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For Immediate Release

UPCOMING WORKSHOP ADDRESSES ON-FARM FOOD SAFETY FOR FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PRODUCERS

Lawrence, Kan. - As the demand for local and organic food grows nationwide, so does the expectation of consumers and institutional buyers for clean produce that lasts on the shelf and in the refrigerator.

On March 30, 2011, the Kansas Rural Center and K-State Research and Extension in Douglas County will co-host a full-day workshop to address issues surrounding on-farm food safety and handling.

Chris Blanchard, owner of Rock Spring Farm near Decorah, Iowa, is the keynote speaker. Blanchard will review Good Agricultural Practices or GAPs and his innovative methods of implementing GAPs on his farm. He will emphasize making the record-keeping recommendations of GAPs flow with farm work rather than existing as a separate set of tasks and requirements.

The workshop is geared towards fruit and vegetable farm owners and operators and their key employees. Food service and/or produce buyer professionals, participants in school or other educational gardening ventures, and educators who work with specialty crop production and/or food safety and food service are also encouraged to attend.

Participants will gain a better understanding of the main areas of farm food safety; be able to assess areas that require implementation of GAPs to reduce chemical, physical, and biological risks; and develop Standard Operating Procedures and recordkeeping logs.

The workshop will be at the Dreher Family 4-H Building on the Douglas County 4-H Fairgrounds, 2110 Harper St, Lawrence. Doors will open at 8:30 a.m. and the workshop will run from 9:00 a.m. - 4:45 p.m.

Registration is \$20 per farm or individual if postmarked prior to March 25. Registration includes one set of handouts and one lunch; additional lunches are \$8 each. Late registrations are \$25 per farm or individual.

Rock Spring Farm is a fifteen acre certified organic farm that produces vegetables and herbs. Blanchard sells produce year-round through a two hundred member CSA, food stores, and a farmers market. Rock Spring Farm passed a USDA GAPs audit in the fall of 2010.

The workshop is also sponsored by the Kansas Department of Commerce Rural Development division, USDA's Risk Management Agency, the Kansas Department of Agriculture, LiveWell Lawrence, The Merc, Earth Flowers, Growing For Market, the Downtown Lawrence Farmers Market, Pachamama's Free State Brewing Company, and Hy-Vee. Lunch is provided by Local Burger.

More information is available by calling K-State Research and Extension in Douglas County at 785-843-7058 or by visiting www.douglas.ksu.edu or .kansasruralcenter.org. -30-