

GE Alfalfa Deregulation Defies Common Sense

by Mary Fund

In late January, USDA caved to industry pressure and approved genetically modified Roundup Ready alfalfa for public sale without any federal restrictions to prevent contamination of the nation's non-GMO and organic alfalfa seed and crops. USDA's decision met with quick outrage from conventional non-GMO producers and organic growers and consumers. Citing the many risks to organic and non-GMO conventional farmers that USDA acknowledged in its own environmental impact statement, the Center for Food Security announced an immediate legal challenge.

Opponents have long argued that GM alfalfa poses a serious threat to non-GMO and organic alfalfa due to the unique properties of the plant. Alfalfa is a basic feed for all organic livestock, and the most common legume in organic crop rotations in the northern states. Pollinated by bees and other insects that travel great distances, cross pollination with non-GM alfalfa and wild alfalfa is a very real threat. The decision appears to completely ignore this potential for cross pollination and contamination of non-GMO and organic crops, and the subsequent damage to markets demanding non-GMO products.

It also ignores the growing evidence of Roundup resistant "superweeds" that are appearing in fields across the country that have received years of

applications of the herbicide.

Co-existence? USDA's decision to deregulate appeared especially harsh to non-GMO and organic farmers because in December USDA's Secretary Vilsack had announced they were working to find a compromise. USDA, he stated, would approve GM alfalfa under either complete deregulation, or partial deregulation with restrictions on where and how the crop could be grown as a way to protect non-GMO alfalfa and organic alfalfa. As late as a week before the final decision, Vilsack indicated USDA would choose partial regulation.

Called "co-existence", the proposal being discussed was not popular among non-GMO and organic growers because most agree that the GM traits can't be contained in alfalfa. But co-existence did attempt to address concerns about cross-contamination by requiring a five-mile buffer between GM alfalfa plantings and non-GMO or organic.

Organic organizations argued for a contamination compensation fund for what they saw as the inevitable contamination of their crops and seed and the resulting damage to their non-GMO markets. But industry firmly opposed a compensation fund, which many see as tantamount to admitting that they could not contain the impact

of their product, and that they did not care if they did.

Speculation is that the Obama White House joined a long line of administrations supporting the biotechnology industry above the needs and welfare of farmers and the environment. The Wall Street Journal reported that the Obama Administration "abandoned the proposal to restrict planting of genetically engineered alfalfa, only the latest proposal shelved as part of the administration's review of 'burdensome' regulation."

Burden is on the farmers. In a statement of principles prior to the decision, the National Organic Coalition stated, "Farmers who seek to avoid GMOs must not continue to be solely responsible for contamination prevention and clean-up and/or be forced to give up growing certain crops." But the decision to deregulate puts the burden of preventing contamination firmly on the backs of organic and non-GMO producers. USDA has not provided evidence of proven methods for preventing contamination.

Not many farmers can afford to sue the corporate manufacturer if their crops become contaminated, which is Big Ag giant Monsanto.

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Rural Papers

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Small Farmer Commentary

Building Resilience at the Grassroots

by Mary Fund

Uncertainty seems to be the common theme in our lives these days. Despite the recent excitement about an increase in the number of jobs created nationally, a slight drop in unemployment rates, and polls claiming more people feel optimistic about our economic future, most people I know are skeptical at best. Most of us simply don't count on national polls and talking heads for an accurate description of what we see around us. And we certainly don't count on them to tell us what to do in terms of defining our own sense of security.

From my vantage point here in rural Kansas, what we see coming at us is not pretty. We see a state budget (like many other states around the country) in crisis with a \$300-\$500 million shortfall for the remainder of the fiscal year we are in, not to mention the next year. Locally, this means cuts to schools, possible closings and a new round of consolidations. It means cuts to other basic programs and services. At the federal level, these cuts are only amplified as are their impacts.

We see people hanging onto jobs they have and a shortage of other job options. We see rising prices at the grocery stores and rapidly rising gas and fuel prices. Young would-be farmers watch land prices rise far beyond their reach and beyond the capacity of the land to pay for itself, even with high commodity prices. We see fewer high school graduates able to afford college or technical schools. And we see college graduates unable to find jobs in their new areas of expertise.

But as the old Chinese adage goes, from crisis there is opportunity.

Increasingly, people are asking just what can they do – in terms of creating a business or filling a need? In other words, if the larger more abstract economy of Wall Street and the role of government fluctuates or pulls away, what can we do that will

meet our needs? Necessity has always been the mother of invention, and that may be what we need a good dose of now to create an economy based on use value and not speculation.

Not to downplay the importance of fighting for the programs and protections government is supposed to provide in terms of offering a level playing field, so that small farmers and businesses have a fair chance against giant corporations, who can never actually have our best interests at heart, but we also need to find ways to support each other as we struggle to create communities for our families and neighbors.

Building resiliency at the grassroots is what happens when we begin asking what is important to our communities, our farms, and the quality of our lives. What kinds of enterprises or collaborative efforts can we promote or adopt to meet our needs here in this place we have chosen to live?

The trend toward ever larger farms and giant corporations controlling our food supply is not only unsustainable, but it is not what people want. A food system that consolidates inputs, homogenizes the landscape and creates dependencies on the very corporations and technologies that created it, provides neither security in today's world, nor good places to live and raise our families.

