

Winter 2023

# RURAL PAPERS

Reporting with commentary on agricultural and rural issues



What Will Hemp Do For Kansas • Farm to School • Community Snapshots  
Board Member Spotlight • Emerging Young Farmers • Local Food Promotion Program  
Making Educated Moves in 2023



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## WHAT WE DO

The Kansas Rural Center (KRC) is a non-profit organization founded in 1979. We promote the long-term health of the land and its people through research, education, and advocacy. KRC cultivates grassroots support for public policies that encourage family farming and stewardship of soil and water. KRC is committed to economically viable, ecologically sound, and socially just agriculture.

## OUR MISSION

To promote the long-term health of the land and its people through research, education and advocacy that advance an economically viable, ecologically sound, and socially just food and farming system.

## OUR VISION

KRC believes that diversified farming systems hold the key to preserving, developing and maintaining a food and farming future that provides healthy food, a healthy environment and social structure, and meaningful livelihoods.

## RURAL PAPERS

Rural Papers is the voice of the Kansas Rural Center. It is published 3 - 6 times a year, in print and digitally. Rural Papers is jointly edited by KRC staff. Reprints of articles are encouraged with acknowledgement of Rural Papers and the author.

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## KRC Staff Members

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - Tom Buller

Tom owns and operates a vegetable farm and has been growing organic vegetables since 2006. He co-authored "Growing Under Cover: A Kansas Grower's Guide" and "Growing Over Cover: A Kansas Specialty Crop Grower's Guide to Cover Crops" with partners at the Kansas Rural Center and K-State Research and Extension.

He was the founding president of the Kansas City Food Hub, a farmers' owned cooperative and currently serves as the organization's treasurer.



### PROGRAM & ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER - Ryan Goertzen-Regier

Ryan grew up and continues to work part-time on a 5th generation Kansas farm in Marion County that grows row crops and raises hogs and cattle. He graduated from Bethel College (North Newton, KS) with a BS in Social Work and a certificate in Conflict Management, before spending several years working with refugee resettlement in South Dakota and returning to Kansas.

He currently serves as the Vice President of the Kansas Farmers Union, and in the leadership of the Central Kansas Young Farmers Coalition. He also holds a seat on the Harvey County Food and Farm council.



### COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR - Charlotte French

Charlotte grew up in Rossville, Kansas, where she learned firsthand that small towns and rural lifestyles are the backbone of America. While her early years may signal a conventional farm and ranch upbringing, Charlotte considers herself an environmentalist.

Before coming to KRC, Charlotte expanded her knowledge of communications with Ogden Publications and Farming Unlimited and by volunteering with her local Sierra Club and Junior League chapters.



### PROGRAM COORDINATOR - Jackie Keller

Jackie owns a ¼ section of rangeland in Wabaunsee Co. and owns/manages a crop farm near Topeka, which she farmed as certified organic from '04-'20. Crops grown have included alfalfa, red clover, wheat/spelt, oats, triticale, barley, peas, corn, soy, milo and sunflowers. While living in California, Jackie volunteered for the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG) planting garlic/beans for low-income residents and weeding the Cesar Chavez Grade School raised beds. She's made three lobbying trips to D.C., testified at the KS State Capital, has served on her FSA County Committee since 2012 and continues as local contact for the Eastern KS Chapter of the Organic Crop Improvement Ass. (OCIA).



## Greetings from Tom Buller

At the beginning of December, I completed one year on the job here at the Kansas Rural Center. As that personal milestone passed, and the end of the calendar year approaches I've taken a bit of time to reflect on the work of the organization. We've had a busy year, with mostly new staff settling into a well-established organization. We developed a new logo to mark this period of transition within the organization, featured in this newsletter. Without a doubt, the highlight for me was gathering in person once again at our Food and Farm Conference, this year at Kansas Wesleyan University in Salina.



We were thrilled to be hosted by Kansas Wesleyan University, who is a new partner for KRC in the work of building sustainable food and farming systems in Kansas. There were so many wonderful speakers sharing about the great work going

on in Kansas and providing insight and inspiration for ways to build a more sustainable future. Dr. Daniel Wildcat and Stephen Lerner kicked off the conversation with an inspiring discussion of how indigenous wisdom and changing our mindset is key in our struggle live with a changing climate. We were able to share about work going on in regenerative agriculture, agrivoltaics, small livestock production, farmer-veteran efforts, diversity, equity, inclusion in agriculture and many other topics. We brought together a learning circle of women landowners and hosted discussions for beginning farmers. It was a great conference, and we appreciate everyone who was able to make it.

While our November conference is still top of mind for me, we've had a lot of other highlights in 2022. It has been a solid year of accomplishments. We hosted an online Beginning Farmer Conference in March. We worked at the Kansas Legislature this year, along with our partners in the Kansas Food and Farm Coalition to support cutting the state sales tax on food and we've started to spark discussion about the 2023 Farm Bill in our policy work at the national level. We've provided presentations and workshops on grants for farmers, farm transition, land access, and farm business management. We've connected with communities across the state to help support good work going on and

amplify the successes across the state.

This issue of the Rural Papers includes reflections on work we have accomplished so far, but also a preview of some of the exciting things that are coming in 2023 and beyond. Next year when we will roll out the first introductory sessions of our Farm Beginnings programming in January.

We also look forward to next year as we begin a new project we call Building the Central Kansas Food Corridor. We are working with partners at Common Ground Producers and Growers, St. John's Baptist Church of Salina and Kansas Wesleyan University to connect farmer in Central Kansas to local market opportunities, while expanding the model of Common Ground Producers and Growers to expand access to locally produced food even in areas with low food access. We're excited about what we've done this year, but even more enthused about what's next.



