

Organic Farming Forum Set for November 13 in Salina, Ks.



Resources, information and networking opportunities for existing and beginning organic farmers, and conservation professionals, as well as anyone interested in learning more about organic farming, will be the focus of a day-long forum on organic agriculture on Tuesday, November 13, 2012. The “Organic Farming Forum: Resources, Research and Marketing Opportunities for Organic Agriculture in Kansas”, hosted by the Kansas Rural Center, will be held at the Quality Inn, Conference Room, 2110 West Crawford, Salina, Kansas from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

“Demand for organic grains surpasses the available supply nationwide,” states Mary Fund, workshop coordinator for the Kansas Rural Center, “which means there is opportunity for growers. Organic farming offers a way to reduce production costs, adopt a cropping system that offers multiple conservation benefits, and provides a premium in the market place. Like all agriculture, it is not without challenges, and the forum provides a chance to discuss those. The day will also provide an opportunity for conservation district personnel and others who work with organic farmers to learn more about organic agriculture.”

Keynote speaker will be Dr. Michel Cavigelli, lead scientist for USDA’s Farming Systems Research Project at Beltsville, MD. The major focus of the long-term field cropping systems study is to evaluate the sustainability of no-till, conventional till, and organic cropping systems by evaluating the agronomic performance, nutrient dynamics, and soil biological activity, and predicting long-term sustainability of cropping systems. Dr. Cavigelli has Kansas ties as in the 1980’s he was an intern at the Land Institute and also worked as an intern at the Kansas Rural Center where he completed case studies of five Kansas organic farms before going on to complete his graduate and PhD work.

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Agriculture and Health Summit Planned for November 16

The influence of agriculture on Kansans’ health will be the topic of an all-day “**Healthy Farms, Healthy People: Agriculture and Health Care Summit**” in Topeka on November 16, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Washburn University’s Bradbury Alumni Center. The event is coordinated by the Kansas Rural Center, in partnership with the Kansas Health Institute, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Kansas Farmers Union and others, with funding support from the Center for Disease Control through its National Network of Public Health Institutes.

Registration for the summit is open to those interested in learning more about the intersection of the Kansas health, agriculture and food environments, including dietitians, nurses, doctors, worksite wellness coordinators, agency officials, public health practitioners, community development officers, farmers, ranchers, grocers, restaurateurs.

The daylong event will explore Kansas perspectives on the connections between farms, food systems, and health, with a goal of learning more about the challenges and specific to Kansas communities.

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Small Farmer Commentary

Consideration of the Wild Cards

by Mary Fund

Cooler temperatures and the colors of the fall landscape help us forget the extremes of the summer, even if we have not yet had the rains that would signal recovery or back to normal. Unfortunately, the political and economic landscape is much the same— it is uncertain and may prove as extreme as the weather.

Everyone hopes their vote will signal a return to the safety and surety of days gone by. Many are adamantly sure of their candidates and the path forward. But the world is a changing and increasingly complicated place, and regardless of who is elected, solving problems requires us to work together to meet new challenges—not something we have done very well the past few years. Solving problems also requires us to face certain realities and ask tough questions—another casualty of an ever more polarized populace and political leadership.

Frankly, I don't see any "back to normal" for weather, economics or politics anytime soon. And unfortunately, these all have a major impact on the future of food production and natural resources, and our communities, our lives.

Despite their importance, there has been a general lack of focus on food, agriculture and climate issues in the major campaigns. Sure there are ample stories about the farm bill limbo we find ourselves in (and stories of both sides blaming the other for that). You can find the obligatory candidate-views of agriculture and energy policy in the mainstream ag press. But the politics of food, water and climate are largely no man's land when it comes to responsible debate and discussion.

Surveys indicate that for farmers and ranchers, talking about climate change is a

dead end. The majority don't believe it, and if they do, they certainly don't want to hear that they are contributing. And they darn sure don't want their actions to be regulated. Surveys of the general public indicate that belief in climate change is on the upswing—and this was before the weather extremes and news of accelerated Arctic ice melts of the past summer. I myself have heard farmers and ranchers expressing more doubts about their previous denials after the second year of weather extremes. Yet, the politicians and decision makers play to fears and stick our head in the sand platitudes.

On other food and farming fronts, we hear conflicting stories or we hear nothing at all. Although the direction of Big Agriculture remains full throttle on genetically modified seed and products, studies pointing to problems with GMO's keep popping up.

A recent French study of the impact on rats given a diet of GMO corn, or given water containing Roundup at levels allowed in our drinking water, found that the rats suffered from tumors and kidney and liver damage—pointing to a need for more research on the health impacts of GMO's. Emergence of herbicide resistant weeds also creates increasing problems for GMOs; and carry over of herbicides hinders adoption of conservation minded cover crops on farms. All but buried studies of the impacts of GMO crops on soil microbiology raises questions of overall soil health and what long term damage are we inflicting? These are the wild cards of modern agriculture.

Facing certain realities and asking the right questions—real consideration of climate change impacts on agriculture and the impact of our technological fixes like

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Briefs

Stanford Organic Study Criticized by Scientists

A recently released study by Stanford University that found organic food had no significantly higher nutritional value than conventionally produced food created ripples throughout the consumer and research world. Findings of the study also said that organic vegetables and fruits do have considerably less pesticide residues and that organic meat contained considerably lower levels of antibiotic-resistant bacteria than conventional meats. But the media pounced on the easy headline of “little evidence of health benefits from organic foods”.

According to researchers who reviewed the study and the same materials reviewed in the study, the Stanford researchers failed to include several benefits of organic foods. According to Charles Benbrook, Washington State University research

professor, these include a reduction in pesticide induced changes during fetal and childhood development, and a health balance of omega-6 and -3 fatty acids in organic dairy and meat products.