Small though they may be, KRC sees signs of farmers, consumers and communities beginning to take steps toward a more sustainable future. For instance, more farmers and ranchers are showing interest in an integrated approach to crops and livestock production with reliance on cover crops and legumes for nutrients, forages, and erosion control, and exploring alternative markets for crops and livestock.

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Briefs

Congressional Budget Cuts

Target Farm Programs

KRC joined 154 grassroots organizations sending a letter to the U.S. Senate in opposition to a government funding bill that would cut more than \$60 billion from the federal budget for the last half of fiscal year 2011. The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) circulated the letter.

The groups argue that the bill (H.R.1) unfairly singles out programs that serve sustainable, organic, beginning and minority farmers, and that the disproportionate cuts to agriculture and rural America are reckless and unjust.

The bill slashes a disproportional amount from the agriculture budget (22%) relative to other budget functions, and the House is also proposing deep cuts to conservation and renewable energy funding provided by the 2008 Farm Bill. A combined \$500 million would be cut under the House bill from the Conservation Stewardship Program the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), and the Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP).

However, no cuts were proposed for agriculture's two biggest line items—commodity payments and crop insurance—while conservation, renew-

able energy, loans for beginning and minority farmers, and feeding programs for low income families took big hits.

The letter urged the Senate to reject this short-term approach that disproportionately targets a particular piece of government spending and threatens to reverse economic recovery in rural communities.

For more up to date information on agricultural budget cuts and farm bill programs, go to NSAC's website at: <www.sustainableagriculturecoalition.org>. □

GE Alfalfa...

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And in case that is not enough, Monsanto's Technology Stewardship Agreement, that each farmer buying their seed must sign, makes it crystal clear that the farmer is the one held liable, not Monsanto: "In no event shall Monsanto or any seller be liable for any incidental, consequential, special or punitive damages." So farmers carry the burden either way.

Solution for a non-existent problem – or creation of a new one? But you might ask, is there a real need for Roundup Ready alfalfa? The biotechnology industry argues that commercial alfalfa growers complain of weed problems or thin stands. Weeds in Roundup resistant alfalfa could be sprayed without damaging the alfalfa. But any good farmer knows that the best answer to the problem is to implement a vigorous crop rotation.

Alfalfa is a perennial crop, but the longer it is kept in place, the more problems there are. So the solution is to plant a new crop every few years,

use the old field for corn or soybeans, and take advantage of the fertility and nutrients the alfalfa provides. The introduction of GM alfalfa simply allows poor management based on a monocrop system, and seals the biotech seed industry's hold on the top four commodity crops—corn, soybeans, cotton and alfalfa.

Furthermore, the development of "superweeds" resistant to Roundup after years of exposure is well-known and is creating a whole new set of problems. Critics argue that USDA failed to analyze this in their approval of GM alfalfa. Recent stories describe farmers undoing years of conservation tillage work with heavy tillage—all due to super weeds no longer responding to Roundup—or returning to the use of more toxic herbicides. There is also emerging news from long-term research that using the same seed and pesticides on millions of acres of farmland could be creating unforeseen damage to soil quality and plants.

Destroying organic markets. The organic sector has been a profitable

part of a diverse U.S. agricultural economy—a 26 billion dollar a year industry that helps keep almost 15,000 family farms operating. Double-digit annual growth has been the norm for nine of the past ten years. "Preserving market and farmer choice and agricultural diversity are central to USDA's mission and the future of rural American livelihoods," stated Christine Bushway, Executive Director and CEO of the Organic Trade Association. "This failure to do so will make it increasingly difficult to meet the growing demand for U.S. organic crops."

Legal challenges. The Center for Food Safety, the non-profit group who fought the earlier legal battles on GE alfalfa, vows to seek a court order immediately reversing and voiding USDA's approval of Roundup Ready alfalfa. "We will be back in court," Andrew Kimbrell, CFS Executive Director stated, "representing the interest of farmers, preservation of the environment and consumer choice." □

Improving Winter Management Can Improve Herd and Calf Health

Clean Calving Environment Directly Linked to Calf Health

by Mary Howell

Hanover, Ks. - Improving winter-feeding conditions, reducing winter-feed costs, and maintaining herd health, especially at calving time, were topics at the recent "Improving Livestock Production Workshop" in Hanover. Thirty-nine people gathered at the Kloppenberg Community Center for the workshop sponsored by the Tuttle Creek WRAPS to learn more about how to improve herd productivity and profitability.

Dr. Larry Hollis, Kansas State University Extension Beef Veterinarian, focused on winter feed, feeding site management, and ways to improve herd health at calving time. "Producers need to keep their cows in good shape during the winter prior to calving to give the calf the best chance at arriving healthy and performing well throughout its life cycle," he explained. Good quality hay should be eaten and poor quality hay should be used for something else.

Ideally hay is best fed unrolled on a clean area daily in the amount that the cows need and will clean up in 2-3 hours, Hollis told the group. The hay should be unrolled on standing dormant leftover grass. The cows will eat all of the unrolled hay and the dormant grass, rest and then scatter the manure when they move to another location or go to drink. "This can keep the manure, nutrients and bacteria out of the creek; it's healthier for the calves, and good for the watershed, but," he acknowledged, "it is more work for the farmer versus

dropping bales in round bale feeders close to the homestead."