Kansas Rural Center's new logo, created by [amandandesign.com](http://amandandesign.com)



Farm Bill Panel at the 2022 Food and Farm Conference



Ryan leads KRC's beginning farmer and rancher program

# Kansas Rural Center uses Local Food Promotion Program Grant to Build “Central Kansas Food Corridor”

North Newton, KS – As part of its mission to promote the long-term health of the land and its people, the Kansas Rural Center (KRC) is pleased to announce its recent acceptance of a Local Food Promotion Program grant from the USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).

This project will see KRC and partners, Common Ground Producers and Growers, Kansas Wesleyan University and St. John’s Baptist Church of Salina working to create a “food corridor” along Interstate 135 that bridges Wichita and Salina in central Kansas, in which a new food hub will be established. Over the next three years KRC will work to bring farmers together to form a new food hub organization to assist with the aggregation and marketing of locally produced agricultural products and deliver them throughout the region. Additional work will be done to connect with food purchasers and wholesale markets and make sourcing local products easier for buyers.

“We’re excited to continue our work of supporting small farmers and rural communities with this food hub project!” said Ryan Goertzen-

Regier, the Farmer Engagement Coordinator for the grant. “By forming an organization that will assist existing farmers with scaling up, marketing, and delivering their local food products I hope to see the barriers to entering farming reduced for young and beginning farmers as well, who otherwise may have an extremely difficult time getting their farm businesses up and running.”

Other aspects of the project will focus on delivering fresh produce and local foods to food deserts and other areas with low access to healthy foods. The food hub’s distribution network will assist easier movement of local food throughout the region.

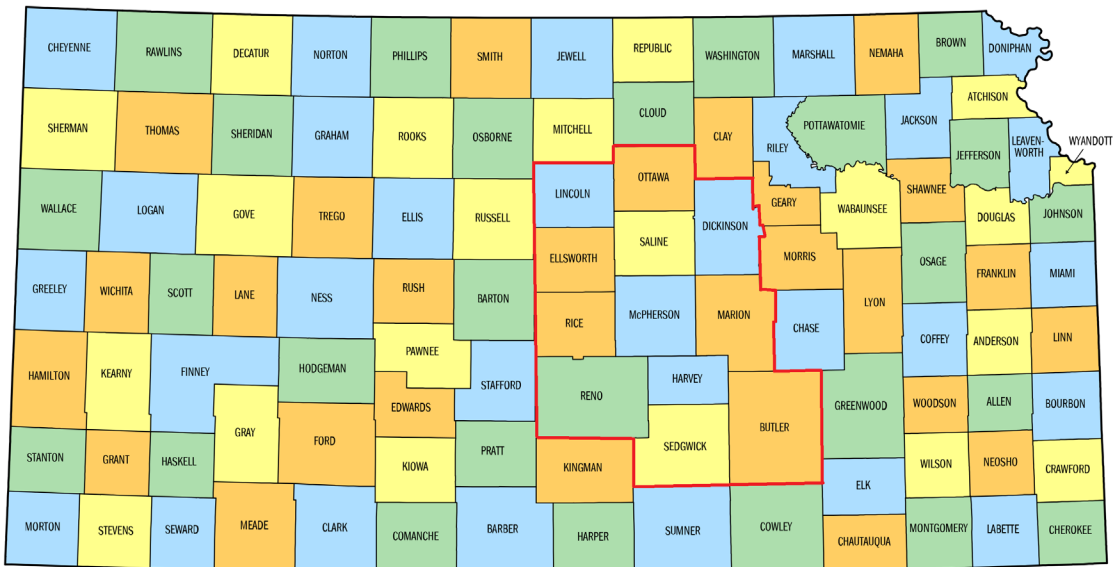
“Working together is the key to building thriving communities, and we’re thrilled to be working with Common Ground Producers and Growers, Kansas Wesleyan University and St. John’s Baptist Church of Salina to strengthen local food systems across central Kansas,” said Kansas Rural Center’s Executive Director, Tom Buller.

In the upcoming months Kansas Rural Center staff will be gathering with

farmers and ranchers from across a twelve county region to begin assessing farmer interest and capacity for the formation of the food hub and what legal structure it should utilize. Parties interested in becoming a seller or buyer of local foods in Sedgwick, Reno, Butler, Harvey, McPherson, Marion, Rice, Ellsworth, Saline, Dickinson, Ottawa and Lincoln counties can stay informed by signing up for Kansas Rural Center’s mailing list at <https://kansasruralcenter.org/newsletter> or contacting [foodhub@kansasruralcenter.org](mailto:foodhub@kansasruralcenter.org).

*Funding for “Building the Central Kansas Food Corridor: Creating a Food Hub and Delivery Network to Serve Communities Along Interstate 135 in Kansas and Increase Food Access” was made possible by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service through grant AM22LFPPKS1095-00. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA. For more information about the Kansas Rural Center, visit <https://kansasruralcenter.org/>, call 866-579-5469, or email [info@kansasruralcenter.org](mailto:info@kansasruralcenter.org).*

KANSAS



Counties serviced by the Central Kansas Food Corridor will be:

Sedgwick, Reno, Butler, Harvey, McPherson, Marion, Rice, Ellsworth, Saline, Dickinson, Ottawa and Lincoln.

Sign up for Kansas Rural Center’s mailing list at <https://kansasruralcenter.org/newsletter> or contacting [foodhub@kansasruralcenter.org](mailto:foodhub@kansasruralcenter.org).