Jim Riddle, organic outreach coordinator at the University of Minnesota, also said the Stanford researchers overlooked the documented beneficial benefits of organic farming on water sources, and other multiple benefits of organic farming to farmers, farm workers, and rural residents.

Riddle concludes that the “most favorable outcome of the study is that it has opened up a conversation about the multiple benefits of organic production and the need for expanded research.”

For more Benbrook and Riddle’s responses, go to www.kansasruralcenter.org, What’s New Column. □

Study Finds GM Corn and Roundup Cause Tumors and Organ Damage

The first animal feeding trial studying the life-time effects of exposure to Roundup tolerant corn, and Roundup herbicide shows that levels currently considered safe can cause tumors and multiple organ damage and lead to premature death in laboratory rats. The study was published online in the scientific journal **Food and Chemical Toxicology**.

Conducted at the University of Caen, France, researchers found that rats fed a diet containing a strain of Roundup tolerant GM corn, or given water containing Roundup at levels permitted in the U.S., died earlier than rats fed on a standard diet. They suffered mammary tumors and severe liver and kidney damage.

Researchers claim the study suggests that licensed GM crops should be re-evaluated and that in the future, safety studies in laboratory animals must be conducted over significantly longer periods of time that are equal to their normal life span and not just their adolescence.” (From **The Organic and Non-GMO Reporter**, October 2012)

Small Farmer Commentary Continued

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GMO’s ~ changes where the money goes (i.e. research, tax credits, farm programs, etc.) But change that is forced upon us by mistakes or disaster is far more painful than if we plan for it.

Farming and food production has always been about adaptation, and whether we accept climate change or not, or question the impact of GMO crops on our soil and personal health, farmers already find themselves adapting. Whether planting earlier in the spring because of warmer spring weather, double cropping behind those early harvests, planting more winter wheat or other small grains to hedge bets on another dry year, planting forage crops to

provide fall and extended season pasture to offset hay losses due to drought, or constructing hoophouses with shade cloth and irrigation to produce fruits and vegetables—it is all about adaptation. All of these changes increase diversity on the farm, and in nature, diversity means survival.

Whether or not our politicians and leaders want to honestly look at the problems and issues facing our food, farming, climate and energy future, producers and consumers may be well ahead of them. There will always be wild cards, but asking questions and joining in a continued conversation about these and other issues is critical for a better future. □



Farm Bill Future Uncertain

by Mary Fund

The federal farm bill expired September 30 with no fanfare or immediately discernable impacts, and without passage of a new 2012 farm bill. This is unprecedented, but then again, a farm bill has never come up for renewal during a presidential election year. The perceived lack of impact, though, is not accurate.

True, commodity program changes won't begin until January 2013, and the food and nutrition program (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP) continues to assist the nation's vulnerable population as Congress saw to it that its authority was part of the just-passed Continuing Resolution that keeps government running through March 2013. Crop insurance, the new sacred cow of agricultural policy, is not technically part of the farm bill, as it is authorized under the Federal Crop Insurance Act, so remains unaffected.

While current commodity program payments are covered until the end of 2012 with some payments being made in 2013, any bill passed now, whether in the lame duck session or by a new Congress next year, will make big changes in commodity crop programs—based on those proposed by both House and Senate in their respective versions of a farm bill. Administratively those changes don't happen quickly or easily, and farmers

(and their bankers or credit providers) need time to make decisions. So the longer the limbo, the greater the impact and the greater the confusion.

Conservation programs present a mixed bag. The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and its sub-programs and special initiatives, should continue normal enrollments due to an earlier extension of their program authority to 2014. The just passed Continuing Resolution, which keeps government running, provides continued funding for EQIP – albeit at a lower level than before, but funding. But the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), while also authorized to 2014, only has funds to pay for existing contracts but not enough to pay for any new ones. Until Congress takes action, new enrollments to CSP are on hold.

The Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) have acres remaining under the acreage cap of the 2008 farm bill. But the legal authority for all of these expired September 30, so according to the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC), there can't be new enrollments until Congress passes a new farm bill, extends the current farm bill or extends these authorities in a

continuing resolution or final appropriations bill. Payments and maintenance of existing contracts is allowed.

Additional programs important to building a better food and farm future are also impacted by the lack of a new farm bill. The past two farm bills (2002 and 2008) included programs and funding beyond the traditional food stamps, commodity subsidies, and conservation. Programs impacted, according to NSAC, include: Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Conservation Reserve Program- Transition Incentive Program, Farmers Market Promotion Program, National Organic Certification Program, Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative, Rural Energy for America Program, Specialty Crop Research Initiative, and the Value Added Producer Grant Program.

These programs continue to exist on paper, but after October 1 have no renewed funding; and will remain so until after Congress takes action on a new farm bill, or extends the current bill. Without these programs, beginning farmer training opportunities and minority farmer assistance programs dry up. Microloans and training for very small businesses end. Researchers will not be able to get dedicated funding for organic or fruit and vegetable research. Funds to help move expiring CRP land into the hands of beginning farmers ends. Incentives to create sustainable biofuels based on perennial crops will end.

In short, programs to create jobs related to food (not commodity crops), renewable energy and improved production and access to healthy food are on hold and may not be restored.

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Sustainable Farming News

Workshop Focuses on Water and Fencing as Drought Intensifies

by Tom Parker

With exceptional drought conditions crippling 60 percent of Kansas and the rest of the state not much better, water is on a lot of minds lately, notably livestock producers and farmers. But it wasn't just graziers discussing water at the Kansas Rural Center's Livestock Water and Fencing Workshop in Courtland on Sept. 11—a pair of BBC reporters were also there interviewing attendees for an upcoming documentary on water issues.