"Round bale feeders are a blessing or a curse depending how they are managed," Hollis warned. The design, spacing and angle of bars determine how much feed is wasted using hay rings. In a study done in Michigan the most efficient hay feeder was a round feeder with an upper cone holding the bale so that hay pulled out was then caught in the lower ring and consumed; the next most efficient was a ring that was solid on both the bottom and upper rim with angled middle bars. A trailer with angle bars and bunks to catch the loose falling hay was third, with the rounded cradle type feeder being the most wasteful.

The number one cause of calf mortality is diarrhea or calf scours. Contributing pathogens are virus, bacteria, salmonella, clostridium, and cryptosporidium. Within every herd are carrier cows that transmit these viral diseases every year. Newborn calves must receive an adequate amount of colostrum within twelve hours of birth to receive the protection needed to fight off disease until they start building their own immunity.

Hollis explained that humans



Dale Kirkham spoke about low-cost management based options to improve pasture and manage livestock at the recent Hanover meeting.

transfer antibodies to the embryo through the placenta as well as in the colostrum, but in cattle there is no cross-placental transfer of antibodies. An 80# calf needs to consume one gallon of colostrum, ideally having its first drink within two hours of its birth. Within 24 hours the gut wall closes, and then, no more can be absorbed. If the calf is slow to nurse, the caretaker should either milk the cow or use alternative colostrum to feed the calf.

Hollis noted that the best colostrum is from the cows within the operation because they produce the antibodies from that farm. *Continued on page 11*

State Policy Commentary

Open Letter to the New Governor of Kansas:

Looking for Economic Opportunities

by Paul Johnson

Congratulations Governor Brownback on your election as the 46th Governor of the great state of Kansas. In the midst of a very serious economic recession and the highest unemployment in decades, Kansas should use this situation to reassess certain fundamental infrastructures in our state – food, energy and affordable housing.

In remembrance of our 150 years of pioneering self-reliance, Kansas can rediscover an economic independence that will boost our economy, create more local employment and leave us less vulnerable to future food and fuel price hikes. The State of Kansas has developed and funded several 10-year transportation plans but that model has not been applied to our systems of food, energy and affordable housing. You could provide such guidance.

Governor, as you know, Kansas has tremendous agricultural resources to be a diversified producer of many food products. Unfortunately this diversification has significantly declined over the last 100 years. In 1910, Kansas had over 140,000 acres in fruits and vegetables but today that acreage has declined to just over 6,700. Kansans consume \$525 million annually in fruits and vegetables but 97% of that total - \$509 million – is imported while only 3% - \$16 million – is grown locally. Comparable data could be compiled for the opportunities in meeting the growing consumer demand for local, natural meats by the remaining 71 small meat processors in

Kansas. Kansas should establish some local food goals to capture - say 10% - of the \$5.6 billion spent annually on food in our state.

Governor – the energy picture has dramatically changed in Kansas over the last 60 years. The Hugoton natural gas field was the third largest gas field in the world. Kansas built an economy and a housing stock around this very inexpensive energy supply. Kansas was a major natural gas energy exporter. In 1997, Kansas turned the corner and became an energy importer. Kansans now import over \$2.5 billion a year. Every unnecessary dollar spent on Wyoming coal is unavailable to reverberate in our own economy.

Also, Kansas has been virtually last among the 50 states in offering utility-based or governmental energy efficiency programs. Kansas has 948,000 occupied housing units and a best guess is that only one-fourth of these units are adequately insulated. Utilities are guaranteed monopolies serving defined areas. Energy utility law should clearly mandate that energy conservation is equal to energy production to provide the most cost-effective energy service. Your first appointment to the Kansas Corporation Commission can send this ‘balanced energy’ policy signal.

Governor – in your State of the State address, you listed a ‘decrease in the percentage of Kansas’ children who live in poverty’ as one of your five measurable goals. One serious

problem for many low-income families is the availability of affordable housing. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Kansas has 948,000 occupied housing units with 302,000 being rentals (32%) and 646,000 being owner-occupied (68%). 4 out of 10 renters are cost burdened paying over 30% of their income for housing expenses while 1 in 6 homeowners are paying over 30%. In April, the housing data from the 2010 U.S. Census will be available to assess the cost of housing in Kansas.

Kansas needs a coordinated 10- year private-public housing plan that identifies the needs for new construction, rehabilitation options and a dedicated funding source - similar to the 10-year transportation plans. This plan must be coordinated between the 7 entitlement urban areas and the balance of the state of small cities and rural areas. Your ‘Rural Opportunity Zones’ investment plan will need an affordable housing component to grow.

For whatever else happens with our economy, Kansans will always eat, will always pay utility bills and will always have to pay their housing costs. Where we can capture those food dollars locally and lessen utility bill and housing expenses, Kansas will be a wealthier and more secure state for the future. What a tremendous legacy you could leave for our blessed state. □

Paul Johnson is currently KRC's Legislative and Policy Watch Project Coordinator monitoring the State Legislature.

