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**HIGHLAND AG
SOLUTIONS**
Helping Farmers Reach
Their Full Potential

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THE NEED TO START THINKING LIKE AN Island



By Jim Frankowiak



The headline may prompt some questions, but Dr. Brooke Hansen, an anthropologist specializing in food and agriculture with the Patel College of Global Sustainability at the University of South Florida, can quickly provide clarification based upon her varied activities, educational initiatives and experiences.

Initially a "Jersey girl," Hansen and her family moved from New Jersey to Southport Island off the coast of Maine, where the family focus was on the boating industry. When it came time for college, Hansen opted for a warmer climate and enrolled at the University of South Florida where she earned her undergraduate degree, majoring in psychology and anthropology. She then pursued her doctorate in cultural and medical anthropology at the University of Arizona – Tucson.

Dr. Hansen spent the next 20 years at Ithaca College in New York where she met her husband, Jack Rossen, an archaeologist and Scientific Recovery Expert for History Flight, who spends regular periods of time locating and returning the remains of World War II soldiers from the Battle of Tarawa in the Republic of Kiribati. Hansen and Rossen have a daughter, Sierra, also an alumna of USF with a Masters in Counseling and now working with BayCare Health System.

A sustainability focused anthropologist with specialties in tourism, food, farming, indigenous studies, transcultural health care, service learning and women's studies, she ran a 70-acre organic farm and cultural heritage center in central New York while at Ithaca College with the Haudenosaunee, a Native American Confederacy, involving members of the Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga and Seneca tribes, and local community members. At the Cayuga SHARE Farm, she directed student interns, taught service learning classes and installed and maintained a Native American medical herb garden. Dr. Hansen also collaborated on the development of cultural tours of the area as part of student orientation to the Cayuga homeland.

"For 15 years during my time at Ithaca College, we organized sustainability and service learning classes in Hawaii," she said. "Those winter field classes focused on the connections between cultural revitalization, island food security, heritage

interpretation and the economic engine and environmental impact of tourism." This ultimately led to a decision by Hansen and her husband to relocate to Hawaii in 2016 where she became associated with the College of Agriculture at the University of Hawaii at Hilo, teaching courses in agriculture, food tourism, spice agribusiness and women in farming. She also became involved with local farmers and the challenges they faced, leading to initiatives in agritourism within the serious regulatory confines of the islands.

The volcanic eruption and hurricanes that beset the islands in 2017 made Hansen aware of the need for all to start thing like an island when those disasters "made us realize the islands had food sufficient for just four days and were heavily reliant upon shipments coming in by boat," she said. Even Governor Ige of Hawaii initiated numerous programs to focus on local food production to increase food security in the state. The disruptive weather and volcanic events, coupled with a financial crisis at the university, prompted Hansen and her husband to return to the U.S., relocating to the Tampa Bay area and becoming affiliated with the Patel College at USF.

"I teach in the areas of sustainable tourism with a focus on agritourism and food systems," she said. Hansen is a member of the Tampa Bay Network to End Hunger, the Urban Food Sovereignty Group, Florida Agritourism Association, Florida Food Policy Council and the new USF Center for the Advancement of Food Security and Healthy Communities. She is also a member of the Hillsborough County Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee and has served on the Advisory Board of Tampa Bay Farm to School, helping to build school gardens in Hillsborough County.

"I am currently working with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services new farm to school state outreach coordinator Andrew Smith to do a census of school gardens across the state," she noted. "I have suggested a pilot program here in Hillsborough County as a starting point."

"I am passionate about increasing local food production, especially through systems and circular thinking to recapture food waste, compost, and grow food," said Hansen. "One thing



landowners or backyard gardeners. "No matter where you live in Florida, there are ways to grow food," she said.

To that end, Dr. Hansen is working on a book entitled, "Staking Our Ground: Forging Local Food Sovereignty in America".

If you would like to "start thinking like an island," contact Dr. Hansen via email: kbhansen@usf.edu for suggestions on how to begin.

I have noticed along with others who have relocated here is the absence of fresh markets like we were used to in other places, particularly in the northeast and upper Midwest. I think there's potential for markets that offer 100 percent Florida grown products, including new specialty spice crops including vanilla, clove and allspice."

"All farmers, regardless of size, ought to be involved in this so we never have to worry about where our food is coming from like they do in the islands," she said. "This self-sufficiency is a matter of national security, in addition to sustainability. Frankly, I see no reason why every resident of Florida should not be involved in this quest to reduce any vulnerability that we may have in terms of food shortages." And, she does not limit that participation to

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