“People are concerned about drought and water,” said Johnny Dymond, BBC reporter. “How to use it, how to get it, how to save it. It's a global issue, and we're in Kansas to see how people on the Great Plains are coping.”

Mark Green, regional coordinator for the Southwest Missouri Regional Management Intensive Grazing Schools and Missouri NRCS district conservationist, responded with a one-word assessment: “Flexibility.”

If there's one thing the weather has taught us, Green said, it's that no two years are alike. Producers must find solutions in an ever-changing environment, requiring systems that are flexible, practical and dependable. His two-prong approach incorporates water distribution and electronic fencing for intense rotational grazing, and of the two of them, water takes precedence.

“Water is the most limiting factor in maintaining flexibility,” he said. “It's the most important nutrient for cattle, but you have to deliver adequate

amounts of water at the right location.”

The key is to determine how much water is needed and to understand cattle behavior, he said. Cattle require eight to 12 gallons of water per day, and double that during hot weather. While the moisture content of feed should be considered, equally determining is the travel distance. Cattle within 600 feet of their food source drink 15 percent more water than cattle that walk more than 1,000 feet, Green said.

On shorter distances cattle tend to drink individually, but at greater distances it becomes a social event. Unfortunately, only the lead cows get their fill because the herd heads back before the last cows have their turn.

“How flexible is a pond location?” Green asked. “The goal is for livestock to never travel more than 800 feet. You need water in every paddock.”

Concrete tanks, implement tire tanks, portable watering systems and even converted bathtubs are options available for water distribution in paddocks. All have their pros and cons, but they share the need for the correct type of piping to deliver the right amount of water. Whether installing permanent, belowground pipes or laying out aboveground plastic or PVC tubing, diameter and materials play equally important roles.

Gravity-flow systems should never use less than a one-and-a-half inch



Mark Green, regional coordinator for the SW Missouri Regional Management Intensive Grazing Schools, demonstrates a homemade lightning arrester. Photo T. Parker

pipe, he said. Below-ground pipe should be buried at least 30 inches and, in rocky soil, pea gravel added for bedding. For aboveground piping, PVC has limited durability because of a lack of UV-stabilization, often becoming brittle after as little as two years. Black polyethylene pipe works good but 150 psi is best for durability, and should be run along fences to minimize impact. “After one season you won't even see it,” he said.

Shut-off valves and hydrants offer an extra measure of flexibility especially when isolating paddocks or making repairs. “Hydrants should be placed at every cross fence,” Green said. “They're inexpensive and easy to install. And you can never have too many shut-offs.”

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Our Local Food Chapters



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Marketing Workshop Draws Enthusiastic Farmer Crowd

by Tracey Graham

Forty-two people attended the September 21 “Strategic Marketing for Livestock Producers Workshop and Tour” focusing on direct and niche marketing “how-to’s” in Concordia, Ks. Speakers ranged from livestock producers who are successfully using direct or niche marketing to increase revenue and manage risk to Kansas Department of Agriculture and Kansas State University and other experts on business development, marketing and regulations.

Lisa Roberts of the Kansas Small Business Development Center at Wichita State University challenged participants to evaluate the costs and values associated with their farm enterprises, while discussing the multivariate factors that must be considered when setting prices for farm products.

Direct costs, indirect costs, opportunity costs, and values-tangible and intangible, quantifiable and emotional- must all be part of the equation. Roberts who comes from a farm background, said, “Everything I know about business I learned on my

family’s farm and I learned it from my grandfather!”

Panelist Norm Oeding of Janzen Farms (grass-fed beef and whole grains, Harvey County), Rosanna Bauman of Bauman’s Cedar Valley Farms and Anco USDA Poultry Processing Plant (Pasture-raised eggs, chicken, turkey, and ducks, and 100% grass-fed beef ; Anderson County), Noah Goddard of Goddard Farms (Goats, Grade A Dairy; Douglas County) and Laura Fortmeyer of Jubilee Farm (sheep and lamb products; Brown County) shared their experiences with pricing issues and the importance of record-keeping. Speakers answered questions related to marketing, pricing, processing, added value, shipping, diversification, cooperative marketing, “coopetition” and collaboration with other producers, and working with interns.

Julie Mettenburg, KRC Executive Director, covered the Basics of Marketing, Sales and Branding,

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Resources

Kansas Farmers Markets - For a list of markets statewide or to search for the market nearest you, go to: <http://www.ksfarmersmarkets.org>

The website is organized so you can search for a market by city or county; or you can view a list of all the markets in Kansas.

Local Food Connections-- For sources of local food in Kansas go to the “Food Finder” at KRC’s newest website: <http://www.ourlocalfoodks.org>

Farms and food businesses are still registering at this relatively new site, but check it out for farm listings, farmers markets, and more.

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Marketing Workshop....

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through a marketing mix of 7 key decision points: Place, Price, Promotion, People, Process, Physical Environment, and Product. Each of these areas overlap, and provide an avenue for niche marketers to tell their unique story, thereby increasing the value of the products offered.

Panelists Andi Dale of Dale Family Farms (grass-finished beef, pastured pork and poultry; Comanche County), Cherie Schenker of Schenker Family Farms (all-natural beef, lamb, pork and poultry; Crawford County), and Tonia Rupe of Lucky Star Farms, (grass-fed Angus beef; Greenwood County) shared their marketing and sales experiences and fielded a wide range of questions.

Transitioning from traditional commodity crops to niche marketing of specialized products (and becoming debt-free as a result), obtaining and maintaining Naturally Grown and Animal Welfare certifications, and determining the optimum mix of direct market retail and wholesale sales, were topics of interest.