## Metropolitan Woman Advocates for Rural Communities and Food Justice

I was raised on a fourth-generation family farm in Southwest Kansas with a deeply ingrained awareness of, and respect for, the environment, agriculture, and food systems. It is the framework for living that I was given by my parents and my community; it serves as the basis for how I experience and interact with others and the world around me.



I left Kansas in my late twenties and moved to New York City, where I attended law school at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University. Even across the country in the big city, my rural Kansas roots were deep and strong, and inspired me to concentrate my legal studies in the areas of food, agriculture, and environmental policy.

While it's safe to say I was the only one of my classmates studying "farm law" in Greenwich Village, I was able to find a community of like-minded advocates from whom I learned so much. During law school, I worked with the National Farmers Union and the Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, researching, drafting, and engaging with policy and policymakers in new and exciting

ways. After I graduated, I worked at GrowNYC, a large environmental nonprofit in NYC that provides access to locally grown food, community and school gardens, and recycling and waste reduction tools to neighborhoods across the city.

In this position, I got to work with stakeholders and members of communities both urban and rural. Almost daily, I was struck by the core values shared amongst all communities, regardless of their setting. And when it came to food, everyone ultimately wanted to share. Farmers wanted to share their harvests, months of labor, and years of good stewardship; New Americans wanted to share their traditions, recipes, ingredients; Chefs wanted to share their creativity, Educators wanted to share their passions, Neighbors wanted to share their green space...the list could go on. This generosity of spirit was easily recognized by me – it was the same one that I had witnessed in my farm family and rural community.

After nearly a decade in NYC, I returned home to the heartland and got involved with the Kansas Rural Center shortly thereafter. I have been a Board Member since 2020. I love being involved with KRC because of its explicit focus on rural communities and their role in preserving, developing, and maintaining a food and farming future that provides healthy food, a healthy environment and social structure, and meaningful livelihoods. Vibrant, thriving rural communities benefit us all, regardless of where we live. KRC's work in communities across the state speaks to a high level of understanding and commitment to this principle.

I love being back home; I've always been a proud Kansan regardless of where I have lived. And I love using my legal skills to help organizations like KRC, Kansas Farmers Union, and the Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition further their missions. But I'm most excited by the opportunity to use what I have learned to help farm families and businesses in rural communities navigate their unique legal needs. My strong rural Kansas roots are the ones that allowed me to grow up and away, learn from others, and gain new skills. It feels great to return to those same

"And when it came to food, everyone ultimately wanted to share."

roots, now having the honor of also bringing something to share.

Thank you for sharing in the work and mission of the Kansas Rural Center. This holiday season, I invite you to invest in rural communities. If that means a donation, please visit [kansasruralcenter.org/donate](https://kansasruralcenter.org/donate).

If financial giving isn't possible for you this year, you can still support our work by sharing our story. Learn more about KRC and follow us on social media and subscribe to our newsletter.



## Beginning Farmer and Rancher Workshop Series

Throughout 2022 half of my job has been to work toward developing a beginning farmer and rancher training curriculum that the Kansas Rural Center can use to provide education to annual cohorts of new farmers who desire further education about farming but may not want to or be able to enroll in an agriculture program at a Kansas community college or state university.



Ryan Goertzen-Regier Program Manager, KRC

Many of the farmers I've interacted with do not come from generational farming families and tend to be interested in growing specialty crops, starting small meat or dairy operations, and other ventures outside the "typical" agricultural paradigm here in Kansas. Though young and beginning farmers already work hard to be good stewards of the land and plants or animals they want to raise, some of the business management aspects of their farms can be neglected due to busy schedules amongst the various other challenges of starting a farm. Thus, KRC decided to focus our training program on business management and holistic planning to help beginning farmers get their farm businesses off on the right foot.

Thanks to generous funding from the USDA's National Institute for Food and Agriculture we were able to provide some education to beginning farmers through a virtual beginning farmer

conference in March, with recordings available for farmers to access at [kansaruralcenter.org/bfr](http://kansaruralcenter.org/bfr). I was also able to meet with beginning farmers to hear what areas of education and assistance they felt were lacking or unavailable to them and gained valuable insight into what types of training beginners would like to see. In addition to these efforts, KRC joined the Farm Beginnings Collaborative (FBC), a cohort of sustainable agriculture and farmer education organizations that share curriculum components, best practices, and support for facilitators of classes. We at KRC feel that the FBC's guiding principles for farmer training of being "farmer led, community based, and promoting sustainable farming" are a great fit for us and the work we've been doing for over 40 years.

Our curriculum consists of real world instruction from farmers and technical experts and facilitation by KRC staff. The 10-12 week short course will include but is not limited to:

- Whole farm planning
  - Business formation
  - Financial management
  - Record keeping and taxes
  - Marketing
  - Scaling up business
  - Decision making
- And more

Participants will work each week to build a part of their farm business plan, culminating in a presentation of their farm business at the end of the course to classmates and providing farmers with a business plan they can take to lenders, etc. Farmers I spoke with valued in-person education and meeting with other farmers, but also anticipated difficulty with driving long distances for classes on a weekly basis. At this time we're considering using a hybrid strategy of meeting at a central location several times throughout the course with the remaining sessions held online to save participants time and fuel. A

high desire was indicated for farm tours and mentorship to be part of our program, aspects that we are still discussing how best to incorporate.

Though KRC applied for more funding to start full classes this winter we have not secured the money to make it happen, so are hosting a more pared down workshop series on Thursday evenings January 12, 19, and 26, 2023. We'll explore establishing purpose, assessing readiness to start a farm business, and creating a preliminary action plan to help farmers reach their goals.

Registration is \$15, and only \$5 for those who attended KRC's annual Food and Farm Conference!

