

Winter 2023

RURAL PAPERS

Reporting with commentary on agricultural and rural issues



Staff Updates • Farm Bill • Supporting Paul Johnson • KSAAC: A Brief History
Board Member Spotlight • Farm Beginnings Training • Urban Ag Tour • Farm Beginnings
Mental Health • Learning About Leaves • Insights from Pipeline Food's Bankruptcy • Podcast Chat

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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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Cover photo "Pigs in Snow"
Provided by: Daniel Regier



2023 Accomplishments and What to Look Forward To



Tom Buller, Executive Director - It has been a busy year for the Kansas Rural Center, marked by amazing new opportunities and growth. We have added two staff members over the past year, Teresa Kelly and Dakota Welch, who have helped us connect with many new people and groups across the state. This year we have been able to join into two new, multi-year, regional partnerships, the Heartland Environmental Justice Center and the Heartland Regional Food Business Center which will continue for years to come. These programs help us reach out to farmers and communities across the state and provide resources to address the issues they are facing. We are poised to help many new and beginning farmers over

the coming years as we start our Farm Beginnings work this coming January. We also continue our work to help bring farmers and food buyers together in Central Kansas as we wrapped up year one of our project to build the Central Kansas Food Corridor along Interstate 135. What was supposed to be the 2023 Farm Bill kept us engaged with farmers and politicians as we push for a sustainable vision for American agriculture. Now maybe it will be the 2024 Farm Bill, we shall see... We had a very successful conference in Topeka this year, thanks to all who attended and shared their knowledge with each other. While we are working hard to do great things in the state of Kansas, we couldn't have any impact without your support. Thanks for helping us work for the health of the land and its people!

Thanks,
Tom



Charlotte French-Allen, Communication and Events Coordinator - This year has been a grand experiment in flexing our voice at Kansas Rural Center. From our Rural Cinema initiatives and tabling, to our KRC stickers and social media promotions, we have been collectively working to get in front of our public. It hurts my heart when people ask if we are "new," and that is something that I am passionate about fixing for KRC. A few projects that I am particularly proud of this year are our eight Farm to School Videos to guide those exploring their options, our Soil Health podcast series completed in partnership with the Prairie Ramblings podcast allowed us to uplift another Kansas media source while highlighting the work of four Kansas farmers who care deeply for our soils, the Rural Cinema video showings that were coordinated in partnership with Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation allowed us to support community interest in food sovereignty, the promotion of the Common Ground film has given us an opportunity to be seen as a resource to those new to the idea of regenerative practices and soil health, and of course, this year's conference where all of these ideas converged to offer education and collaboration to the food and farm curious from across the State. Before joining the KRC team, it was the conference that drew me in and let me know, "These are where my people are." This feeling weighs heavily on me from year to year, and I consider injecting that feeling across the media created on behalf of KRC. I hope you, our followers, feel that sense of belonging here with those interested in food sovereignty, community strength, and sustainable practices.

Next year, we are excited to continue our work in Rural Cinema and to broaden the reach of our screenings to include Prairie Hollow Production's Hot Times in the Heartland, Kiss the Ground's Farmer's Cut of Common Ground, and We Live Here, which features Courtney and Denise Skeeba. Please feel free to contact us with documentaries that you feel would be a good fit for communities in Kansas.

With over 1,400 subscribers, we will form a plan to continue the podcast. The release dates are currently "evergreen" but will have a more steady schedule. I am looking forward to providing outreach support with our newest initiatives: Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center, Heartland Regional Food Business Center, Beginning Farmer Training, and the Central Kansas Food Hub.

Please read on for more information about these projects, as highlighted by my coworkers, and contact me if you are interested in helping with outreach. charlotte@kansasruralcenter.org



Ryan Goertzen-Regier, Program and Administrative Manager - Since I became aware of the Kansas Rural Center years ago, I've always appreciated the core values that the organization and its founders hold dear. Our guiding principles have always been that agriculture must be environmentally and ecologically sound, and provide for the self-renewal of our natural resources of soil and water – and people on the land. These excellent goals, along with creating and stewarding food and farm businesses that are economically viable and socially just make up the core of our work, and of the initiatives I'm currently working on.

Part of my job is to help build the local and regional food system here in Central Kansas.

Back in 2022 KRC was granted a Local Food Promotion Program grant award to explore the creation of a new food hub entity or increased support of an existing entity to resource farmers and local food purchasers in the region. Food hubs are a collaborative strategy that I've been excited about for a long time, and I'm thrilled to be able to work on a project to hopefully bring farmers together in this way. The basic idea is that a food hub encompasses a group of farmers who aggregate, market, and distribute their products together to mid-tier wholesale purchasers, such as grocery stores, restaurants, school and institutional cafeterias, and more. These producers work together to fill orders that a single one of them couldn't do alone and simplify the selling process for farmers (sell to the food hub instead of 20 restaurants) and buying process for purchasers (buy from a food hub to fill an order, rather than contract with 20 farmers selling different products). Though a food hub is certainly not a perfect solution for every farmer or situation, I hope that we can continue to find creative and collaborative ways to enhance business for farmers and local food access across the region.

I'm also currently working on launching KRC's first "Farm Beginnings" class in the middle of January 2024. Farm Beginnings is a short-form whole farm business planning course that will run for eight weeks starting the week of January 15. Last year we joined the Farm Beginnings Collaborative, a nationwide group of like-minded organizations who share best practices and teaching experience around beginning farmer training that is farmer-led, community based, and focused on sustainable agriculture. You can find out more information and register for the upcoming course on page 9 of this issue of Rural Papers. We know how dire the need is for more beginning farmers and ranchers in Kansas, and I'm excited that KRC will be contributing to ensuring new farmers' success through Farm Beginnings!



Jackie Keller, Program Coordinator - The year started off with a big bang with award of a Rural Cinema grant from Working Films to help address Environmental Justice issues with Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation (PBPB) as partner in 2023. With the added tool of film screenings, authentic relationships were further developed with PBPB, especially with Mikayla Kerron, who took the 'bull by the horns,' as community leader on this project. Four trainings on the eight elements were helpful for community engagement, along with guidance from Working Films staff and input from the Rural Cinema Cohort during check-in meetings. In addition, I connected with Native Chef Jason Champagne during several events

he catered including Gathering Of Native Americans, Indigenous People's Day at K-State and KU, and the Tribal Health Summit in Topeka, organized by KS Alliance for Tribal Community Health (KATCH), where KRC provided healthy breakfast and snack items I procured from local vendors. During the Summit, I was a panelist in the Food Sovereignty breakout and was one of three judges for the health themed chalk drawing contest. Involvement with KATCH has fostered existing and new relationships.