“Pay attention to detail. Be so conscientious people think you’re anal,” advised Cherie Schenker. “Give stuff away” and “Be prepared to fail,” added Andi Dale. “Show you’re committed to the lifestyle and find ways to preserve this way of life,” offered Tonia Rupe.

Rosanna Bauman, known as the youngest HACCP writer in the state of Kansas, moderated the session on Processing, Rules and Regulations.

KDA Dairy Inspection Program director George Blush, KDA Meat and Poultry Inspection Program director Julie Ehler, and Dr. Liz Boyle of Kansas State University Animal Sciences, shared challenges and opportunities livestock producers face in processing and selling their products.

They encouraged livestock producers to not be afraid to contact specialists at KSU and KDA for answers to specific questions concerning processing, labeling, liability insurance, inspection programs.

According to the panelists, it is widely recognized that the majority of food safety regulations were written with large producers in mind, and that many regulations do not apply well to smaller niche marketers. Most state regulators will work with producers to see to it that the intent of the regulations are addressed, and are not looking to overregulate small producers beyond their abilities. Efforts are being made at KDA and at USDA to streamline and clarify processing and handling regulations and procedures.

The workshop concluded with a tour of an example of a successful direct/niche marketing farm: the Lazy S Farm near Glasco where Larry and Madonna Sorrell raise heritage pigs (Red Wattle, Gloucester-shire Old Spot, and Mule Foot), turkeys (Standard Bronze), cattle (Scottish Highland), and sheep (Katahdin and Jacob). They also operate Rustic Remembrances Bed and Breakfast on the farm.

The majority of their livestock is purchased, processed, and marketed by Heritage Foods USA. Their meats are popular with world-famous chefs on the west and east coasts, including Mario Batali, Jason Denton and others.

Heritage Foods offers farm to fork traceability for their meats. This level of attention to heritage breeds and knowing specifically where each cut of meat comes from commands high dollar prices in top restaurants in Los Angeles, the Bay Area, Chicago, Washington D.C., New York City and Las Vegas. The Sorrell farm has been featured in a number of magazines including Time and Sunflower Living, and newspaper articles, including the Salina Journal and Kansas City Star in recent years.

Workshop participants will receive a copy of KRC’s soon-to-be published **Finding Your Niche: A Direct Marketing Guide for Kansas Farmers**. The 150+ page guide, due out later this fall in both paper and online versions, will be full of information similar to that offered at the workshop, guaranteed to help farmers and ranchers get successfully established in direct marketing. □

Community Organizes Around Healthy Food: Brown County Hosts FEAST Event

by Chhaya Kolavalli & Cole Cottin



Participants at the Brown County FEAST (Food, Education, Agriculture Solutions Together) share information about food issues locally, before they share a meal together at the Klinefelter Barn at Highland Community College. Photo by C. Cottin.

On Monday, September 24, 2012, over 70 people gathered at Highland Community College's historic Klinefelter Barn to engage in Kansas' first ever "Community FEAST." FEAST (Food, Education, Agriculture Solutions Together) is a model for community organizing created by the Oregon Food Bank to help involve people in addressing regional food systems issues.

According to the Brown County Healthy Foods Coalition (BCHFC), the primary goal of Brown County Community FEAST was to unite a broad range of community members under one roof to discuss challenges to and opportunities for responding to regional health issues and food access needs.

FEAST participants included: local farmers, school workers, food business owners, tribal representatives, government employees, and food bank staff members.

With one of the highest food

insecurity rates in Kansas and a health status ranking of 89 out of 100 Kansas counties, the Brown County Healthy Food Coalition identified FEAST as a tool to generate greater community involvement in improving the availability of and access to healthy foods. It was supported by a grant from the Kansas Health Foundation to the Community Foundation of Northeast Kansas.

FEASTs held elsewhere in the nation have resulted in increased nutrition education efforts, farm-to-school partnerships, local food hubs, new farmers markets, food producer networking groups, community gardens, food policy councils, and more.

After attending a FEAST Facilitator's Training, held at Kansas State University (K-State) in June, BCHFC partnered with the Kansas Rural Center, K-State's Center for Engagement and Community Development (CECD), Kansas Farm Bureau, and Glacial Hills Resource and

Conservation Development (RC&D) to make this event happen.

The evening featured presentations from local and state agencies, plus small group discussions. Karla Harter, of the Brown County Health Department, kicked off the evening with a presentation on the challenges to community health in the area.

Just four grocery stores serve all of Brown County's predominantly rural population. Harter asked participants: "What do you do when you can't even afford to get to the grocery store? Then, if you do get there, the only food you can afford is highly processed, high sodium, calorie dense, and nutritionally poor." In order for healthy food to become a regular part of residents' lives, Harter says it must be available, reachable, affordable, and prepare-able. "The days of grandma in the kitchen teaching you how to prepare wholesome foods are gone, folks," she emphasized - pointing to

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Brown County FEAST....

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the need to educate people about healthy foods identification and use.

Next up, from the Kansas Department of Education, Cheryl Johnson and Barb Depew shared information on the many programs public schools can choose to offer to respond to issues of access and education. Often, they said, healthy eating “starts with the kids.” Just getting kids excited about different types of healthy foods can have a great impact on how families eat.

“October is national Farm-to-School Month,” they pointed out, “We hope Brown County will be a shining example for the state!” In fact, later that evening, connections were made between farmers and school food service directors interested in purchasing healthy, local food for their schools.

Other speakers included: Matt Young, Brown County Extension Agent, who encouraged participants to use his office as a resource for increasing the local food supply. Brown County farmers, Mark Ward and Jake Johannes, emphasized the economic potential of marketing farm products locally and regionally.