If you feel passionate about the success of beginning farmers and ranchers like I do and want to support our efforts please reach out to [ryanrgr@kansaruralcenter.org](mailto:ryanrgr@kansaruralcenter.org) or head to <https://kansaruralcenter.org/> donate to add your financial support.

This KRC project was supported by Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program grant no. 1027549 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

### Links From This Article:

KRC Beginning Farmer Resources - <http://bit.ly/3jffDoL>

Farm Beginnings Collaborative - <https://bit.ly/3vdta3z>

Beginning Farmer Workshops - <https://bit.ly/3BQVkwA>

KSU Center for Sustainable Agriculture - <https://bit.ly/3hF7ESr>

Donate to KRC - <https://bit.ly/3zSrOie>

### How the Holistic Management testing questions can help align actions with your “true north.”

It's hard to imagine an environment more complex than a farm, with its multitude of environmental, economic and social decisions on any given day, along with unfolding long-term consequences of those decisions.



Julie Mettenburg.  
CLO, The Provenance Co

Holistic Management is a decision-making framework we can use to accelerate the outcomes we desire. Because our vision for our life and farm is unique, Holistic Managers start by defining what is important to us. We capture statements about the quality of life we desire and the future resource base needed to support it, into a document called the Holistic Context.

We can then set our priorities and test our decisions against our Holistic Context, ensuring our actions will support or accelerate our desired path.

#### Testing Questions

The following questions and testing process, attributable to Allan Savory, are utilized in holistic decision-making. Your Holistic Context should be in front of you or fresh in your mind. Then, consider your context as you ask the following questions,

which are best approached with the first question first and the last question last, and those in the middle in no particular order.

They are to be breezed through quickly, a process that gets easier as you gain practice.

- **Cause and effect:** Does this proposed action solve the root cause of my problem?

The brilliance of this question becomes apparent upon first consideration: Do I have a problem? Or is this action a solution in search of a problem? If the answer to this question is “no,” we are prompted to stop here and go back to the drawing board of our potential solutions, or perhaps rethink the “problem” altogether.

Furthermore, it helps us discover when we are treating only symptoms. If instead, we address the root cause of problem, we can perhaps eliminate the problem altogether, or at least stop perpetuating it.

- **Sustainability:** Does this action move me toward the future resource base I've defined, or away from it?

If financial security is central to quality of life for you, does it make sense to make a purchase utilizing debt? Or to leave your day job? If it is important to you to feel that you are making the world a better place through your work, does it make sense to continually choose a degrading path?

Choices like debt can seem inevitable, to get what we think we want. But if they are actually counter to the quality of life we would love, what are some other options we could consider?

Some of the most creative management scenarios and partnerships are born from this question. Sadly, some of the most painful losses could have been avoided by getting real about this question, as well.

- **High Marginal Reaction:** If I'm weighing two potential actions, which provides the biggest bang for my buck, of time and money spent?

This question often reveals which options provide the win-win-win outcomes, and which fall short. Or, does one action significantly shorten the path to your desired outcome? That's getting big bang for your buck.

- **Gross Profit Analysis:** If I'm weighing two potential financial options, how do they compare when I pencil out the profit and loss for each?

In financial planning, holistic managers will determine only direct revenues and expenses for any given enterprise. So, if the expense of doing the thing, when subtracted from any revenue of the thing, provide you with profit, how does that profit compare? Which option contributes the most to covering the overhead costs of your life and business?

This question helps address but also contextualize the inevitable question, “How does it pencil out?” Weighing the financials against your bigger-picture context helps ensure your decisions and outcomes are more holistic than utilizing profit alone.

- **Energy-money source and use:** What am I putting into this — from what source — and am I investing it into the best use?



This question challenges us to evaluate whether what we are considering is a potential “addictive” choice. Am I utilizing debt, which may entrap me? Will I continue to have to make this input or action to keep the business running? Or is it a one-time investment that will leap the whole forward?

In addition, when it comes to energy, it's asking us to think about whether we are converting sunlight into dollars, or utilizing less sustainable sources such as fossil fuels. And how about human energy — is this going to wear myself and my people down, or is it going to be additive to our overall energetic equation?

• **Weak links:** Have I considered the biological, social and financial weak links of this action?

As it sounds, the “weak link” is the link of your production chain that, when stressed, will break. Here’s how we would apply it:

• **Biological:** if we’re evaluating an intervention such as a pest control or a supplement, this question would prompt us to consider whether that intervention is timed at the right moment in the creature or system’s life cycle, to have the most impact.

• **Social:** This question asks us to consider the humans who might introduce challenge to our new solution. While not often a reason to not do the thing, this provides a valuable prompt to think through potential obstacles that we can prepare to avoid or manage, before we embark on the action. Spouses, parents, neighbors, colleagues — where might my action spark friction, and how might I prevent or assuage that friction?

• **Financial:** We recognize that the work of farming is to convert solar energy into dollars in our pocket, a process that causes

energy to go through three links in the chain: resource conversion (maximizing healthy roots in living soil), product conversion (maximizing the product we capture to sell from that resource base), and marketing conversion (getting top dollar for that product).

Am I addressing my weak link in this chain? Or am I applying a solution to a link in the chain that’s already performing better than one of the others? For example, investments in direct marketing often fall short to advance our business if we are not already maximizing green plants with living roots in healthy soil.

• Finally, the **gut check:** What is your gut telling you about this decision?

At the end of the day, many of us rely on our gut decisions. This last question empowers you to go with your gut. However, you will have considered the question from other angles as well, ensuring you emerge with a more holistic view and action path that advances your vision while minimizing risk of jeopardizing it in unforeseen ways.