Genuine bonds have also blossomed with the Central Topeka Grocery Oasis (CTGO) board. I've attended two in-person monthly meetings as a new member, and after one Shawnee County Farm and Food Advisory Council meeting, also as a new member, I now serve on the Member Recruitment Subcommittee. I am on the Rural Grocery Initiative (RGI) Advisory Board and have provided input to a consultant who is helping RGI with their Strategic Plan. The KRC conference provided further engagement with grocery endeavors. Adetola Lamidi, a K-State graduate student in Ag. Economics, co-presented with Regena Lance, owner of the Mildred Store, on the Feasibility Study for a Group Purchasing Cooperative for rural grocers in Southeast KS. The CTGO Board President, Marge Ahrens, also presented in the "Independent Grocery Stories" breakout. Other conference sessions I

coordinated were the Hemp Tour and the Mental Health Panel. I led the two-part Conservation Learning Circle for Women Landowners and obtained post-screening discussants for the Film Track. Talk has begun about a possible future film screening in Allen Co. at the Mildred Store, and/or in Humboldt on the square.

Other accomplishments include staying abreast to EJ TCTAC (Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Center), which will provide training and other assistance to build capacity for navigating federal grant applications systems, writing strong grant proposals, and effectively managing grant funding. Outreach to communities has begun. Also, I have been lightly a part of planning for Common Ground screenings in Lawrence and Overland Park. Conversations about future screenings in Manhattan, Salina and Wichita have ensued. Lastly, I am one of the co-planners for the KHF IVE cohort Learning Circle on anti-racism which will be Jan. 18 where three KRC staff are invited to attend.



Teresa Kelly, Food Value Chain Coordinator - I love this job. My part of the journey developing a Food Corridor stretching 90 miles and covering 12 counties has been fun and challenging. Fun outweighing the challenges.

Here are some of the highlights along the way, in no particular order. I met in person our partners at Common Ground and Kansas Wesleyan, and St John's and toured their facilities. It is so helpful to walk in the path with those you are working with. I participated in the Farm to School strategic planning meeting, the Local Food Roundtable, toured the Potawatomie Band industrial hemp facility prior to our conference; enjoyed a FAM tour of Salina's local food scene including producers and wholesale buyers, toured the Kansas Land Institute, met with local food producers and buyers in Wichita, facilitated a wholesale sales session and supported our webinar series. So many new faces and places that are part of a great map-literally hanging on my wall in my office- starting to take shape as I begin to connect the dots shaping a vibrant food corridor.

I thrive on discovery and building community. This year has been a lot of both. It is exciting to look forward to the possibilities ahead in 2024.



Dakota Welch, Farm Business Navigator - Since coming on board with KRC in August, I've been spending the last few months getting a feel for the newly created role of a 'farm business navigator' and looking for ways to be the most effective in this position. Luckily for me, I was able to hit the ground running in this new work, as I had set out to serve farmers in much of the same capacity when I left my lending career in April to work as an independent consultant for farms seeking access to land and capital. In the first several weeks of joining KRC, I spent time working to identify all of the various areas that a farm business may need direction, and I ultimately identified these areas to be the following: business planning, mentorship and technical support, access to capital, access to land, and robust marketing opportunities.

In recognizing that these focus points likely don't address all the needs of a farm business, I felt that this encompasses much of what it takes to build a thriving enterprise. After identifying these areas, the work I've been doing up to this point has largely been engaging with farm businesses as well as identifying opportunities in each of these categories of support. What I've found is that no two farms are the same when it comes to their needs and desires, and this often wrang true in my former career as a lender. In looking at some of the early 'wins', I've been able to direct one farm business to our Farm Beginnings program; in another instance, I've served a farmer in helping them to identify a grant opportunity for value added production; and in a more recent case, I'm working with an individual to explore a cooperative operation model as a creative approach to land access. In all of this, probably the most important use of my time has simply been outreach to both farmers and other service providers, as these opportunities to serve individuals can't happen without their awareness of what we do. I'll close by saying thank you to all that continue to support the Kansas Rural Center in our work. We couldn't make any of this possible without you.

Kansas advocates plant seeds of new farm bill addressing needs of diverse agricultural economy

Kansas Rural Center policy analyst Paul Johnson said the federal farm bill plowed about two-thirds of crop subsidies into feed grains for livestock despite the U.S. Department of Agriculture's recommendation that half a person's diet feature fruits and vegetables.

Johnson said too many politicians were content with the government's recipe for stabilizing the agriculture economy and showed little interest in reform legislation matching USDA farm program strategies with dietary suggestions.

"It has health implications," said Johnson, an organic market gardener. "It's less than 1% of federal farm bill subsidies that go for primary sources of healthier food."

Congress was expected to complete a rewrite of the five-year law implemented in 2018, but conflict interfered with work by the House and Senate on a bipartisan compromise. Federal lawmakers, including President Joe Biden, agreed to a one-year extension of the farm law that had earmarked \$430 billion for food and agriculture objectives from 2019 to 2023.

About 80 cents of every \$1 of farm bill expenditures go to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps, while much of the remainder served interests of farmers engaged in growing wheat, corn, soybeans and sorghum. A fraction was reserved for specialty crops that included fruits ranging from apples to strawberries, vegetables such as artichokes and watermelon and tree nuts including

almonds and walnuts.

Johnson said only 7% of Kansas farmers were under the age of 35 and the average age was nearly 60. He said Kansans should expect a robust generational change in who farms the state during the next two decades.

"We need a whole new generation of beginning farmers to emerge for a better, more wholesome food system in Kansas," he said. "We need a Kansas food-farm plan from the Department of Commerce and Department of Agriculture. We need a robust debate. In this state ... the Kansas Legislature doesn't seem to take notice. We need to build it into the congressional campaigns and really talk about kind of the future of farming in Kansas."

Kansas Farmers Union executive director Nick Levendofsky, who also appeared on the Kansas Reflector podcast with Johnson to talk about the farm bill, said updates to the federal law in 2024 should recognize broader agriculture interests.

National policy ought to place an emphasis on making food for U.S. consumers affordable, accessible and healthy, he said.

"Kansas was once one of those states that grew a lot of produce. We were growing grapes. We were growing potatoes and we were growing watermelon. There was lots and lots of diversity at one time," said Levendofsky, part of a farm family operation near Belleville. "We could still be doing this. It's just that we choose not to and because the system allows for the production of these other crops instead."

In any given year, Kansas received \$1 billion to \$1.2 billion for farm programs and \$400 million to \$500 million for food stamps. Federal funding invested in Kansas has been so substantial that farmers concentrated on fewer crops.

Johnson said Congress could adjust the farm bill to bring about more equity in terms of distributing taxpayer funding. He said there were about 58,500 farms in Kansas, but 2,900 accounted for three-fourths of the state's farm sales in 2017.

In fact, he said, 88% of approximately \$1 billion in federal farm payments scattered across Kansas in the past 20 years went to 20% of farms in the state.

"So, only 12% of those farm payments were left over for the remaining, you know, 80% of farms," Johnson said.

Levendofsky said Congress should fully fund conservative programs authorized in the farm bill to get as much participation as possible. In 2020, only 18% of eligible Conservation Stewardship Program applicants in Kansas received funding to develop whole farm conservation and soil improvement programs.

There is interest in drafting legislation requiring farmers who benefit from subsidized crop insurance to adopt land use practices embraced by environmentalists, Levendofsky said.