Annarose Hart, Agribusiness Development and Farmers Market Specialist for the Kansas Department of Agriculture, spoke about creative models for improving food access in communities. Hart pointed out that programs like Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT), which facilitates vision card (food stamp) and credit card sales at farmers markets, have doubled the income of some farmers markets: “It’s a huge way to be able to capture the food dollar, to help make sure that farmers can keep farming and that

people can have access to healthy foods.”

After the presentations, participants enjoyed a locally-sourced meal followed by small group discussions on a variety of topics, which included access, education, production, and distribution of healthy foods in Brown County. Driven by the premise that sustainable solutions to community challenges must be community-based, the groups submitted their ideas to the Brown County Healthy Food Coalition with a list of allies and resources that might be useful for addressing different areas of concern.

Some of these ideas included “mobile food trucks” as a solution to the challenge of physical access to food. “Brown County has limited grocery stores and only one farmers market,” they said, “but a mobile food truck operation, perhaps run through a local grocery store and in collaboration with area farmers, could deliver food to outlying communities.” Others suggested that a virtual food store, in which customers order food online and receive a delivery to their door, could increase food accessibility.

In his closing speech BCHFC Chair, Steve Smith, addressed the FEAST participants: “The things we are discussing tonight are not easy fixes. They are total societal changes. We have a lot in front of us.” His sentiments echoed Harter’s opening statement, “We can change history. We can change the course of Brown County.”

For photos and story about the Brown County FEAST, visit www.kawrivervalley.org/2012/10/feast-on-this-community-organizes.html. If interested in organizing community around food and agriculture, or learning more about hosting a FEAST-like event, you

Why FEAST Matters?

Brown County is not alone in its struggle to access healthy foods. Rural residents are at greatest risk for limited access to healthy foods, but pockets exist even in urban areas. Of the 675 cities in Kansas, only 51% have a grocery store. At the same time, the Kansas Health Institute states that 60% of Kansas adults and one-third of Kansas children are overweight or obese, and the annual cost of treating obesity related diseases in Kansas is \$561 million.

There is some irony in the fact that Kansas, the “breadbasket” of the United States with more than 46 million acres of farmland, struggles to connect its residents to healthy food. It is estimated that only 77,000 acres are needed to feed Kansans, but in our current food system we find the vast majority of Kansas produced foods leave the state (USDA Census of Agriculture, 2007). In 2010, Kansans spent \$7.5 billion dollars on food of all kinds. For produce purchases alone, we currently spend about \$767 million annually – but only 4% of that produce is sourced from Kansas farms. Notable economic potential could exist in the job creation and income generation that could result from connecting more Kansans to Kansas produced foods.

can download a “FEAST Planning Guide” from the Oregon Food Bank’s website at: <http://oregonfoodbank.org/Our-Work/Building-Food-Security/Community-Programs/>. Also, keep an eye out for KRC’s soon-to-be released “FEAST Toolkit,” full of resources from the planning of Brown County Community FEAST, at: <http://www.kansasruralcenter.org/publications.html>. □

School Covers MIG benefits to Livestock, Plant and Soil Health, and Bottomline

by Jason Schmidt

With increasing feed and input costs, cattle producers are interested in increased forage utilization by their grazing animals through better grazing management. This interest brought together 55 individuals from over 30 farms to the Lyon County Fairgrounds in Emporia to spend two full days learning about management intensive rotational grazing on September 12 and 13.

This third annual Eastern Kansas Grazing School brought together Kansas and Missouri grazing experts to educate farmers and ranchers on how to become better grazing managers. The school combines hands-on learning experiences in the field with classroom education on subjects including plant and soil management, livestock nutrition, fencing and watering options for designing a rotational grazing system, and the economics of grazing.

David Kraft, State Rangeland Management Specialist with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) kicked off the school with an introduction to Management Intensive Grazing (MIG). Kraft said that MIG is a new idea to many.

The basic concept of rotational grazing is to encourage the grazing animal "to remove as much forage as possible in a short amount of time," then move the animals to let the plants rest and allow the roots and leaves recover. The more paddocks or cells that are in a rotational grazing

system, the higher are the rates of forage utilization.

The class observed a rotational grazing system with a field trip to Fuller Farms near Emporia. Gail Fuller has incorporated a form of rotational grazing called mob grazing into his no-till cropping system to utilize cover crops.

At Fuller Farms on day one, the class was given the assignment to partition off an area big enough to give Fuller's beef herd enough forage for one day plus ensure half the standing forage in the area was left at the end of one day of grazing. Doug Spencer, NRCS Rangeland Specialist from Marion, explained that it is important to leave half of the growing leaves to ensure rapid recovery of the roots below the ground.

The exercise taught the class how to estimate the amount of forage available in a pasture, calculate the amount of forage consumed by a beef herd, and ultimately determine an appropriate stocking rate. On the second day the class returned to the farm to observe whether they had given Fuller's cattle herd enough forage for one day.

Along with learning how to estimate how much forage is available and how much forage cattle consume, the class learned about forage species common to eastern Kansas.

David Hallauer, Jefferson County Extension Agent, gave an overview of



David Kraft, State Rangeland Management Specialist, above center, provided an overview of management intensive grazing at the Eastern Kansas Grazing School near Emporia, Ks. in mid-September. Photo by J. Schmidt

the growth patterns of different forages and the soil fertility needs to maintain healthy pastures. Hallauer stressed the importance of adequate soil phosphorus levels for healthy plants.

With this year's grazing school located in Flint Hills, KC Olson, Kansas State University (KSU) livestock specialist, gave an appropriate talk on managing the KSU beef herd year-around on native prairie. Olson told the story of how he has increased the profitability of the beef herd through maximizing grazing utilization of rangeland.

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Grazing School...