Research Shows Problems Emerging with Roundup

The Land Stewardship Project, a sister sustainable agriculture organization in Minnesota, runs a regular feature in their newsletter called “Myth Buster Box” an ongoing series of ag myths and ways of deflating them”. In their summer 2010 issue they tackled the myth that Roundup is not a long-term environmental threat and provided research findings debunking that myth.

Recently more controversy has arose as Don Huber, Purdue University emeritus professor, wrote USDA asking them to stop the deregulation of Roundup Ready crops, particularly GE alfalfa. He expressed concern over a newly discovered organism that may have the potential to cause infertility and spontaneous abortion in farm animals, which may also raise concerns about human health. Huber believes the appearance and prevalence of the unnamed organism may be related to the nation’s over reliance on the weed killer known as Roundup and/or to something about the genetically engineered Roundup-Ready crops.

Response from academia and industry was swift faulting Huber’s work using the usual “bad science” claims, which one would expect regarding such a widely used and profitable product. But one thing is clear: all questions about the long-term impact of Roundup Ready and glyphosate have NOT been answered, and more research needs to be done. The question is whether industry can produce unbiased research, and whether public dollars will continue to be able to fund research.

Mary Fund, Editor

The following article from the Land Stewardship Project is reprinted with permission.

Much of the basis for society’s (and government’s) acceptance of Roundup Ready GMO technology centers around the belief that the herbicide glyphosate (a linchpin in the Roundup Ready system) is safer for the environment than many of the pre-emergent herbicides it was supposed to replace. This is based on the idea that its greater volatility makes it less likely to hang around long enough to create environmental and human health problems. So, goes the argument, applying more glyphosate is less of a threat than applying less atrazine, for example.

But there are signs the herbicide glyphosate is threatening the soil’s long-term ability to create a healthy growing medium for crops. That’s not just a regrettable side effect that puts a bit of a tarnish on a silver bullet—it’s a potential bombshell that changes everything farmers (and environmentalists) have been led to believe about this ubiquitous herbicide.

Don Huber, a Purdue University emeritus professor of plant pathology, has recently been making minor waves within the world of no-till/minimal till agriculture by highlighting glyphosate’s ability to make the growing environment for plants an unhealthy one. In a summary paper of the latest research in this area, Huber documents how glyphosate has significantly changed nutrient availability and plant efficiency. Some of these changes are brought about by glyphosate’s direct toxicity, while others are caused indirectly through changes in soil organisms.

It seems one of the indirect effects of glyphosate is that it ties up or “chelates” the micronutrients necessary for healthy plants. For example, it can consistently inhibit plant enzymes responsible for disease resistance. It does this to plants engineered to resist being killed outright by glyphosate, as well as their non-GMO counterparts.

Huber’s 13-page paper has this chilling conclusion: “The introduction of such an intense mineral chelator as glyphosate into the food chain through accumulation in feed, forage, and food, and root exudation into ground water, could pose significant health concerns for animals and humans, and needs further evaluation.”

Huber’s warnings are being taken seriously by a sector of the farming community that benefits greatly from Roundup Ready technology: no-till and minimum-till farmers. In an effort to reduce tillage-based weed control as much as possible, these types of crop producers have adopted glyphosate-resistant plant technology in droves.

But in an article tellingly called “Are We Shooting Ourselves In the Foot With a Silver Bullet?”, the March 2010 issue of No-Till Farmer magazine quoted Huber and other researchers who are quite concerned that Roundup Ready is becoming

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a detriment to crop farming. It turns out farmers and crop consultants are reporting more incidents of entire fields showing signs of disease and stress in general. Crops may not die outright, but will do things like mature earlier, turning yellow and losing the bright green coloring that shows they are still adding to their final yield.

“For the last 2 to 3 years, corn plants have been losing color about 7 to 10 days earlier each year,” Iowa crop consultant Bon Streit told No-Till Farmer. “In 2009, we often saw corn yellowing up by August 1 even where nitrogen deficiencies weren’t the problem.”

Up until now, such signs of stress were automatically blamed on weather or some other “outside” culprit. But Huber and others are now saying no-till and minimum-till farmers need to look at their own spray tanks as a source of problems. Perhaps the most troubling point that Huber makes is that contrary to conventional wisdom, glyphosate is not a temporary presence in the environment. It can actually stick around in the soil for long periods of time.

“We see a buildup of glyphosate in the soil in part from glyphosate-tolerant crops and weeds,” Huber told No Till Farmer. “When we add phosphate fertilizers for corn, soybeans or wheat, for example, the the phosphorus reacts to release the glyphosate back into the soil, where it’s available for uptake by plants.”

And that build-up, along with the negative results of that build-up, gets worse over the years. One German study found that wheat planted in soil where glyphosate had been used for a decade yielded 46 percent less than wheat planted where glyphosate had been used for only a year. And since no-tillers disturb the soil less, they are at greater risk of seeing the herbicide accumulate to levels where crops will be negatively affected.

As Huber’s paper makes clear, we need research on the long-term effects of GMOs now more than ever. And we’re upping the ante by the minute. □

- To read Don Huber’s summary paper on glyphosate, see: www.geertsonseed-farms.com/pdfs/ag_chemicalandcropnutrientinteractions.pdf.
- The article, “Are We Shooting Ourselves In the Foot With a Silver Bullet?”, is in the March 2010 issue of No-Till Farmer: www.no-tillfarmer.com.