Directives could include common practices such as no-till cultivation, crop rotation, managed grazing,

plant of cover crops to preserve moisture or terraces to deter erosion. Sustainable farming practices could reduce erosion into streams, rivers and reservoirs that compromised the drinking water supply.

Levendofsky said the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, which made investments in clean

energy and climate action, included appropriations for farm conservation.

“Those programs are in place, so that we have that land to pass on to the next generation. It’s an investment,” Levendofsky said. “Preserving that land, preserving the water and the soil is key to all of this.”

This article is written by Tim Carpenter and originally published by Kansas Reflector (<https://kansasreflector.com>). To listen to the conversation please follow the link below or by listening to the Kansas Reflector podcast.

<https://on.soundcloud.com/LfMmw>

Support Paul’s Work with Kansas Rural Center



farming, and food systems policies and communities. Paul’s reporting and commentary is informed by an immense depth of knowledge about Kansas State politics and policies and research into the policies that impact the Kansas food and farming system. Beyond the reporting that is publicly visible, Paul is also active behind the scenes working to set up meetings with the leadership of organizations like K-State, the Kansas Department of Commerce and other key players across the state to figure out what can be done to build more sustainable food and farming systems in Kansas. Paul has consistently pushed that Kansas invest more in sustainable agriculture in a wide variety of ways, and that programs that do exist such as the Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops at K-State (<http://kansassustainableag.org/>) or the Beginning Farmer Loan Program at the Kansas Developmental Finance Authority (<https://kdfa.org/BeginningFarmer>) receive increased funding and public awareness. Paul’s detailed knowledge and understanding of the Kansas state budget and administrative structures is invaluable as we seek to strengthen support for sustainable food and farming systems across the state. Paul’s efforts and

advocacy are enriched by the lived experience he brings from his other role, as a vegetable farmer in Northeast Kansas.

To hear the latest example of the great work that Paul Johnson does, you can listen to a recent interview regarding the Farm Bill that Paul did with Nick Levendofsky, of the Kansas Farmer’s Union, and Tim Carpenter, of Kansas Reflector.

While we have partners who underwrite some of the cost to produce Policy Watch and our other policy efforts, we rely heavily on individual donors to keep these going. How can you support Paul’s work in the Statehouse and the other policy efforts of Kansas Rural Center? You can donate to Kansas Rural Center through our year end giving campaign on our website, or via the Douglas County Community Foundation (<https://bit.ly/47XJiYU>).

As always, we appreciate your ongoing interest, support, and involvement in the work of Kansas Rural Center. Thank you.

The Kansas Rural Center’s mission is 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. The three tools at the heart of KRC’s mission are research, education, and advocacy. Perhaps no piece of our work more perfectly ties those three tools together than the efforts of our Policy Analyst, Paul Johnson.

For over a decade, during the Kansas Legislative Session, Paul has developed a weekly newsletter, Policy Watch, for the followers of Kansas Rural Center and other non-profit organizations that covers a range of relevant topics that are up for debate in the Kansas Statehouse and at the Federal level. These detailed reports help us keep our finger on the pulse of Kansas politics as they affect our environment,

Follow Paul’s work by subscribing here: <https://kansasruralcenter.org/newsletter>

Support Paul’s work by giving: <https://kansasruralcenter.org/donate>

Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops: A Brief History

Senate Bill 534 from the 2000 Session of the Kansas Legislature called for Kansas State University to create a Center of excellence on sustainable agriculture and alternative crops. The bill set out functions of the center to include:

- Emphasizing research, education, outreach and marketing for sustainable agriculture and alternative food, fiber and medicinal crops.
- Assisting farmers to increase their share of the food system dollar.
- Collecting and analyzing basic information on the Kansas food system and opportunities for production and direct marketing.
- Focusing research on value added processes and new crops that offer low-volume, high margin niche opportunities.
- Assisting small farmers to access lower input costs through a delivery system with expanded access to sustainable agricultural practices.
- Marketing assistance to promote products produced and processed in Kansas.
- Expanding small farm research to include organic products, less capital intensive investments, energy saving technology, and agricultural practices that reduce soil erosion and restore soil health.
- Developing and distributing a guide of all state services for small farms and value-added agriculture.

The bill passed and is now codified in statute - K.S.A. 76-4, 103. Although the bill carried no fiscal note, K-State's College of Agriculture has provided funding and a home for the Center – the Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and

Alternative Crops (KCSAAC) since 2000. KCSAAC, first housed within the Kansas Center for Agricultural Resources and the Environment (KCARE), was later moved to, and remains in, Extension administration where it serves as host for the Kansas office of North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE).

The primary focus of KCSAAC has always been small and medium sized Kansas farmers who may not produce traditional Kansas crops and livestock and tend to be underserved by research and extension programs. That focus led to the adoption of KCSAAC's Mission Statement, which is:

To support small family-owned farms in Kansas through research, education and outreach focused on production, storage, processing, and marketing technologies that will boost small farm profitability, protect natural resources, and enhance rural communities.

Many of the producers served by KCSAAC over the last 23 years have only recently been considered bona fide farmers by some in agriculture. That hasn't stopped investment in programming, education, and research targeting small family-owned farms and specialty crop production. In fact, KCSAAC and NCR-SARE have invested more than \$7.5 million in Kansas for research and education programs since 2000.

A sampling from the past 23 years of projects funded in whole or in part by KCSAAC includes: Grow Your Farmers Market, Helping Farm Families Manage A Successful Business, Post Harvest Handling and Production Facilities for Horticulture Crops, Exploring Early Season

Sweetpotato Slip Production Opportunities Utilizing High Tunnels, Effect of Roasting on Sensory Properties of Pecan Cultivars, Investigating Optimal Variety Selection and Production Practices for Dry Field Pea, Dryland Soil Health Network, Farm Beginnings Training, and numerous farm tours.

Agriculture has changed a lot since 2000; much of that change has been for the better especially in terms of inclusion of all types and sizes of farm. Kansas still has underserved farmers and KCSAAC remains dedicated to its mission to serve small and medium sized farms by investing in on-farm and university research and education programs that capture the depth and breadth of sustainable agriculture practices and alternative crop production in Kansas.



Kerri Ebert has coordinated the Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops (KCSAAC) and for the Kansas Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Professional Development Program for K-State Research and Extension for the past 12 years. She is also the communications coordinator for the K-State Olathe Horticulture Research and Extension Center.

Outdoorswoman Becomes Scientist, Farmer, and Advocate

I'm proud to support the Kansas Rural Center as a donor and board member since 2016. Currently, I am also serving as the 2022-2023 Fellow at the Dole Institute of Politics on behalf of the KRC, fulfilling a shared desire to host conversations about environmental issues impacting Kansas. There are few organizations whose mission aligns so clearly with my own to support equitable, sustainable communities in Kansas with a focus on people and the land.