The Holistic Context and context checks are just one small piece of the Holistic Management framework, but one of the most powerful. More information is available in the Holistic Management texts by Allan Savory and from instruction and assistance of trained Holistic Management professionals and educators.

Julie Mettenburg is a Master Field Professional for the Savory Institute ([savory.global](http://savory.global)) and Chief of Land Operations for The Provenance Co, a land regeneration management company ([theprovenanceco.com](http://theprovenanceco.com)). She is a prior Executive Director of the Kansas Rural Center.

**Holistic Management Testing Questions**

- Cause and Effect
- Sustainability
- High Marginal Reactions
- Gross Profit Analysis
- Energy-Money Source and Use
- Weak Links
- Biological
- Social
- Financial
- Gut Check

Notes:

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## What Will Hemp Do For Kansas?

As we gear up for 2023, most Kansans know about the reintroduction of hemp as a protected agricultural commodity. After operating under a research program from 2019 to 2021, the Kansas Department of Agriculture oversees our state's commercial hemp program, while businesses that process hemp are now registered with the State Fire Marshal's office.

for farmers growing varieties more conducive to their environments and operations as traditional row crop farmers. It is exciting to see more fiber/grain cultivars that are signaling renewed investment into an industry contributing globally to sustainability and regenerative practices. Another positive sign is USDA's Risk Management Agency now offers basic

for textiles. According to data from USDA and more recently information from South Bend Industrial Hemp in Great Bend, KS, average net returns for hemp for fiber range from \$400-600 and returns for hemp seed are estimated to range from \$400-\$450 per acre. While these figures fluctuate based on multiple factors, the trends documented in U.S. Congressional



Kelly Rippel - Kansans for Hemp

The first few years saw inclement weather, the learning curve to grow and harvest hemp, and a still-emerging supply chain that have all contributed to a decreasing number of licensed and harvested acres over time. However, there are multiple factors causing a now positive shift: The initial years of Kansas' hemp program saw 90-93% of licensees growing high labor-intensive varieties for floral biomass to be extracted for CBD products. This was mainly due to national attention about cannabidiol's therapeutic benefits through lobbying efforts and legal definitions, which unfortunately distracted focus from other beneficial plant compounds and end uses (see attached image - Source.)

In 2022 Kansas had just over 1,094 licensed hemp acres. As we've seen with the already saturated CBD market from previous years' yields and large companies coming onto the scene, there has been an expected transition

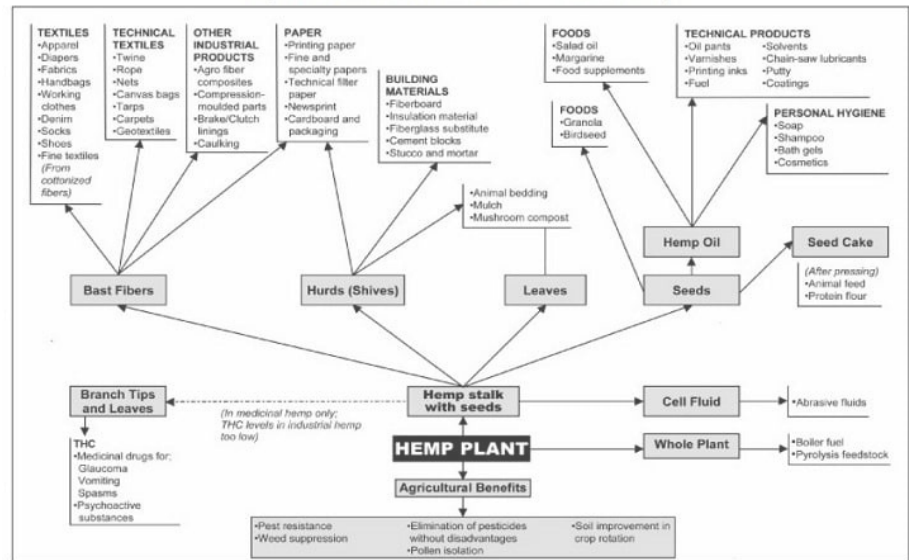
crop insurance to hemp farmers and the program will evolve over time.

The "lowest hanging fruit" for hemp is food for humans and animal feed. This is because established research and protocols have been developed, and are ongoing for full marketability approval at the federal level. At grocery stores a vast majority of hemp derived foods such as protein powder, hemp hearts and seeds are currently imported from countries such as Canada. However, changes are expected to be coming in the 2023 Farm Bill with potential to open up pathways for domestic production opportunities. The next sectors Kansas farmers can be excited about are hemp hurd for hempcrete, insulation and construction materials, various forms for biocomposites, and long fiber

reports and economic studies show hemp's potential is exponential with projected stabilizing in the coming years.

While there are fewer than a handful of industrial hemp processors in the state, they are now up and running and are open to work with farmers as expansion into coops may be on the horizon. There are still hemp biomass extractors for those growing floral material for CBD products, which we will continue seeing changes as other forms of cannabis become protected in the upcoming legislative session. Fortunately, Kansas is also home to multiple agricultural equipment entities including Shield Ag in Hutchinson that provides equipment farmers can use for cultivating hemp. Another manufacturer of hemp harvesting machinery is located in Giltner, Nebraska – Bish Enterprises &