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Olson says the number one factor for determining profitability is to “maximize the percent of nutritional cost that can be absorbed by the grazable forage.” This is accomplished by making livestock fit their nutritional environment. For Olson, this meant adjusting the calving season to coincide with the peak forage quality of the prairie in April. Also, to match the harsh environment of the range, Olson is reducing the size of the cows to reduce the maintenance cost of the animals. He said there is a 40% increase in maintenance cost for a 1400 lb cow compared to a 1000 lb cow.

Included among the harsh conditions challenging producers is the historic drought experienced this summer. Olson challenged every livestock producer to have a drought management plan. He outlined how KSU has implemented their drought management plan this summer.

Mark Green, Missouri NRCS, instructed the class on the nuts and bolts of designing and installing a rotational grazing system. Green brought his van packed with fencing and watering tools for hands on demonstrations. Green preached for the need to build flexibility into a rotational grazing system. This means minimizing permanent fences and permanent frost free waterers, and maximizing the use of electric fences and unburied waterlines.

Wesley Tucker, University of Missouri Extension, drove home the importance of managed grazing. By far

the most important variable in determining profitability is feed cost, Tucker said. Feed cost can vary drastically between cow-calf producers ranging from \$200-\$900 per cow per year. Tucker challenged the school that the cattle industry is undergoing a major shift. The cattle industry was built on “cheap land, cheap feed, cheap fuel, and cheap fertilizer.” Between 2007 and 2008 we saw the disappearance of all these.

“... essentially with management, we can double our forage base without buying more land.”

Tucker encouraged the class to re-think how we manage our animals to adjust to this change. During the grazing season this means maximizing pasture utilization through grazing management. Over time we can increase the grazing utilization of our cattle from 30% in a continuous grazing situation, to approximately 70% utilization with 24 paddocks, or moving cattle to a new paddock every one or two days. This increase will not happen overnight, but essentially with management we can double our forage base without buying more land.

Tucker encouraged participants not to get overwhelmed by

the thought of moving cattle every day, but to “move as much as your lifestyle allows.”

During the winter, Tucker said we must stretch grazing as far into the dormant season as possible. Feed and hay drives cost, while grazing drives profitability. Wesley says the Tucker Farm philosophy is that “cows, sheep, goats, and horses can all harvest forages cheaper than you can.” And, with managing our pastures, the only ingredient that we can affect for growing grass is soil nutrients. So, make sure we evenly distribute manure with rotational grazing, and feed hay back on the pastures. Every 1000 lb round bale has approximately \$20 worth of nutrients.

Tucker left the school with a final challenging quote from Jim Gerrish, “The more metal and fuel you put between solar energy and a cow’s belly, the less profitable you will be.”

The Grazing School was sponsored by Kansas NRCS, KSU Research and Extension, and the KRC and was funded in-part by a grant from the USDA Risk Management Agency. □



Grazing school participants get some hands-on experience calculating forages. Photo by J. Schmidt

Sustainable Farming News

Water and Fencing...

Continued from page 5

Though frost-proof tanks are popular, Green questioned their need. "They're the most expensive part of supplying water," he said. "It's what breaks the bank."

Green prefers focusing on water management for the rest of the year and using common sense measures such as site placement when available, such as locating buried concrete tanks on south-facing slopes to capture winter sunlight and shield against winter winds.

Heavy implement tires make excellent tanks, he said, though it should be noted to avoid steel-belted tires. If it can't be helped, a Sawzall is the best resort for cutting through the treads.

Pads should be placed around the tanks to prevent erosion and to ensure that cattle stay long enough to drink but not to socialize. "You want it uncomfortable for them to stand around," he said. "I want them to get in and get out."

Keeping cattle from wandering across the top of buried tanks, limiting pond access or dividing paddocks requires the right kind of fence, something he described as "any fence that keeps livestock where you want them to be." There are two types of fences, he explained—barrier fences and psychological fences. The latter require electricity, and enough to "buckle their knees and water their eyes," as he put it. "You want a charger that'll get their attention."

Electric fencing has three components: chargers, fencing and grounding. Chargers should be low

impedance with a minimum of 5,000 volts output, and with as high a joule rating as possible. "Buy bigger than you think you need," Green cautioned. "I guarantee you're going to want to add some fence down the road."

A minimum of three six-foot ground rods tied together should be used, and should match the type of wire. Mixing types of metals such as copper to galvanized steel can lead to electrolysis, or corrosion, and should be avoided. Lightning protection is a must and requires the same number of ground rods plus one. For instance, if three ground rods are used, four rods are needed for lightning protection, and should be placed at least 65 feet from ground rods. And even then it's only an educated guess. "There are no guarantees for lightning," he said.

For fencing, 12.5 gauge high tensile wire is best but requires a spinning jenny to unroll without having the bale explode into an instant Slinky. "Beg, borrow or steal one, but don't do it without one," Green said. Barbed wire isn't a substitute because of the spiral threading and the barbs themselves, both of which toss off electrical current.

Portable fencing needs at least 90-strand braided wire and quality posts, preferably with long metal spikes and adequate bases for pushing into the ground. Fiberglass poles tend to splinter and unravel, he said, but the new composite-material posts look promising as long as a pilot hole is used.



Mark Green, District Conservationist from Springfield, Mo., drew to the Water and Fencing Workshop.

"Like with all things," he said, "quality varies. Get the right tool for the job."

Connectors, insulators, testers and tighteners also play pivotal roles. Green explained at length the various features and foibles of each type of gadget, and said that a more detailed explanation of fencing types can be downloaded at: on the home page of KRC's website at www.kansaruralcenter.org under the What's New column.