I was a quiet kid who thrived by exploring pockets of wild spaces near my home in all the places my family lived across the midwest and Germany. I developed a passion for hiking and camping and logged hundreds of backpacking miles in a dozen states. Farming was always a dream, but it seemed unattainable for someone who wasn't born into it. I chose to study at KU to connect with some deep family roots in Douglas County and stayed.

After a BA in Environmental Studies, I dug into soils research. Permission from gracious landowners allowed me to access soil sampling sites across northwest Kansas and southwest Nebraska as part of my PhD research in Geography. I was struck by the beauty of Kansas working lands and the awesome responsibility of private citizens for stewarding the ecosystems under their care.

My own path into farming was launched when our home was purchased by eminent domain for a highway project. We bought our farm under a cover of snow and didn't know what we had until thistles and fescue greeted us in the spring. It's been gratifying to see the pastures recover with rest, fire,

and rotational grazing. Now I raise grassfed beef cattle and a few hair sheep, though over the last fifteen years I've raised a milk cow, milk goats, guinea hogs, chickens, ducks, and turkeys.

Beyond the farm, I have operated two successful businesses including an engineering and manufacturing business, Bluestem Machine Works, Inc., with my husband and partner Scott Eudaly and now work with a local nonprofit consulting group, Futureful.

Just recently, I also launched a new land link site, FarmTender.us with a friend, Brad Bradley, to help connect new and expanding regenerative farmers with ecologically minded land owners. Our task is to expand the number and diversity of farmers and boost soil health practices across the state. Kansas has an incredible capacity to deploy soil health practices and boost the nutritional and ecological value of our food. Within the uncertainty of a climate change future, soil health is a powerful ally.

Last year I stepped into a new role as a Douglas County Commissioner with the task of weighing competing community values for ecological protection, the need for new and affordable housing, local food production, and the imperative to decarbonize our energy systems. These lead to frank conversations about stewarding our local and global environments and the people who depend on them.

Twice daily chores outside in any weather seems to ground me. Even after a late commission meeting, I change into my coveralls and

button up the livestock for the night. It helps me remember that nature is endlessly creative and resilient. It gives me hope to see that ecosystems always strive to regenerate and our farms and communities can do the same.



Karen Willey is a PhD scientist and 3rd District Douglas County Commissioner who manages a 115 acre farm in eastern Kansas raising grass-fed beef cattle while restoring native pasture. She also has experience in no-till crops, cover crops, sheep, goats, pigs, chickens, turkeys and bees. As an entrepreneur, Karen has created and led a variety of successful businesses including an engineering and manufacturing business, Bluestem Machine Works, Inc., with her husband and business partner Scott Eudaly. Recently Karen and friend Brad Bradley have created FarmTender, a land-linking website seeking to connect regenerative farmers with eco-friendly landowners.

Links from the article

Futureful: <https://befutureful.com>

FarmTender: farmtender.us

Urban Agriculture in Fayetteville Arkansas

I'm currently enrolled as a graduate student in K-State's Masters in Horticulture with emphasis in Urban Food Systems program at the K-State Olathe campus, seeking to gain more experience and knowledge about both urban and rural food systems for my personal life and professional work. Though we're the Kansas Rural Center, I've found it very valuable to learn about urban food systems and the interactions that rural and urban food producers have with their respective surroundings and the food system at large. We at KRC see our mission as not only to serve and uplift rural farms, people, and

visited sixteen sites, learning about their contributions and challenges, and how they connected to one another. This included long established farms like Dripping Springs Garden, newer ones like Honest Dirt Farm, the non-profit Cobblestone Farms, NW Arkansas Land Trust, the Fayetteville Public Library, and more. We found that the robust development of the food system in Fayetteville was assisted by the support of the Walton Family Foundation and their prioritization of forming and maintaining a cohort of food system stakeholders. I appreciated how the foundation invested in the community not only

made that work easier and assisted in system-wise collaboration.

All of our visits were good but I probably enjoyed the Fayetteville Public Library the best. There, library staff and community members worked together with the City of Fayetteville and other stakeholders to emphasize sustainability for the library and life enrichment for patrons. Through cooking and nutrition classes, a free seed sharing library, shared space for audio and video production, 3D printer, and using simulators to give experience for CDL or pilot's licenses, and more, the library



Honest Dirt Farm



Dripping Springs Garden



Cobblestone Farms

communities, but to advocate for a better food and farming system wherever people live across our state, creating a more resilient food system for all.

This Fall my coursework at K-State took me to Fayetteville, Arkansas on an Urban Ag Study Tour to visit and learn about a variety of farms and organizations that contribute to the food system in and around Fayetteville. Over five days we

with grants and monetary support, but also by dedicating staff to food system efforts and building the capacity of other organizations in the area. One example is the Walton Family Foundation's support of the creation of the Spring Creek Food Hub to serve farmers and consumers in the area. Though all the locations we visited were doing great work on their own, it was clear that the consistent support of the foundation was a multiplier that

wants to help its patrons "develop a more complete literacy". I like to think that's akin to our mission here at KRC, too. If you're ever in need of a little getaway from life here in Kansas, I recommend giving Fayetteville a look! And if you're interested in furthering your own food system education at the university level, check out K-State's Urban Food Systems Certificate or the M.S. program at Olathe.

The Kansas Rural Center provides Farm Beginnings workshops and individual farmer support to help new and beginning farmers successfully start sustainable agricultural operations. Your support of this program helps lower the registration costs for new and beginning farmers to access our programming.

For the remainder of the year, the Douglas County Community Foundation(DCCF) is raising funds on behalf of KRC through their Giving for Good campaign. When you donate through the Giving for Good Campaign, your gift will be matched by generous donors up to 50% into DCCF's endowed fund - this means you will not only be supporting our work today, but our ongoing plight to train farmers and maintain the small farms and local food systems in our state.

Follow this link to donate with DCCF <https://bit.ly/47XjiYU>



Douglas County Community Foundation

Donate at DCCFoundation.org
#GivingTuesday thru Dec. 31
#DCCFGiving4Good

Farm Beginnings Training

Farm Beginnings is Kansas Rural Center's farmer-led training program to help guide beginning farmers and ranchers on their journey to establishing sustainable and economically sound farm and ranch businesses and achieve their goals. Our program is focused on being farmer led, community based, prioritizing racial equity, and emphasizing sustainable agriculture. Farm Beginnings is designed for new and prospective farmers who want to plan a profitable farm business. Students do not need to currently own or lease land, but some farming or production experience is helpful to get the most out of the class. KRC is a part of the Farm Beginnings Collaborative, and national network of organizations that offer Farm Beginnings trainings.

What's in the class?

The Kansas Rural Center is excited to address that need and is happy to announce that enrollment is open for our very first "Farm Beginnings" training, which will run for eight weeks from January 15 – March 10.

The course will be centered around:

Whole Farm Business Planning

You'll reflect on your past farm experience, set goals, and develop a business plan that you can use to build a strong foundation for your farm. Across the 8-week class, participants will:

- Clarify their values and establish quality of life goals.
- Learn about whole farm planning, marketing, and financing from experienced farmers and other technical experts.
- Write a farm business plan.