Myth Busters

The Land Stewardship Letter’s popular Myth Buster series is available on their website at:

www.landstewardshipproject.org/resources-myth.html.

For paper copies, contact Brian DeVore at 612-722-6377 or bdevore@landstewardshipproject.org

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Designing systems based on these lessens dependence on expensive outside inputs and opens up new options for marketing.

While no one argues that all food can be produced locally, growing interest in strengthening local food production with hoophouses and development of farmers markets and direct marketing to institutions and food services is a step toward greater food security. It also provides an entry point for young farmers, and more business opportunities for value added or related food enterprises.

The number of communities developing economic development plans based on existing talents and skills of stakeholders, and importing the skills and services needed (medical, manufacturing, communications, energy etc.) is growing. Building a local food system is often a part of these plans.

In Kansas, the push to involve watershed stakeholders in decisions about water quality protection locally has generated discussion about less expensive management based options available to a wide range of producers. Connecting what happens on the individual farm to broader watershed goals protects the resource base critical to building local communities and the local economy.

These are small steps to be sure, but they are all part of building resiliency into our local economies, and thus into the national economy. Debate should be focusing on how to do more of this. □

Our Local Food Program to Expand In Kansas

by Mercedes Taylor-Puckett

Whiting, Ks. The Kansas Rural Center was recently awarded a \$70,000 grant from the Kansas Department of Agriculture to expand the Our Local Food (OLF) Program. This program seeks to spur the development of community-based food systems by creating regional networks of local farms, farmers markets, food businesses, agricultural professionals, supportive organizations and businesses, as well as consumers who are committed to increasing the production and sales of fresh, local foods in Kansas.

KRC's OLF Program was launched in the Kaw River Valley in 2010. Counties comprising the Kaw River Valley Chapter include Atchison, Douglas, Geary, Jackson, Jefferson, Johnson, Leavenworth, Pottawatomie, Riley, Shawnee, Wabaunsee, and Wyandotte. The program enrolled 54 charter members in its first year- 37 farms, 7 farmers markets and 10 food businesses. With funding from the 2011 Specialty Crop Block Grant from the KDA, two additional chapters are launching in 2011.

The South Central Chapter (OLF-SC) encompasses Butler, Cowley, Harper, Harvey, Kingman, Reno, Sedgwick, and Sumner counties. Natalie Fullerton has been named OLF-SC Chapter Coordinator. (See page 9.) Kansas State Research and Extension (KSRE) Sedgwick County has joined as a collaborator and will sponsor a summer intern dedicated to local food system work.

The Twin Rivers Chapter (OLF-TR),

under the coordination of Tracey Graham (see page 9), covers Chase, Coffey, Greenwood, Lyon, Morris, and Osage counties. Building on the significant groundwork laid by the Emporia Area Local Food Network, such as the development of a community kitchen, the OLF-Twin River Chapter will expand to include broad representation from all aspects of its regional food system.



The chapter model was selected over a single statewide program because it is better able to address the opportunities and challenges of individual regions while fostering important community relationships.

Regional chapters are semi-autonomous but operate under OLF organizational structure which calls for each chapter to establish its own coordinator, steering and partner committees, and summer interns. Chapters will collaborate on overall Our Local Food Program efforts

through the leadership of OLF Program Director Mercedes Taylor-Puckett.

The Our Local Food Program label (see below) will be modified to reflect the name of each region. The label can be used by members to identify and promote food grown in that region. For example, a farmer can print out cards with the chapter label that can be used as product price cards at farmers markets on those items that have been raised in that region. Program stickers could also be placed on products like pies or jelly, if the primary ingredient was grown in the region. A restaurant could use the label for a menu item when it designates the farm from which the primary ingredient was sourced.

Regional OLF label shelf tags will enable retailers to highlight products from the area. This eye-catching label will assist consumers by providing a definition of local-within that region, making it easy to select choices that support local ag producers and the their regional economy.

The OLF website, launching in mid-May, will have information targeted to consumers, producers, food businesses and other groups such as economic development professionals. There will also be sections devoted to each chapter that offer a directory of farms, CSAs and farmers markets as well as food businesses that use or sell foods raised in each region.

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Local Food News



Natalie Fullerton brings her passion and enthusiasm for producing food and helping people live more sustainably to the Wichita area as OLF chapter coordinator.

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Meet Natalie Fullerton, S.C. Chapter OLF Coordinator

Natalie Fullerton grew up in northeast Nebraska where her work in the family garden was a great influence on her interests in food and agriculture today. After obtaining a B.S. in Horticulture at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, she jumped into the Master's program, where she worked as a graduate assistant through the Nebraska Rural Initiative. Her graduate project focused on the use of high tunnels in Nebraska, aiming to learn what resources producers needed to grow successfully in high tunnels.

The economics of being able to produce profitably while selling locally was a major focus of the project. Natalie worked with an agricultural economist at the university to help develop a set of budget sheets for producers wanting to manage the economics of growing in a high tunnel. Natalie's Masters Program was enhanced with a minor in community and regional planning, which added to the valuable local food aspects in her program. In May 2010 she received her MS. in Public Horticulture Administration.

