm just ha holding the camera.

there's enough collateral out there so that people will be able to, to, to, to trace us down.

[00:41:20] **Susan:** And, and find out more about how to connect and reconnect with where your

[00:41:25] **Max:** Yeah. And, and, and, and likewise, I'm only a small cog in, in this and, and I'm, I'm developing this, this thought about trying, trying to do good, but we can't all do it alone. if we can all collectively hold, hold hands and all just have this, this thought that if we can, Ann, if we, can do good.

And I do think a lot of that. Max is holding up an apple and a banana Again, for those on the podcast, if we can do good in this, this world, I do think that there's a lot to be said for farming and, and fresh produce because it's feeding the world in a sustainable manner and it's, and it's doing good.

And there's nothing wrong with being an accountant, but if you want a fulfilling journey in life, get involved with, with, with farming, horticulture, fresh produce.

[00:42:05] **Susan:** Well, none of the audience are accountants anyway at this stage. We've moved so far. Life has gone so far beyond the numbers now that they've been left behind, but there might be a few. Anyway, thank you so much, max for your time today. It's been a journey.

[00:42:21] **Max:** It has and I'm off to walk three Labradors and wish me luck.

[00:42:25] **Susan:** Good luck.