Some of the primary challenges beginning farmers or ranchers face are accessing land or capital to start and expand their agricultural businesses, but a need that sometimes goes unaddressed is business planning and management training to help start that business and keep it running sustainably once it's off the ground. This course will take participants through analysis of their farm dreams and ways to manage their businesses to better make those dreams come true. Sessions each week will build business skills and at the end of the course farmers will present their business plan to the class and have it available for future planning or to take to lenders for financing. Though some classes will be conducted in-person, online attendance will be available for all sessions. The course cost is \$300 and scholarships are available. We don't want financial burden to prevent farmers from participating in our program, so please reach out to Ryan at ryangr@kansasruralcenter.org for scholarship options or any questions about the program.

Visit <https://kansasruralcenter.org/farmbeginnings> to check out the course schedule, learn more, and enroll. We hope you'll join us!

Cohort Based

Learn alongside and network with other beginning farmers and ranchers from across Kansas.

Learn in a Hybrid Environment

Recognizing that your time is finite and costs are high, we want to remove barriers to participation while also helping you build networks by offering a hybrid curriculum. We'll meet in person several times over the duration of the course, with all other lessons available virtually to save you time, gas, and stress.

On Farm Field Days

Visit successful and innovative agricultural producers in the region and learn from their on-farm successes, challenges, and adaptations to keep their businesses running strong.

Finding Brightness in Winter Shadows: Mental Wellness Strategies for Rural Living

During winter, many of us experience a dip in mood, commonly known as the winter blues or seasonal affective disorder (SAD). One significant influence is the decrease in sunlight. There are also fewer recreation options and community events in winter and so the tendency to stay indoors due to cold weather also reduces social interactions, increasing feelings of isolation and loneliness. The winter holidays often associated with joy, can paradoxically induce stress due to expectations, financial strain, and complicated family dynamics. The suggestions below feature activities to keep perspective and increase endorphins, serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin, which are the brain chemicals associated with feelings of happiness, pleasure, and well-being.

Give Yourself a Reality Check

Understanding that winter brings family, holiday, and financial stress to most of us can be reassuring. Contrary to common belief, not everyone experiences heightened happiness during this season. Around 80% of Americans admit that holiday-related expectations and events amplify their stress levels. Financial concerns worsen for half of the population, while an equal number worry about their own or their family's mental health. Stress and sadness linked to family relationships are widespread. Winter months, emphasizing familial bonds, can be particularly challenging for those experiencing family estrangement, a reality for at least a third of Americans in relation to a parent, child, or sibling. Not feeling shame about these stressors, prioritizing self-care, and setting boundaries becomes crucial

for safeguarding emotional well-being during this period.

These family difficulties have their origin in the high stresses of modernity that includes multiple generations affected by moving, job loss, wars, illness, droughts, floods, and economic recessions and depressions. Are you remembering a happy time that didn't really exist? Writing about the reality of a difficulty relationship can keep you from painful nostalgia and help you maintain perspective. You might also try to reach out and repair a broken relationship while keeping healthy boundaries. Acknowledging and addressing these feelings is crucial for mental well-being. Don't be afraid to talk about what everyone is going through. Seek support from friends. Engaging in new activities or new traditions that bring personal joy and comfort can also provide solace during this period.

Greet the Morning Sunshine



Going outside into natural light for a brief ten-minute period right after you wake up each day is enough to maintain circadian rhythms and trigger the production of serotonin—a key neurotransmitter for a good mood. The significance of sunlight in regulating mood and sleep patterns cannot be overstated. This simple ritual can transform the outlook for the entire day, offering a boost of energy and positivity.

Eat Procrastination

“Eat That Frog” is a strategy to conquer procrastination popularized by Brian Tracy in his book of the same name. The idea is to tackle your most dreaded or important task—the “frog”—first

thing in the morning. By doing this, you get relief and in prioritizing your most significant or unpleasant task you set the tone for a productive day. Tackling the most daunting task first instills a sense of accomplishment, reinforcing self-belief despite the inner resistance. Procrastination stems from fear of failure and anxiety about past difficulties and it is not laziness. Procrastination is now understood to be a form of self-soothing. Confronting it head-on allows individuals to reclaim a sense of control and confidence and it increases dopamine.

Make a Daily Done List (5-10 minutes) and Increase Self Esteem after 6 Weeks

Instead of just a “to do” list, each day make a “done list” of the past day. Instead of solely focusing on what lies ahead, jot down everything you accomplish during the day, including the smallest errands. You'll be pleasantly surprised by the sense of achievement this brings. Moreover, this practice stimulates the release of dopamine, reinforcing the feeling of accomplishment and reducing shame, anxiety, and depression. Shifting the focus from undone tasks to acknowledging accomplishments can be transformative.

and sugary beverages. Try a phone app like Carb Manager, MyFitnessPal or Noom to raise your awareness of what you eat.

Get Started on a Creative Pursuit

Engaging in creative activities—carpentry, painting or refinishing furniture, writing, crafting, or playing music—provides avenues for stress relief and a sense of accomplishment. Creativity acts as a form of self-expression, and you get into a “flow state” where you lose track of time with healthy theta brain waves. Make something to give away if you don’t need anything.

Connect with Community

Deliberately make local connections through events, groups, or neighborly interactions to build a support network, easing the effects of isolation. This could be going to church, joining a 12-step group, or a “meet up”. Check out meetup.com and if not much is happening near you, start a group like a game night meeting.

Go on Field Trips - Be a Tourist in Your Own Region

Novelty reduces anxiety and depression. Get out of your routine. Go to local community, university and community college sports, music, plays and cultural events. Visit a museum you have never seen. Visit Wichita’s Winter Bluegrass Festival, Wamego’s Winter Woolfest, or Topeka’s Blizzard Bash Demo Derby. Check out the travel Kansas calendar to see what is going on and plan an outing <https://www.travelks.com/events/>

Create a Vision Board

Visual representations of aspirations serve as potent motivators, our mind starts to believe in what we see each day. Define your aspirations in different areas of life—career, relationships, health, personal growth, etc. Collect magazines, images, quotes, and any materials that resonate with how you want your life to be. You can also print images from the internet. As you arrange the gathered images and words on the board, you craft a collage that encapsulates your vision and aspirations. Place your vision board in a visible place where you can see it daily.

Developing and maintaining good self-care habits holds profound significance for our mental health. These habits act as the cornerstone of our well-being, contributing to a cumulative impact that extends far beyond immediate effects. When we prioritize self-care, incorporating practices such as keeping a perspective, regular sunlight and walking, done lists, gratitude practices, eating the frog, controlling our inner critic, healthy nutrition, and more, we provide ourselves with essential tools to nurture our mental health. Over time, these habits create a sturdy foundation, fortifying resilience against stressors and enhancing our ability to cope with life’s challenges. Similar to physical workouts, mental health routines require daily upkeep to prevent the resurgence of sadness, self-criticism, shame, and anxiety. Consistently engaging in self-care not only fosters a positive self-image but also cultivates a sense of self-worth and emotional balance, significantly bolstering our overall mental and physical wellness.