After graduating and following her husband to Wichita, she has taken great interest in getting sustainable agriculture into the households of producers and consumers. Natalie believes local food is an integral aspect in the future health of our economy in Kansas and nation wide. Natalie is excited to be an important part of local food movement in Kansas. □

Meet Tracey Graham, Twin Rivers OLF Coordinator

Tracey Graham has served on the board of the Emporia Area Local Food Network since its inception in Fall of 2008, and has worked with many other enthusiastic lovers of local foods to promote the production, processing, preservation, and consumption of local foods. Her involvement with the Emporia Farmers Market evolved from market shopper, to board member, then vendor, then market manager, then back to vendor, over the past eleven years.

Her love of great, fresh, local food made up for her lack of agricultural experience (she grew up in suburban Los Angeles) and lack of preparation provided by her formal training (Ph.D. in Geology, University of New Mexico, 1997) in seeking out and implementing programs and processes that positioned the Emporia Market to ride the wave of growing interest in local foods. Founded in 1982, Emporia's market has more than doubled its annual sales over the past 10 years. This winter's expansion to year-round has positioned the market for continued exponential growth.

Tracey also enjoys her part time position as Program Assistant for the Lyon County K-State Research and Extension Family Nutrition Program, teaching elementary school students about the benefits of healthy diets. She is also an active volunteer with Emporia Main Street and Lyon County Extension Master Gardeners. □



Tracey Graham of Emporia is thrilled to have the opportunity to help grow the local food movement in the six county region of the Twin Rivers Chapter

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Local Food Systems News

OLF Expands...

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Chapter coordinators will also reach out to members and consumers through bi-weekly newsletters to keep them up to date on events and opportunities, highlight seasonal products and profile members.

With assistance from KSU's Dr. Rhonda Janke, chapters will develop preliminary food system reports this spring. (Visit KRC's website to download Dr. Janke's presentation from the November sustainable ag conference that covers the preliminary work on the food report she is creating for the Douglas County Food Policy Council < <http://www.kansasruralcenter.org/publications.html#CCC>>

OLF Coordinators will collect information on current agricultural production, processing and distribution capacity, and gather statistics on what might be required to meet a portion of a region's current consumption of various foods. The reports will also attempt to present a snapshot of the various channels local food currently moves through in each regional food system.

Farm Membership. The annual farm membership fee is \$25. If specialty crops (defined by USDA as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture) are produced, farms are eligible for complementary 2011 OLF membership through the KDA grant. Farms that only produce non-specialty crops, such as meat, dairy, and grains are not eligible for support from the grant and must submit the \$25 annual membership

fee. Each chapter is seeking additional program support, which may reduce membership fees.

Farm members of the OLF program will receive a range of services and individualized support from their Chapter Coordinator and Interns:

- * Placement of farm name and profile on the OLF website;

- * Identification of sales opportunities with OLF markets, restaurants, and institutions who are committed to buying local;

- * Highlighting of farm events and activities in a bimonthly OLF chapter newsletter that will be sent to interested consumers;

- * Feature stories about specific farms for the bimonthly OLF newsletter;

- * Opportunities for farms to directly interact with consumers;

- * TV, radio, internet, and print media about OLF and its members.

Business Membership. The business membership fee, normally \$100, is discounted 50% for OLF Charter Members. Charter Membership is \$50. Business members are eligible to receive the following support from chapter staff:

- * Placement of business name and profile on the OLF website;

- * Identification of OLF farmers who are interested in providing businesses with local food and specialty crops;

- * Ways to highlight the presence of local foods and specialty crops on your shelves or in your menus;

- * Feature stories about specific businesses for the bimonthly OLF-KRV newsletter;

- * Updates on business events and activities in the bimonthly OLF-KRV newsletter;

- * Design of opportunities for

businesses to directly interact with both farms and consumers.

Program participation also entitles members to an OLF banner or window cling, and access to a tool kit with the electronic version of the OLF chapter logo, point of sale and other materials.

Those interested in joining in the Our Local Food Program are encouraged to contact the Chapter Coordinator for their region (See below) . Membership information and applications will be available by the end of March.

This project is supported in part by the USDA Specialty Crop Grant Program, through a sub-grant from the Kansas Department of Agriculture, and by a grant by the USDA Risk Management Agency. □

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www.kawrivervalley.org

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Clean Water News

Livestock Management...

Continued from page 4

If there is a cow within the herd that gives much more colostrum than her calf needs, Hollis suggests milking her and freezing that colostrum to use for another calf later. The protection from colostrum lasts about nine weeks. Research has shown that calves receiving inadequate colostrum have decreased performance throughout their life cycle. When weaned they are more likely to get sick, more likely to die, and gain less weight than their counterparts.

Spreading cattle out over a larger area lessens the concentration of disease producing organisms that young calves are exposed to. It is critical to keep calves in a clean environment- the bigger the calving area and the cleaner the ground, the less the concentration of bad organisms. When the challenge level to the calf overwhelms the protection it got from the cow and the immunity it is able to produce on its own, diseases like scours break out.