Following the meeting, participants conveyed to the farm of Dale Strickler, where Green demonstrating installing a 45-degree angle corner post. "This was exactly what graziers were asking for for years," said Mary Howell, Kansas Rural Center Field Organizer, Frankfort. "The number one thing graziers have requested is information on livestock fencing and water systems."

The workshop was sponsored by the Kansas Rural Center, Kansas SARE, Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternate Crops, and the Kansas Farmers Union, with funding from the USDA Risk Management Agency. □

Events and Resources

Agriculture & Health

Summit... *Contd. from page 1*

Morning sessions and presentations will explore healthy eating behaviors and influences, farming and food systems in Kansas, the role of food and farm policy, and the challenges in producing healthy food.

Speakers will include Barb LaClair, M.H.A., of the Kansas Health Institute; Anthony Randles MPH, Ph.D, of the Kansas Department of Health and Environment; Rhonda Janke, Ph.D, of Kansas State University; Paul Johnson, public policy contributor to the Kansas Rural Center, and Donn Teske, president of the Kansas Farmers Union.

Featured Keynote speakers will include Dr. Elizabeth Ablah, PhD, MPH, Associate Professor in the Department of Preventive Medicine and Public Health at the University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita and Bob Martin, Senior Policy Advisor for John Hopkins School of Public Health in Baltimore, Maryland.

Afternoon roundtables will provide participants with an interactive opportunity to generate potential solutions of interest to their own communities and work. Roundtable topics may include beginning farmer programs, farm to school, farm-raised food distribution infrastructure problems, access to healthy food, incentive programs such as SNAP, and workplace wellness. The organizers seek to bring together stakeholders from health and agriculture to create the dialogue that is needed to create an understanding of challenges, opportunities, and actions for change

around identified food, farming and health issues in Kansas.

Cost to attend is \$35, which includes beverages, snacks, and a locally sourced lunch. For more information or to register, visit www.kansasruralcenter.org.

KRC has partnered with the Kansas Health Institute, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Kansas Health Consumer Coalition, Kansas Farmers Union, and Bon Appétite Management Company to coordinate this event.

The summit is a part of the Healthy Farms, Healthy People (HFHP) State Meetings Learning Community. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has supported the learning community through its cooperative agreement with the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI). NNPHI has provided funding to selected state meetings and contracted with the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) to provide technical assistance to meeting organizers. The views expressed during this meeting do not necessarily represent the views of NNPHI, IATP, CDC, or the Healthy Farms, Healthy People Coalition. □

Organic Forum co-sponsors are the Kansas Rural Center, Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops (KCSAAC), and Kansas Organic Producers Association. (KOP) □

Organic Farming Forum...

Continued from page 1

Workshops sessions will focus on the challenges and opportunities for organic farming including organic system plans and crop rotation basics, organic certification, USDA NRCS and other resources available for organic farmers, and marketing options. The day will conclude with a roundtable of organic farmers, researchers and others on the challenges and needs facing organic farmers including drought adaptation or management, production issues, and research needs.

“The forum also provides organic farmers and beginning or want-to-be organic farmers an important networking opportunity to learn from each other,” stated Fund. “The final roundtable of the day will provide time to discuss production problems or issues, certification questions, and list research needs - all helpful in planning future workshops, farm tours, or research projects, or answering a particular question for your farm.”

Forum registration cost is \$15 per person, which covers lunch, snacks and hand-out materials. The deadline for RSVP for the meal and registration is Wednesday November 7. To register go to KRC’s website at www.kansasruralcenter.org, or contact KRC at 785-873-3431, or ksrc@rainbowtel.net.

The Kansas Organic Producers Association is also holding its annual meeting the following day at the same facility, so the Quality Inn is providing a conference rate for those interested in lodging. See the registration information at KRC’s website for more. (Contd. column to the left.)

Farm Bill, Food Future...

Continued from page 4

Furthermore, there are programs that like the above mentioned conservation programs (CRP, GRP, and WRP), have funds but lack the authority to spend them. These include programs like the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program.

While many of the above “non-traditional” programs have been included in both the Senate and House versions of the new Farm Bill, their fate is uncertain. Will there funding be restored? And will they be included in the new bill?

Indeed, the fate of the farm bill during the lame duck session is uncertain. Will Congress come together and work out a compromise bill by the end of the year? Or will Congress work out an extension of the current bill with some modifications until spring, summer or fall 2013? This option means the new Congress beginning in January 2013 starts the farm bill process all over again.

Add to all this the questions surrounding major issues also before Congress before the end of the year (tax issues and deficit reduction/fiscal cliff), and the already thick fog of the farm bill's future gets thicker. But whether there is an extension (short or long) or a full bill, all of the farm programs should be included. This is not a time to abandon newer important programs that aim to establish a next generation of farmers and ranchers, answer critical production questions for specialty crops, organic practices, and biofuels, and ensure access to healthy food for urban and rural citizens alike. □

(With help from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC). For ongoing information on farm bill developments, go to: www.sustainableagriculturecoalition.org.

More Weed Resistance, More Pesticides Used

A recently published study by Washington State University research professor Charles Benbrook finds that the use of herbicides in the production of three genetically modified herbicide-tolerant crops - cotton, soybeans and corn - has actually increased. This finding is based on an exhaustive analysis of publicly available data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agriculture Statistics Service.

Benbrook's analysis is the first peer-reviewed, published estimate of the impacts of genetically engineered (GE) herbicide-resistant (HT) crops on pesticide use.

In the study, Benbrook writes that the emergence and spread of glyphosate-resistant weeds is strongly correlated with the increase in herbicide use. Marketed as Roundup and other trade names, glyphosate is a broad-spectrum systemic herbicide. Approximately 95 percent of soybean and cotton acres, and more than 85 percent of corn, are planted to varieties genetically modified to be herbicide resistant.