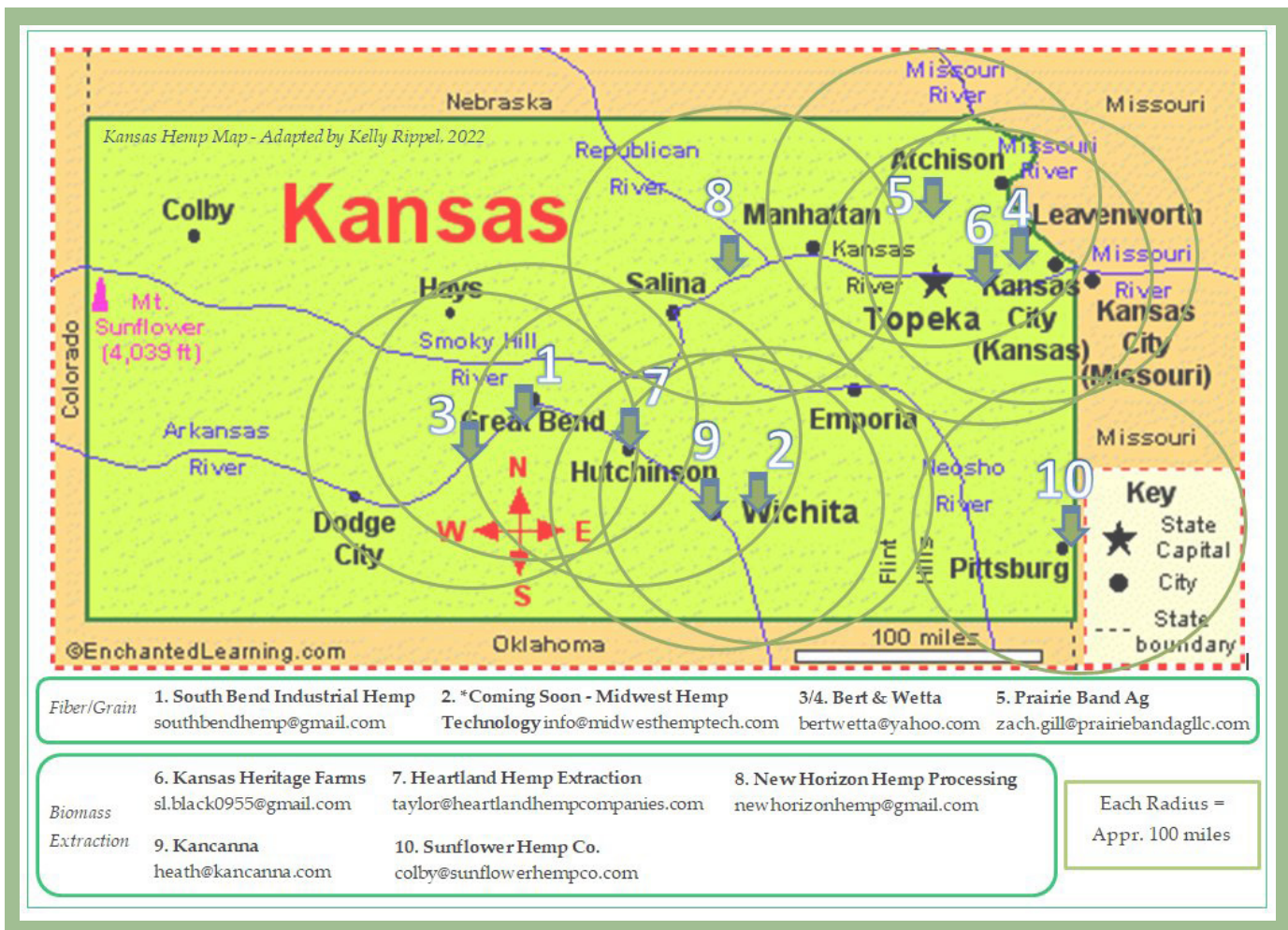
Figure 1. Modern Uses for Industrial Hemp



Source: Industrial Hemp Association of Tasmania, <http://www.ihat.org.au/>.

This article was originally published in the Kansas Reflector, in partnership with KRC.





**Hemp Harvest Works.**

Every operation is different, but some farmers find that utilizing or modifying their own combines with headers or sickle bars is sufficient. Here is a snapshot of the current industrial hemp processors throughout Kansas. Multiple resources exist for information on production including a best practices planting guide from Kansas Hemp Consortium and other production guides and reports. The value added economic opportunity hemp can provide farmers equates to gaining multiple revenue streams from one crop. In addition, hemp is a powerful soil health tool. As hemp grows naturally its roots spread wide and deep creating increased soil oxygenation. As a result, robust mycorrhizae can form leading to soil biodiversity. Another benefit of hemp is enhanced carbon sequestration and remediation of heavy metals

and contaminants. Studies also demonstrate that introducing hemp as a rotation crop can actually increase successive yields of other crops grown on that field. At the same time, when optimal planting density and population are reached, hemp is a natural weed suppressor so herbicides and weed killers become an unneeded input helping farmers' bottom line.

The following are some of the challenges we know farmers are being faced with in the years ahead: Farming operations, including small family farms, take pride in their work and legacies so they do not want to pass on hardship or debt to anyone especially their own families. At the same time, due to drought and other cause of losses many are so reliant on crop insurance to help keep them going from year to year while rarely seem to be getting ahead due to inflation, costs of inputs, labor

scarcity, equipment costs/supply chain shortages, etc. What's more, the trajectory of growing crops that often fail is simply not sustainable, especially on certain ground in areas that experiences frequent problematic weather conditions. This is where diversification and innovation comes in - hemp is currently and will continue to play a critical role for empowering cities and rural communities alike.

Having conversations with elected leaders at the local, county, state and national levels is how we can ensure these opportunities remain available for Kansans. If you are interested in learning more about becoming licensed to grow hemp, please visit Kansas Department of Agriculture's website. Please feel free to reach out to Kansans for Hemp and other industry leaders to connect with Kansas' growing hemp network.