Research in the Sand Hills of Nebraska has developed a successful calving system that keeps the newborn calves away from the older calves. This system requires eight different calving areas, fenced with gates and water. Each week, the pregnant cows are moved into the next cell away from the cows with calves. This happens each week with the cows with calves staying in the cell they calved in. By keeping all of the calves of the same birth week batched together the following happens: 1) Carrier cows that exist in each herd are more spread out; 2) Older calves are disease amplifiers; by leaving age groups together the immunity of the younger calves is less

compromised. 3) This system reduces and practically eliminates scours regardless of which organism is causing the outbreak. 4) The number of calves affected will be minimized.

“Feeding-site management can have a direct effect on newborn calf health.” Hollis concluded. “Pick the management option that works best for you. With calf scours organisms, ‘dilution is the solution to the pollution’.”

“Low-cost or no-cost” management options were the topic for Dale Kirkham, a cow-calf producer in Greenwood County as well as a Clean Water Farms-Field Organizer for the Kansas Rural Center. Kirkham challenged cattlemen in the audience to have their cattle working for them instead of the other way around. “Cattle have four legs, a mouth and rumen for a reason,” Dale told the audience. Cattle can move around the pasture to eat thus helping distribute the manure and nutrients. They do not need all of their feed hauled to them to perform well.

If pastures are managed properly in the summer, Kirkham pointed out, there will be dormant grass for use during the winter. Hay can be unrolled in a different area each day on standing grass reducing the negative impact of feeding in the same spot every day. By offering some additional protein, the cow’s nutritional needs are met.

Also, herd health is better when cattle are not confined in a small area for the winter. If cattle are fed the same time of day in the same place, they will soon be waiting at the gate for their daily handout. Owners can train them otherwise.

A safe source of water needs to be offered during the winter. “Ask

anyone who has ever had cattle drown from an ice break or needed to rescue cattle from icy water,” stated Kirkham. Storm conditions can prevent chopping ice, or snow can cover the pond and cattle break thru the ice before they realize.

By strategically placing salt and mineral, grazing distribution will improve, leading to improved range conditions. Pasture rotation allows the grass to rest; the grass plants become healthier and heal the land. During the summer cattle should be encouraged to stay out of ponds and streams to reduce loafing in fragile riparian areas. As cattle enter the streams and ponds they take sediment and bacteria into the water with them, thus lessening the life of the pond and damaging the banks. Research has shown that if off stream watering sites are offered to cattle, they will spend less time drinking and loafing in the riparian area. Performance will often improve when the cattle are offered an unlimited supply of good clean water to drink.

“Producers must play the hand that they are dealt,” Dale concluded. “Each of us needs to look at our operation, the decisions we make and the activities that we do. Are we making a positive impact or a negative one? We have the ability to make a difference!”

Barbara Donovan, Tuttle Creek WRAPS (Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy) Coordinator, presented a slide show educating the group about the Tuttle Creek Watershed being a top priority in the State of Kansas.

Continued on page 12

Clean Water News

Livestock Management...

Continued from page 11

WRAPS is a voluntary grass roots program working with local participants to build awareness while identifying remedies using Best Management Practices (BMPs.) The long term goals are to protect and restore water quality and storage. Additionally, WRAPS goals are to preserve and enhance wildlife habitat, control flooding, and protect the productivity of agricultural lands.

Tuttle Creek WRAPS Watershed, along with other state and federal conservation programs, has cost-share available to help producers adopt management practices to address water quality problems. Gary Satter, Executive Director of Glacial Hills RC & D, described programs with funding available for qualified livestock producers and cropland farmers.

Interested producers should contact their USDA Service Center for the Natural Resources Conservation Services & Conservation District. Washington Co. 785-325-2321 Ext.3
Marshall Co. 785-562-5343 Ext. 3
Riley Co. 785-776-7582 Ext. 3
Glacial Hills RC & D 785-945-6292
Barbara Donovan, Tuttle Creek WRAPS Coordinator, can be e-mailed at donovanmn@aol.com

Sponsors for the workshop were Tuttle Creek WRAPS Watershed, Glacial Hills RC & D, Kansas Rural Center, Marshall Co.Extension, and River Valley Extension. Partial funding was provided by Kansas Department of Health and Environment via U.S. EPA Non-point Funds. □

Energy News

Energy Opportunities Offered in Kansas

by Dan Nagengast

The Resourceful Kansas Program is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, with the goal of engaging communities throughout the state in making a fundamental shift toward a less energy intensive, more efficient economy. Partners in the project are the Riley county Public Works Department, GBA Architects and Engineers and Kansas State University.

The goal is to work with public institutions, like schools, municipalities, universities and non-profits to reduce energy consumption, increase efficiency, utilize Kansas' abundant wind and solar resources, and cultivate new economic opportunities.

The program will host eight seminars around the state over the next three years. Attendees will receive a customized energy assessment and a renewable energy review or feasibility study. This offers a great opportunity for Kansas institutions to assess their energy program, and explore the feasibility of wind, solar-thermal, solar PV, and ground source energy projects.

The first seminar was held on January 26 at the Riley County Public Works facility, which is a show place for renewable energy, conservation and efficiency projects. The campus features numerous projects such as natural lighting, super insulation on



buildings, four differently scaled wind turbines, Solar PV panels, solar hot water heating, solar PV lighting, and geothermal heat pumps. This farsighted facility is the ideal place to learn about the future of energy use and generation in Kansas.