Dr. Elizabeth E. Heilman, Ph.D., of Wichita State University is a dedicated proponent of fostering sustainable human flourishing and enhancing mental well-being in rural communities. With three decades of expertise in health, civic education, and ecology her journey stands as a testament to her unwavering commitment to positive change. Dr. Heilman passionately addresses the obstacles hindering regenerative agriculture, emotional resilience, and the creation of resilient local food systems. She is the author or editor of five books. Her recent publications include “Anger is all the rage: Reconceptualizing anger to foster growth and political change” (Teachers College Record, 2022), “Regenerative Agriculture: The Secret to Farmer Happiness” (Green Cover Soil Health Resource Guide, 2021), and “Emotional Ecology: Introduction to the Traumas of Unmet Core Needs” (2020). Dr. Heilman has been a keynote speaker at prestigious organizations and events such as the Soil and Water Conservation Society, the NCAT (National Center for Appropriate Technology), and the 78th International Annual Conference of the Soil and Water Conservation Society, showcasing her unwavering dedication to rural mental health and community resilience.

Learning About Leaves

Every year I learn more and more about how important leaves are for the ecosystem. We have several blogs about leaves already, (including Scott's best management practices and my sustainable leaf-raking tips) but this information often needs updating and augmenting. The more we know, the better we can do! And that applies to us too here at Dyck Arboretum. Here are some new ideas I am implementing around the grounds to a-leave-iate our leaf problems.

Leave them when you can...

I know it is not always possible, but the easiest and best practice is leave leaves where they fall. Here at the Arboretum we let leaves freely accumulate in hedgerows, shrub borders, and garden beds, even though it might not look traditionally 'tidy'. Many insects use leaf litter for shelter and breeding, and insects are the linchpin to our ecosystem! As E.O. Wilson said, they are "the little things that run the world". Their populations are in serious decline across many species, especially the leaf-loving firefly.

Allowing leaf litter to stay undisturbed through fall and winter is an easy way to improve insect habitat. While you might be worried about all those 'bugs' snoozing

in your landscape, don't be. Just remember to keep the leaf layer only a few inches thick and not piled high directly up against the foundations of your home.

Don't Shred

A light sprinkling of leaves will not harm your lawn, but they can cause damage when too thick, matted, and wet over the winter, so you may have to remove them. Many folks rush to the mower and shredder for this task. We have a large mulching mower that I once happily raced across all the Arboretum lawns with.

BUT – I've learned now that many insects have already laid eggs or cozied up for dormancy in these leaves. So shredding likely kills all those beautiful and beneficial insects we are hoping to attract. I am attempting a 60/40 rule this year: remove the bulk of the leaves by raking, shoveling, or blowing, and only mow that last forty percent in particularly important/sensitive lawn area. For an acreage this large it is impractical to do much by hand, but I am hoping my small effort will make a positive difference for the insects that call the Arboretum home.

Redistribute

After the wonderful workout of raking leaves, it is time to put

them...where? If you have a compost pile, that's a great start. Or layer them over your vegetable garden. Pile them under cedar trees or in weedy spots you want to smother.

Dyck Arboretum is not accepting community leaf donations this year as our leaf house is deconstructed at the moment, but many cities (including Hesston) have a free drop off leaf compost area for their citizens. For extra sustainability, skip the plastic bags and move your leaves loose with just a tarp and a truck bed. If you must use bags, don't tie them up so they can be easily dumped and reused next year when the leaves fall again.

This time of year I see piles and piles of bagged leaves on the curbs of our neighborhoods and cities. We can certainly do better now that we know what a gold mine of habitat and nutrients these leaves really are. So get out there and jump in those leaves, spend a day in the fall sunshine, and do your part to help those "little things" keep running the world!

This article was originally published in Dyck Arboretum's "Best Management Practices Blog." Find more at dyckarboretum.org



My dog Rosie loves leaves, and so do I! Raking (and playing in) leaf piles was a staple activity of my childhood that I still enjoy with my family today.



Fall colors on the west side of the Arboretum. Stunning, but short lived! Soon these leaves will be swirling around the sidewalks and piling up on paths.



Thanks to volunteers we are able to rake and redistribute some leaves. Without their help, much more would have to be shredded with a mower to save time.



Our parking lots accumulate leaves quickly, and they begin to compost as they pile up in the curb. We use a grain shovel to scoop them out, rake them up, and toss them around the trees and shrubs as good mulch and fertilizer.

Insights from Pipeline Foods' Bankruptcy: Lessons for the Future

The stunning business failure of Pipeline Foods hit the organic community in the upper Midwest hard. For five years, Pipeline specialized in buying, cleaning, and selling of organic, and non GMO corn, soybeans, and small grains for the food and feed markets. Founded in 2017 and located in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota, the original founding partners, by most accounts, wanted to help build and strengthen the sustainable agriculture supply chain. They also saw the rapidly growing niche organic market as an opportunity to build a thriving domestic business, especially since much of the organic grain used in the U.S. is imported. The company reported \$189 million in assets and \$147 million in liabilities at the time they sought Chapter 11 protection under the federal bankruptcy laws in early July of 2021. At the time of this article, more than one bankruptcy lawsuit is still pending, including one that states the value of their assets was overvalued when applying for loans.

From its beginning, Pipeline Foods moved aggressively to place themselves as the business of choice for farmers and grain buyers, with a stated goal of investing \$300-500 million over time. They started by offering higher-than-market-value prices to attract farmers to sell to them. In addition, they acquired numerous facilities to process and store the grain by buying their strongest competitors. Eric Jackson, the original CEO of Pipeline Foods, was quoted by PRNewswire in Sept 2017: "We will put more profits back into the hands of the farmers, create dependability and transparency for food companies, and offer unique investment opportunities for financial partners." In addition to their presence in the U.S., they also had a regional headquarters in Winnipeg, Canada and Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Their stated business values included a strong commitment to environmental and social outcomes through investments in assets, people, and encouraging the adoption of organic and regenerative farming practices as well as offering full traceability and transparency. This optimism drew employees, suppliers, and buyers to work with Pipeline. Their ambitious business model resulted in Pipeline hiring a large staff, including support for farmers with production issues, especially for those transitioning to organic. They offered help with seed and fertility choices, and then provided a ready buyer for the farmer's organic grain. Their rapid growth included the purchase of grain cleaning facilities in Canada and the U.S.

specialty grain division of SunOpta, among others. The SunOpta acquisition in 2017 cost Pipeline Foods over 65 million dollars. SunOpta was well established in the region, with loyal farmers/suppliers and buyers.

To grow quickly, Pipeline Foods obtained funding from AMERRA Capital Management, an asset management firm that provides capital to the agriculture sector. Rabobank provided capital as well, and offered financial help to farmers to transition to organic. Compeer Financial was also a significant lender, supporting much of the infrastructure purchases. At the time of the bankruptcy, Pipeline Foods owned facilities in Hope, MN, Moorhead, MN, Ellendale, MN, Lignite, ND, Cresco, IA, Bowbells, ND, Atlantic, IA, and two facilities in Saskatchewan, Canada (Wapella and Gull Lake). In 2020-2021, Pipeline had contracted with 1,460 growers and was promoting its services to another 1,800. They also had agreements and investments with railways.