## Selling Local Food Product to Schools

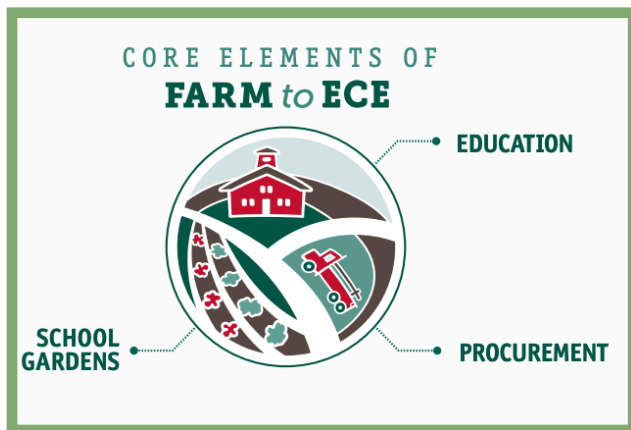
At the 2022 KRC Food and Farm Conference I led a discussion on selling local products to schools, an idea that is a central part of the concept referred to Farm to School. Farm to School also often incorporates school gardening and classroom lessons on food production. This session was based upon the “Bringing the Farm to School” curriculum developed by the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) and the National Farm to School Network.

procurement bidding process. There are opportunities for districts to buy smaller quantities through micro and small purchase programs. These could include one-time purchases for a locally focused meal or smaller quantities for things like a school salad bar. Finally, sometimes people think Farm to School only covers local vegetables. While there are specific nutritional standards that might make it easier for farmers to sell certain products, like orange vegetables, schools can source any part of a school meal locally.

School Census is separate from the regular Census of Agriculture, and covers school food authorities across the country and collects information about what school districts are already buying local foods and where there is interest in buying more. You can browse the data for yourself at <https://farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov>

If you are interested in more information on producing for schools check out the “Bringing the Farm to School” producers resource page at:

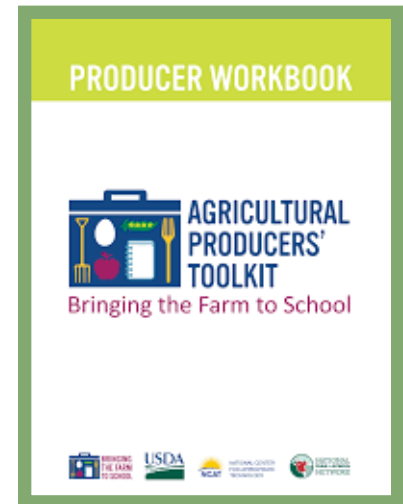
<https://www.farmtoschool.org/our-work/bringing-the-farm-to-school-producer-resources>



This training framework helps producers develop understanding of the school market for local foods and learn about the opportunities and some of the challenges of selling to schools. The presentation covered some of the benefits of schools sourcing local farm products including the support for local farmers, businesses and economies, improved school meal quality with fresh products and increases kids’ willingness to try new fruits and vegetables. We also explored some of the common misconceptions about selling local foods to schools. Contrary to common understanding there are no federal regulations specifying that local producers must have certain food safety qualifications to sell to local districts. Those rules are set up at the state and local level. Another common misconception is that school districts can only buy in large quantities or through a sealed

Perhaps the big takeaway from the conference session is that schools can be a good market for farmers, even those who produce on a limited scale, but producers must take some effort to connect with and learn about the individual school food authorities around them. There is a lot of flexibility in what schools can buy and in what quantities they

need products so farmers need to take time to get to know the food purchasers in the school systems in their area. Likewise, the types of food preparation facilities available varies greatly between school districts (or school food authorities), which can impact the types of products they are interested in purchasing. One participant noted that a common problem faced by most districts in Kansas right now is low staffing on food service personnel. This means schools might be inclined to opt for food that is easier or less time-consuming to prepare, but again that all depends on the district. So schools might be a consistent market for farmers but farmers need to do homework first about the needs and wants of the school food authorities in their area. One tool for a good first step for producers to start that process is digging into the USDA Farm to School Census. The Farm to



There is a complete workbook on that page to help guide producers through market investigation and production planning for selling to schools.

One more note, many states have statewide farm to school policies that support Farm to School efforts, so that might be something that Kansas can adopt in the future, as these policies are a win for local districts and the local economy. We will keep KRC supporters of opportunities to support such policies in the future.

To keep in touch with the latest farm to school information for Kansas, KRC is building out a resource page that is at: [www.ksfarmtoschool.org](http://www.ksfarmtoschool.org).



# Community Snapshots: An Overview of the KRC Conference Session

At this year's Food and Farm Conference, I hosted the Community Snapshots session inviting local food providers to highlight their operations. Representing the KS Specialty Crops Growers Ass. (KSCGA), Pete Pierson kicked off the session with snapshots of production, sales, reach, impact and potential impact.

groceries in over 35 miles!

More of Pete's slides exhibited Wichita's impressive Rise Farms, a 15,000 square-foot urban farm and a 204-panel solar farm situated on the roof of the Fidelity Bank building equipped with food prep facilities. Local markets are supplied helping to fill the gap of no grocery store in urban Wichita, along with restaurants, an on-site market (Firefly) and a food hub gearing up for input from regional growers. Also fulfilling a hungry demand of Wichita restaurants is TLC Nursery in Independence, where brilliant gourmet mushrooms are produced.

organization involved reinvestment in community, educational purpose, tax-deductible donations and federal income tax exemption. Objectives include expansion of the CSA, more support for farmers including new farmers, healthy/local choices, working with the Community Resilience Hub at Wesleyan, education thru cooking and preserving. Pictures displayed a futuristic new store planned for fall 2023 which will move the location to the newly developed business district in downtown Salina on Santa Fe Avenue!