Eighteen cities, schools, universities, regional utilities, counties, and zoos spent the day learning about the basics and advances in lighting, wind and solar power, geothermal heating and cooling, energy assessments, transportation energy and green construction, followed by a tour of the facility.

There are already 10 institutions enrolled for the April 27th round, so interested organizations should apply soon. Rounds 3 through 8 will take place from July, 2011 through Oct. 2012, each focusing on a different geographic area around the state.

For more information, or to apply, visit the website at www.resourcefulkansas.org. □

Resources and Events

April 2 Workshop: How to Build a High Tunnel

Learn how to build a high tunnel by helping to construct one! This workshop will be held Saturday, April 2 from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Dan and Mary Howell's Farmstead, located at 1723 Wildcat Road, about 7 miles southwest of Frankfort, Ks. Bring a lawn chair, cordless drill and dress for work. This is a day of hands-on construction!

The workshop will be led by Dan Nagengast, Executive Director of the Kansas Rural Center. K-State Research and Extension Vegetable & Fruit Crop Specialist Cary Rivard will discuss growing crops in a high tunnel during lunch.

Registration is free and lunch is provided, but you must pre-register by April 1. Call the Glacial Hills RC&D to pre-register at: (785) 945-6292.

Directions: Take Hwy 9 west out of Frankfort about 5 miles; turn left at 17th Road; take the first left onto Wildcat Road. The Howell's are located about 1/4 mile east.

The workshop is sponsored by the following organizations: Kansas Rural Center, K-State Research and Extension, K-State SARE and Glacial Hills RC&D. □

GAPS Information Session Set for March 15 in Lawrence

Do you have a game plan to minimize food safety hazards on your farm? GAPS, or Good Agricultural Practices, can help to ensure that your

fresh fruits and vegetables are being produced in the safest manner possible. Attend this one-hour informational session to gain an understanding of how the USDA GAPs Audit Verification program works and learn about additional training and resources available to producers.

The session will be held on Tuesday, March 15, at 7 p.m. at Dreher Family 4-H Building, Douglas County 4-H Fairgrounds, 2110 Harper St, Lawrence, KS.

Questions? Call Jennifer Smith, Douglas County Extension Agent, at 785-843-7058 □

Kansas City Food Circle's 13th Annual 'Eat Local' Farmers Expo

Kick off the spring season with the first harvests of the year! The Kansas City Food Circle's 13th annual "Eat Local! Expos" brings you local and organic produce, meats, eggs, seedlings and farmers market information. Learn about CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), pick up a free directory of local, organic producers and attend how-to workshops.

The expos will be on two successive Saturdays. Admission and parking are free.

Saturday, March 26, 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., at the Roger T. Sermon Community Center, Truman & Nolan Rd., Independence, MO; and Saturday, April 2, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.,

Shawnee Civic Center, 13817 Johnson Dr., Shawnee, KS

Go to www.kcfoodcircle.org for more information. □

Locavore on the Plains Symposium in Hesston March 19

Saturday March 19, the Dyck Arboretum of the Plains will host a Symposium featuring resources and speakers for local foods. Twenty south central Kansas producers and speakers will talk about their vegetable, dairy, meat, egg, honey, bread, and fruit operations and businesses. Presentations will also include community gardening, food preservation and marketing and distribution.

Presentations are generally ordered in the amount of energy that product requires for our consumption. A roundtable discussion will wrap up the day. Presentations are generally ordered in the amount of energy that the product requires for consumption. A roundtable discussion will wrap up the day.

The symposium will take place at the Dyck Arboretum at 177 West Hickory, Hesston, Kansas, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Cost for the full day for Arboretum members is \$35, and for non-members cost is \$45. Cost includes continental breakfast and lunch. Half day costs are \$15/\$20, plus \$7 for lunch.

Call 620-327-8127 to register. Or go to www.dyckarboretum.org/index.cfm?fusection=events.detail&eventID=163 for more information. □

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Calendar

Tuesday, March 15 - GAPs: Food Safety for Producers, 7 PM in Lawrence KS; Call Jennifer Smith, Douglas County Extension Agent, at 785-843-7058.

Saturday, March 19 - Symposium: Locavore on the Plains; 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., in Hesston KS. For more information or to register, contact the Dyck Arboretum at 620-327-8127 by Wednesday, March 16.

Saturday, March 26 - "Eat Local" Farm Expo 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in Independence, MO. Go to www.kcfoodcircle.org for more information.

Saturday, April 2, High Tunnel Construction Workshop at the Dan and Mary Howell Farm Frankfort, Ks. 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Call the Glacial

Hills RC&D to pre-register at: (785) 945-6292. See more at KRC website.

Saturday, April 2 - "Eat Local" Farm Expo 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in Shawnee, KS. Go to www.kcfoodcircle.org for more.

Wednesday, April 27 - Resourceful Kansas Seminar Manhattan, KS - Application deadline is March 16. For more information or to apply online, see: www.resourcefulkansas.org

Please check the KRC website for updated and more detailed calendar and announcement information on the above and for additional events at:

www.kansasruralcenter.org/calendar.

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