Pipeline was an aggressive competitor in the marketplace, and pushing into the established organic market took capital. As the company borrowed more and more, their lenders became more concerned. AMERRA personnel were in the office weekly and slowly took over the running of the company. In 2019, a new CEO, Anthony Sepich, was installed, which gave AMERRA more confidence that their money was being handled by a more seasoned leader. Sepich came from Compass Minerals (under review for violations of Federal Securities



Harriet Behar runs organic Sweet Springs Farm in Gays Mills, Wisconsin. She serves on the OFA Governing Council and Policy Committee and has been involved with federal, state, and local policy advocacy for over 30 years.

laws), with limited experience in the niche organic market. Former Pipeline employees (who prefer to remain anonymous), state that the overall growth of the organic sector was used as a benchmark to gauge the expected growth of Pipeline's business.

Comparing the consumer marketplace comprising all sectors of the food industry, to an expectation of the growth and profitability for the organic grain market was problematic. Each sector in agriculture has its own challenges and opportunities, and it seems this supply-chain-focused company should have been savvy to know that using consumer demand for the wider industry as an indicator of potential success would not be a true picture of what should be expected for profitability in their smaller commodity sector of that industry. When SunOpta was purchased, many of those employees came to Pipeline. Since organic grains are limited in their availability, those employees learned over time to build strong and trusted relationships with their farmer-suppliers.

Many of those former SunOpta employees stated that they felt farmers they worked with were their friends, and that they worked hard to build and retain their trust. This led to SunOpta having a reliable pool of high-quality grains. Unfortunately, this was not the culture at Pipeline. As the company's debts rose, Pipeline did not pay on time, lowered the prices they offered to farmers, were picky with charging extra fees or discounting grain for the smallest infraction, such as a little bit higher moisture content than contracted. Many of the employees that came from SunOpta, or who were enticed to join Pipeline by

their support of organic agriculture, became disillusioned and left. They were replaced with employees who had very little knowledge of the organic marketplace, and no reason to challenge Pipeline's actions by advocating for a better deal for farmers. Many of the former SunOpta employees expressed how badly they felt to see the farmers be treated so poorly by Pipeline. They were saddened to watch the relationships they built with farmers over decades be destroyed.

The rapid growth, the unrealistic expectations of the organic marketplace and normal supply chain challenges, as well as those brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, caused the two main investors, AMERRA and Rabobank to become nervous. By some accounts, these two entities did not have the same goals for the company, and did not get along. As the finances became shakier, the relationship between these two lenders became strained. This then caused Pipeline Foods to declare bankruptcy, since their line of credit to run the business was no longer sufficient to do day-to-day business. At the time of the bankruptcy, many farmers had delivered grain and were waiting for payment. Many farmers had also received payment, but some of those whose payment was made within the 90 day period before the bankruptcy declaration received clawback letters. These letters were meant to require farmers to return those payments to Rabobank. There are many lessons to be learned from the Pipeline bankruptcy and some are self-evident. Avoid fast growing companies that are funded by outside capital who will want quick payback, for example. Organic farmers and businesses need to be careful to not assume that everyone we work with has the same

understanding and commitment to organic as the farmer who has deep beliefs in organic agriculture. Perhaps this Pipeline bankruptcy also illustrates that the financial aspect of organic business cannot function within the conventional financial model, just as organic production methods do not fit well within the non organic system of agriculture.

Strategies To Protect Yourself From A Bankruptcy Clawback

- Sell smaller amounts to multiple buyers rather than one large sale
 - Be aware of the rules and protections in your state, and the state into which you are selling
- Organize with other farmers within your state to gain additional protections
- Seek an attorney who is familiar with the "ordinary course of a business relationship" statement to avoid the clawback payment

More information regarding the Pipeline Foods Bankruptcy Clawback: September Organic Voice -
<https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/GetUrlReputation>

The Aftermath of The Pipeline Foods Bankruptcy - *organicfarmersassociation.org/ov_sept2023/#flipbook-september-2023-organic-voice-magazine/15/*

Farmer Meeting Recording - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOiOuWagIhw&t=20s>

This Article was originally used in OFA's Publication Organic Voice
<https://organicfarmersassociation.org/organic-voice/>

About the Organic Farmers Association
 The Organic Farmers Association (OFA) provides a strong and unified national voice for domestic certified organic producers. OFA builds and supports a farmer-led national organic farmer movement and national policy platform by developing and advocating policies that benefit organic farmers; strengthening and supporting the capacity of organic farmers and farm organizations; and supporting collaboration and leadership among state, regional and national organic farmer organizations. Learn more at OrganicFarmersAssociation.org.

A Look at Our Podcast Chat with Carey Gillam

Carey Gillam has survived years of attacks on her person and integrity at the hands of a notorious biochemical company. If you haven't heard of Carey, I am willing to bet this first sentence signals suspicions about the name of the company in question.



Carey Gillam: Author, Journalist,
Speaker and Kansan.
Find her at <https://careygillam.com>

Carey grew up familiar with the farming community in rural Iowa, Kansas and continues to call Kansas her home. Her professional journeys have taken her from row crop farmers, ranchers, vegetable growers and orchard operators from across the United States. Through her travels, Carey has come into knowledge that required her to take her to begin investigating some glaring discrepancies between what she was witnessing and what she was being told to report. Upon her discovery, she did what any great journalist would do. She dug deeper. Carey spent as much time as she could with farmers on their farms and talking to companies like Monsanto, Bayer, Syngenta, Dow and DuPont, and their employees. She spent time talking to regulators, scientists and agronomists to understand the industry from

a holistic standpoint. It became clear after a few years that the messaging she and other reporters were getting from the corporations that were driving agricultural policy, practices and products was different from what was happening on the ground. "They were telling us we weren't seeing weed resistance. We weren't seeing harm to biodiversity. We weren't seeing the demise of pollinators that was tied to the agro-chemical industry. We weren't seeing, you know, water quality problems that were tied to excessive use of fertilizers', ...All of these things that they were telling us weren't true. And so you first have to come to that recognition. What is true, you know, and we have to look at the hard facts, even if they're painful or ugly, if we're ever going to get to a better place."

Through her books "White Washed" and the "Monsanto Papers" Cary has exposed that the company knew for many years that it was making people sick through its popular herbicide, RoundUp. Her journalistic studies have not only surrounded the hidden health costs of RoundUp, but also the financial impacts of the financial structure created by these companies. While showing me her RoundUp hat given to her by a farmer friend many years ago Carey reflected "They give them all sorts of stuff. But yeah, they very much believe, you know, Roundup was God's gift to agriculture." When she started covering agriculture in the late 90s, the farmers were still telling her the GMO crops and glyphosate made their lives so much easier and worked wonderfully. But by the mid to late 2000's the farmers began noticing that it wasn't working as well. The weeds were becoming resistant, and in response, the

farmers started spending more money on additional inputs.