"Resistant weeds have become a major problem for many farmers reliant on GE crops, and they are now driving up the volume of herbicide needed each year by about 25 percent," Benbrook said.

The annual increase in the herbicides required to deal with tougher-to-control weeds on cropland planted to GE cultivars has grown from 1.5 million pounds in 1999 to about 90 million pounds in 2011.

Herbicide-tolerant crops worked extremely well in the first few years of use, Benbrook's analysis shows, but over-reliance may have led to shifts in weed communities and the spread of resistant weeds that force farmers to increase herbicide application rates

(especially glyphosate), spray more often and add new herbicides that work through an alternate mode of action into their spray programs.

A detailed summary of the study's major findings, "Impacts of genetically engineered crops on pesticide use in the U.S. - the first sixteen years," is available online at <http://bit.ly/esebenbrook2012>. □

Crop Insurance May Cost Taxpayers

A recently released working paper from the American Enterprise Institute found that future crop insurance may cost the American taxpayer dearly. Findings showed the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) and Supplementary Coverage Option (SCO) programs proposed in the House version of the 2012 farm bill could cost taxpayers over \$20 billion annually (or four times the current cost of the direct payment programs which the PLC would replace). Cost depends on what crop prices do in the future. If prices remain high, program costs would be \$1.1 billion per year. If they drop to historical averages, insurance costs climb to nearly \$20 billion.

The study also found that the programs would disproportionately subsidize certain crops, specifically rice and peanuts. With subsidies tied to farm acreage, the PLC and SCO programs would be new and potentially very lucrative entitlement programs that would provide the greatest benefits to the largest farmers. (See www.aei.org/papers/economics/field-of-schemes-mark-ii-price-loss-coverage-and-supplementary-insurance-coverage-programs/.) □

Resources and Events

Local Connections Workshop Set in Wichita Nov. 10

Our Local Food - South Central Kansas will host a Local Food Connections Workshop Saturday, November 10, 2012 from 9am -4:00pm at the Sedgwick County Extension Center in Wichita.

Local producers, grocers, restaurateurs, institutional food buyers, other food businesses, and locavores (supporters of local food) are invited to attend this daylong event that will focus on networking, and building marketing skills and business relationships that help simplify these challenges.

Featured morning workshop sessions will cover the following topics: Planning Crops for Consistent Yields, Selling & Buying Animal Products: Regulations, Post-Harvest Handling, Liability Insurance for Market Farms, Niche Marketing; Livestock Products, Nose-to-Tail Meat Use, Local Food as a Marketing Tool, Love Local Food, Eating by the Calendar, and Preserving the Harvest.

In the afternoon, a panel of local food buyers and growers will provide opportunity for questions about buying and selling local food. Diana Endicott of Good Natured Family Farms in Kansas will be the featured Keynote afternoon speaker.

Cost to attend is \$25 for members of the Our Local Food program and \$35 for non-members which includes a local food lunch provided by Green Acres Market in Wichita.

Registration and a full schedule can be found at www.ourlocalfoodks.org and www.kansasruralcenter.org.

Registration deadline is November 7, 2012. For questions about the event or membership status, contact Natalie Fullerton, Our Local Food - South Central Coordinator at 402-310-0177, southcentral@ourlocalfoodks.org. □

Ks. Environmental Forum Set for Nov. 10

Join the Kansas Natural Resource Council, Kansas Interfaith Power and Light, and partners at the "Making Connections, Growing the Grass-roots" Environmental Forum Saturday November 10 from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Fiedler Auditorium, KSU Engineering Complex, 17th St. and College Heights Road, Manhattan, Kansas.

Presentation and discussion topics include: Kansas Environmentalism - Where we've been and where we're going; Crafting an effective advocacy campaign; and How to build an effective education message. Breakout sessions on Clean Energy, Sustainable Agriculture, Water Quality/Quantity, and Wildlife and Land Conservation

Registration is free. To register, send an email to ksenviroforum@gmail.com. For more information about registration contact: Moti Rieber with KS IPL at 913-232-2336, rebmoti@kansasipl.org, or Kim Bellemere with KNRC at 785-840-8104, kim@knrc.ws, or go the KNRC website: www.knrc.ws. □



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Calendar

Thursday-Saturday, November 1-3, 2012, National Small Farm Trade Show, Columbia, MO. For more info call Small Farm Today at 800-633-2535, or go to <http://www.smallfarmtoday.com>

Saturday, November 10, 2012, Local Food Connections, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sedgewick County Extension Center, Wichita, Ks. Contact Natalie Fullerton, at 402-310-0177 or southcentral@ourlocalfoodks.org

Saturday, November 10, 2012, Kansas Environmental Forum: Making Connections, Growing the Grassroots, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., KSU Engineering Complex, Manhattan, Ks. Call Kim Bellemere at kim@knrc.ws or 785-840-8104 or go to www.knrc.ws

Monday, November 12, 2012, Grazing Teleconference Call, 7:30 p.m. - 9 p.m. Dial in 1-877-304-5632. Conference Room Number 300 346 2424 and follow it with the # sign. For more information, contact Dale Kirkham 620-344-0202.

Tuesday, November 13, 2012, Organic Farming Forum: Resources, Research, and Marketing Opportunities, 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Quality Inn, 2110 W. Crawford, Salina, Ks. Contact Mary Fund 785-873-3431, or ksrc@rainbowtel.net.

Friday November 16, 2012, Healthy Farms, Healthy People: Agriculture and Health Care Summit, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Washburn University, Topeka, Ks. Contact Natalie Fullerton at 402-310-0177 or southcentral@ourlocalfoodks.org or Julie Mettenburg at 785-393-9996 or juliemettenburg@gmail.com

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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