Last up was Jessica L. Kootz, a very up-beat Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent for Midway Extension District which serves Ellsworth and Russell counties. Jessica showed off fun cooking swag used to help promote the Simply Produce program which incentivizes purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables from local grocers. During the pandemic, Jessica and other community stakeholders strategized ways to make Simply Produce Ellsworth County work during a pandemic and ensure the program had sustainability and longevity. The program has been going strong since September 2020 and continues to reach new households each month. It has brought together a variety of community partners: American Legion Post 174, Ellsworth County Economic Development, Ellsworth County Medical Center, and most importantly Gene's Heartland Foods in Ellsworth. These connections have proven invaluable to the success of the local Simply Produce program!

Readers may remember the success story of the Kearny County Farmers Market which is now introducing monthly "Winter Crates" of local produce, frozen meat, eggs, baked and dry goods with optional culinary classes educating customers/the public on how to utilize local produce at home. The collective, which grew from 4 to 16 growers, provides active outreach, networking, education, and exploration (trials) to expand production and diversity. The City of Lakin Community Support Coordinator is linking the market and growers to community/ economic development.

Enthusiastic Vickee Spicer told the story of Prairie Land Market in Salina which started as a Local Cooperative in the 70s. A CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) began in 2016 and prepared food is also now offered. A new board formed in 2020 and by early 2022, 501 (c)(3) status was obtained. The transition from co-op to charitable



Jackie Keller - Program Coordinator, KRC

Among growers highlighted was Teck Farms, an organic six-acre urban farm in Hutchinson who's had success with grant funding. They've demonstrated remarkable processing/storage infrastructure and a proactive approach to local schools and hospitals. They are a 501 (c) (3) set up for education providing learning for food safety requirements. Next, Pete showed gorgeous photos of mouthwatering melons, pumpkins, peaches and sweet corn from Depot Market in Courtland, one of the largest producers in the North Central region. Depot Market is a wholesaler, supplying markets across the state and intake for smaller growers (realized and potential), and they are a Farm Market too- the only source for



Teck Farms



Depot Market in Courtland



Rise Farms



The Future Prairie Land Market



## A Study Between Heirloom and Hybrid Vegetable Varieties

My name is Daryline Dayzie, and I am an Indigenous student at Kansas State University. I was born and raised on the Navajo Nation reservation. It is the largest tribal nation in northeastern Arizona, northwest New Mexico, and southeast Utah. Within the reservation, many residents live in a food desert community. Grocery stores take advantage of prices by overpricing fresh produce and canned goods. Others resort to traveling 100+ miles to the nearest Walmart to buy affordable essentials to last the rest of the month. Hauling water for my grandparents' home and livestock are some challenges my people continue to face on the reservation.

Haskell Indian Nation University as an undergrad and Kansas State University as a graduate student. They gave me a space where I could incorporate my tribal teaching into my research. The main driving force for me to include my homelands was food sovereignty. In the years 2021 and 2022, Kansas State University

provided me with a 90x90 feet vegetable plot to do my research. Using this opportunity, I decided to grow both heirloom and hybrid varieties as they can benefit food desert communities. This research looks at yields in the case of having accessible food during dry conditions.

Landscape of Navajo Nation - Images Provided by Daryline Dayzie



Experimental garden in Manhattan Kansas



Daryline Dayzie - Kansas State

The challenges my people go through are why I continue my education. From childhood to adulthood, my Navajo language was spoken and ceremonial practices were said to heal relatives. To this day, I carry my language and prayers for motivation. Most importantly, I keep my tribal teachings close as I continue my education. These teachings came from my parents and grandparents and were taught in the farm fields, at home and in ceremonies. The teachings were more than just learning how to respect nature and more than just offerings. They were the way of life and how we can take care of one another.

As I continue my educational journey, I am truly blessed to have attended both



In addition, food sovereignty is a crucial practice to continue the historical lineage of heirloom seeds and to preserve the cultural background that tribal nations carry. Residents and tribal nations continue to face environmental conditions that create scarcity in heirloom vegetable production. Modern vegetable breeding, particularly hybridization, has improved yield, shelf life, pests, and environmental durability. The purpose of this research is to understand and compare yield production of heirloom and hybrid tomatoes (*Solanum lycopersicum*) 'Cherokee Purple' vs. 'Medusa', Anaheim-chili peppers (*Capsicum annuum*) 'Anaheim 118' vs. 'Changer' and Butternut squash (*Cucurbita moschata*) 'Neck Pumpkin' vs. 'Waltham' vs. 'Avalon.' In addition, the butternut squash shelf life and Brix sugar content were recorded.

Furthermore, in my research, three sister gardens demonstration of corn, squash, and beans were planted in each corner of the plot. Before growing the vegetables, I prayed for good rain and a large harvest. In the mid-season, I harvested the corn pollen, as they are a sacred element for prayers. I currently use the corn pollen for my prayers, a prime example of me continuing my tribal teachings. With this research, I encourage other tribal students to continue or build food sovereignty within their community while including tribal values.



Squash harvest in Manhattan, Kansas

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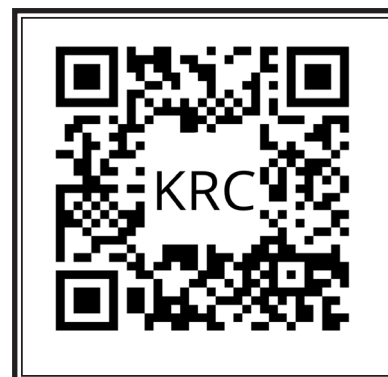
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