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NEWS RELEASE October 14, 2010

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KRC To Hold Sustainable Agriculture Conference November 20 “Connecting Cows, Carbon and Carrots: Making Sense of Our Food Future”

Whiting, Ks. – The Kansas Rural Center (KRC) will hold its Sustainable Agriculture Conference on Saturday, November 20, 2010, at the Flint Hills Technical College, Emporia, Kansas. The theme for this year’s conference is “Connecting Cows, Carbon and Carrots: Making Sense of Our Food Future”.

KRC is hosting a one- day conference of speakers and workshops for people interested in learning more about climate change and its challenges for agriculture, the budding “food movement” of local and regional production and business opportunities, how to approach the transfer of land to the next generation, plus many more ways of “connecting cows, carbon, and carrots”.

The morning keynote speaker will be Joel Brown, who will speak on “Climate Change and Agriculture-- the Challenges and the Responses”. Brown is a rangeland ecologist in New Mexico for the USDA Natural Resources Service, where he is involved in research and development of land classification systems, carbon sequestration on rangelands, and grazing land ecology. He also works as the CSIRO (Australia) Project Leader and scientist, and NRCS Global Change Leader and Cooperating Scientist with the ARS Jornada Experimental Range.

“Climate change, whether natural or human caused, presents some serious challenges to agriculture. Agricultural producers are very familiar with responding to variable climate,” states Brown, “However, projected increases in climate variability will require an even more flexible approach to management.” According to Brown, an important aspect of responding is a realistic assessment of the risks, and development of responses and decision systems to address needed changes.

Brown spoke on climate change and the impact on agriculture at the 2002 Kansas Sustainable Agriculture Conference, providing an early perspective on what would be an issue of growing importance.

Two other featured speakers for a roundtable discussion of climate and agriculture are Karl Brooks, U.S. EPA Region 7 Director, and Jeff Schahczenski, Policy Analyst for the National Center for Alternative Technology (NCAT).

Eighteen workshops following the four tracks of Cows and Crops (farming practices), Carbon (carbon, climate and farming practices), Carrots (local food and marketing), and Connections (politics of food) will be held throughout the day. These will cover a wide range of topics including: Ecological Approaches to Farming; Trends in Production and Marketing of Grass-fed Beef; Opportunities for Local and Regional Food in Kansas; Growing Healthy: School and Community Gardens; Kansas Smoke Management: Melding Legislation and Production Practices to Preserve Prairie Ecosystems; Food Policy Councils; Hoop Houses 101; Patch-Burn Grazing the Prairies of Kansas; Cover Crops: The Next Frontier in Farming; Intergenerational Farm Transitions: Planning for Success; and the 2012 Farm Bill: What Does the Future Hold?

The conference will be held at the Flint Hills Technical College 3301 W. 18th Ave., Emporia, Ks. from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Cost is \$20 per person, which will cover lunch, snacks and materials. Registration is limited to the first 150 persons, and the deadline for registrations is Monday November 15.

A detailed agenda with presenters listed is available at the KRC website. Online registration is also available at the website (www.kansasruralcenter.org), where you may register online (and pay by credit card), or print out a registration form and mail it and your check in. Or contact the KRC office at 785-873-3431, or ddysart@rainbowtel.net, for more information.

Co-sponsoring the event is the Kansas Center For Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops (KCSAAC). Numerous other organizations and agencies will have display tables.

The Kansas Rural Center is a non-profit organization promoting sustainable agriculture and a sustainable food system through research and education activities. -30-