In addition to RoundUp, some Southern farmers had to begin hiring hand laborers to help them, so their costs went up, their input needs went up, and their soil quality noticeably went down. The farmers were losing pollinators. "Now," Carey reflects, "farmers in many areas really are on this, this treadmill, this cycle, where they're having to use Dicamba, 2,4-D, along with the glyphosate, and they're having to buy these expensive seeds." Carey reminded me of the importance of not blaming the farmers for perpetuating these issues. (Something the Common Ground Film also marked as vital.) Carey specifically calls out our public policymakers, government, lawmakers, and regulators who have been slow to recognize that we need a systemic change.

Carey recalled, interviewing a conservation scientist for USDA, hired to teach about the benefits of crop rotation and cover crops, "he said, I'm not allowed to say, use fewer synthetic pesticides. I will get in trouble if I say that out loud. Because the agrochemical industry just has such a dominance in Washington, DC. So it's very tricky to overcome, I think, a lot of the political hurdles that we need to overcome, to get to kind of the simplified place of just going back to traditional farming practices and respecting Mother Nature and working with mother nature as opposed to trying to constantly fight, you know, we're outsmart Mother Nature with newer, better, bigger applications of chemicals. It's just, it's not a good long-term strategy."

Outlining Carey's work seems like a lot of familiar doom and gloom, echoing popular criticisms of our lawmakers and large industries, but we wound down our conversation on a positive note. "I think that regenerative agriculture is an idea, and an issue that can't be ignored, or turned away from at this point of where we are in the evolution of our environment, and of our health." We see acknowledgement of it across the agriculture industry including the aforementioned businesses. Carey mentioned feeling like the black mark on Monsanto's reputation in the early 2000's has created a safer environment for journalists, like her, to ask questions and for farmers to feel more secure from various hostile repercussions around their GMO genetics.

These Goliath companies are starting to look for a way to be a player in regenerative agriculture. We're seeing acknowledgment of it in the halls of Congress, to a degree. Carey reports seeing a gradual shift around the edges of the political forces putting up walls to regenerative practices. "I see those walls starting to come down. And then I see you see farmers who are all over this, like, you know, Gabe Brown is not alone out there. There are hundreds and hundreds of farmers, maybe 1000s. I'm aware of hundreds who are actively working on this right now and saying, we've seen what happens when we don't work with mother nature... it directly affects you. If you're someone who eats food, or water, you're affected by these issues, every single day."

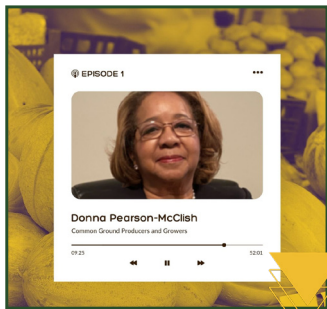
Carey recommends we check out the **"IDEA Farm Network"** for those looking for best practices built around crowdsources of scientific data around Regenerative Practices. If you would like to follow her work, you can find her on the websites **The New Lede** and **The Guardian**, check out her books **White Washed** and **The Monsanto Papers**. You may also see films she's recently worked on **Common Ground** and **Into the Weeds**.

If you would like to listen to Charlotte and Carey's conversation, please visit the podcast Kansas Rural Center Presents on your favorite app or at **kansasruralcenter.org/podcasts** there you will also find our backlog of episodes including and interview with Common Ground Film Director/Producer duo Josh and Rebecca Tickell.

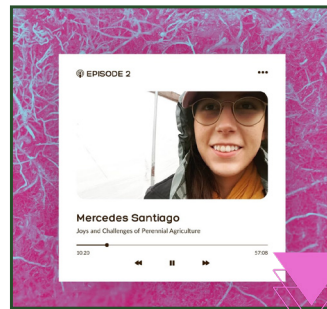
Match Made on the Prairie

Kansas Rural Center recently rpartnered with Amy Glattly of Prairie Ramblings Podcast to host a series of 4 conversations around soil health.

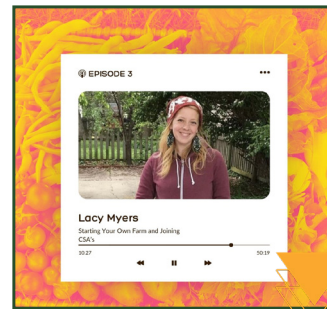
We invite you to listen in on these episodes featuring Donna Pearson-McClish, Mercedes Santiago, Lacey Myers, and Amy June, all experienced farmers and food producers with soil on their minds, under their fingernails, and in their hearts. Listen on your favorite app or at www.kansasruralcenter.org/podcasts



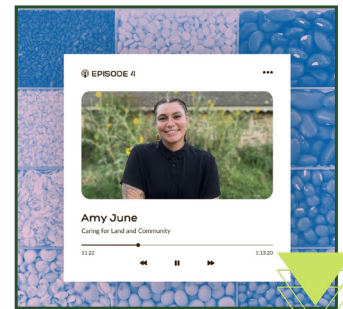
Donna Pearson-McClish, of Common Ground Producers and Growers, discusses her family history in agriculture and how she raises crops and livestock from inside the city limits of Wichita, KS, to feed healthy local foods to individuals who otherwise lack access.



Mercedes Santiago, from The Land Institute, weighs in on her love of perennial agriculture and how these growing methods are something that runs in her family. Listen in for musings on the magic of soil and how TLI's perennial crop, Kernza, is changing how we raise grains for commodity use.



Lacey Myers, owner of Wild Hollow Farm, discusses the need for mentorship and networking when dipping into the business of farming and CSAs. She also touches on her and her family's decision to buy a homestead property and strike out on their own and what the future may bring.



Amy June, from Goodway Farm, met with our podcasters to discuss the need for access to soil and nature for the well-being of us all. Amy has experience growing in community gardens on the East Coast and is now enjoying the collaborative grower community in Lawrence, KS.



Nestled within North America is the beautiful Kansas Prairie, specifically within Kaw & Osage Land. We will be exploring all of the different realms that this space has to offer. With a focus on the topics of holistic farming and the crew members, farm-to-table restaurants, ways to be a conscious consumer, and diving deep within many other sustainability ventures throughout! All will be shared here on the Prairie Ramblings Podcast.

Support this podcast at: <https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/prairie-ramblings-podcast/support>



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Giving for good



Douglas County Community Foundation

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#DCCFGiving4Good

For the remainder of 2023, the Douglas County Community Foundation(DCCF) is raising funds on behalf of KRC through their Giving for Good campaign. When you donate through the Giving for Good Campaign, your gift will be matched by generous donors up to 50% into DCCF's endowed fund - this means you will not only be supporting our work today, but our ongoing plight to train farmers and maintain the small farms and local food systems in our state.

Follow this link to donate with DCCF: <https://bit.ly/47XjiYU>

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