

2011 Sustainable Agriculture Conference Set For Nov. 19

Options,
Opportunities, and
Optimism:
Cultivating Our Food
and Farm Future

Whiting, Kansas - The Kansas Rural Center announces that its 2011 Sustainable Agriculture Conference will focus on food and farm opportunities and the optimism for expanding local and regional food and farming in Kansas. The conference, titled "Options, Opportunities and Optimism: Cultivating Our Food and Farm Future," will take place Saturday, November 19, from 9 to 5 p.m. at Flint Hills Technical College, Emporia.

Speakers, workshops and panels will explore and share ideas and information for building a local and regional food and farm system. Information and registration are available at www.krcsustainabilityconference.blogspot.com or at www.kansasruralcenter.org.

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KRC Receives Two New Regional Food System Grants



Three OLF chapters boasted the new "Our Local Food" banners over the summer, like the one above at the Twin Rivers Chapter in Emporia. KRC has received two new grants to expand the program across Kansas, helping increase the number of growers and local food related businesses.

Photo by T. Graham.

Whiting, Ks. -The Kansas Rural Center is pleased to announce that it was recently awarded two grants focused on regional food system development and producer education and outreach.

A \$171,520 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG), through a sub-grant from the Kansas Department of Agriculture, will permit KRC to expand the Our Local Food (OLF) program in Kansas. This program seeks to spur the development of community-based food systems by creating regional networks of local farms, farmers markets, food businesses, agricultural professionals, supportive organizations, as well as consumers who are committed to increasing the production and sales of

fresh, local foods in Kansas.

The SCBG will assist in further developing OLF program resources such as subsidized membership fees, educational opportunities and consultation services for producers and food businesses, an interactive website and online food hub development, as well as member tool kits. Two chapters—a South East and a State chapter—will be added to the existing three, enabling the program to cover the entire state.

Additionally, this grant will permit KRC to bring back Savor the Season, a program started in 2009 to increase the diversity and boost sales of specialty crops at farmers markets.

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Rural Papers

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Rural Papers is the voice of the Kansas Rural Center, Inc., (KRC), a non-profit organization that promotes the long-term health of the land and its people through research, education, and advocacy. The KRC cultivates grassroots support for public policies that encourage family farming and stewardship of soil and water. KRC is committed to economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially sustainable rural culture. The KRC is funded by private foundations, churches, and individual contributions. **Rural Papers** is available to contributors or for a \$25 per year subscription to organizations and institutions.

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Small Farmer Commentary

A Different Kind of Harvest

by Mary Fund



The 2011 Kansas harvest has been a mixed bag- depending on your location. Drought in most of the state cut yields, forcing many to cut crops for silage, and causing reductions to cow herds as pastures dried up and hay crops dwindled. In the part of northeast Kansas where I live, we had adequate to more than adequate rains, and farmers quietly admit to good crop yields - knowing they may be in the eye of the drought by this time next year.

As we gathered at the September 14 NRCS training on organic farming in Sabetha, a different kind of "harvest" was going on outside the building. The semi-trailer truck belonging to Harvesters- The Community Food Network, a non-profit anti-hunger and food bank organization, made its monthly stop at the church parking lot to distribute free food.

Harvesters has been operating in the Kansas City area since 1979 acting as a clearinghouse for the collection and distribution of food and household products. They collect food and other items from industry and community sources. They then redistribute these through a network of non-profit agencies.

Today that network covers a twenty-six county service area in northeast Kansas and northwest Missouri, serving as many as 66,000 people each week. Half the people served are children or senior citizens, and 40% of the households served have at

least one person working.

Within the last year or two, the mobile food bank began making monthly rounds to small rural communities. In Sabetha, cars lined up for two or three blocks waiting for their turn to pickup a box of free food.

It was only one of the small rural towns the truck would be stopping in that day- all this in a largely agricultural area, rich with natural resources and, one would think, rich with business or work opportunities related to food.

Those receiving the free boxes of food have many reasons for being there- loss of jobs, disabilities, health issues, and limited incomes- all pointing to the need to supplement their incomes with free food. But the Harvesters truck in the parking lots of resource rich agricultural communities helps drive home the contradictions of our food and economic system. While we claim to feed the world, increasing numbers of people have trouble accessing food and/or the jobs or resources needed to buy it.

Inside at the workshop, speakers talked about a more ecological agriculture- building fertility and nutrients from legumes and cover crops in rotation; weed and pest control from rotations and mechanical controls; energy saving practices; and the conservation and production benefits from building better soil.

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Commentary

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They also talked about production of food via seasonal high tunnels or hoophouses, a new conservation practice standard available through USDA NRCS programs. High Tunnels promise to increase the amount of local fresh produce available around the state and around the country. They also promise opportunities for existing farms to expand into new enterprises, as well as for beginning farmers to enter agriculture.

“That, “ I told the conservation professionals, pointing to the food distribution line in the parking lot, “ is what conservation is about. It is not conservation for conservation alone, but ultimately it is about preserving our ability to produce food.”

Conservation practices that protect the soil's ability to renew itself, and to hold precious water and nutrients are critical to being able to feed ourselves. But the current food production system may need to stretch beyond the usual corn-soybeans-corn-soybeans-farm to do it.

Yes, those corn-soybean farmers are raising “food” but it must go through multiple transformations and many miles before it comes back to us in grocery stores or in that box of food. All of it is also dependent on fossil fuels, distant markets and high inputs owned by global corporations. And when those mountains of corn and soybeans leave rural communities, they take with them local job opportunities and true food security.

Wouldn't it be nice if even some of that transformation occurred closer to where the crops are grown? wouldn't it be smart for more horticultural production to happen closer to home, where the need is? and wouldn't the jobs and businesses generated be better for all?

KRC News Bulletin!

KRC Hires New Executive Director

The Kansas Rural Center Board of Directors is pleased to announce that Julie Mettenburg, Lawrence, Ks., will be KRC's new Executive Director, starting December 1, 2011. Julie has a BS in Journalism from the University of Kansas, and a MS in Political Science from City University of New York. She has business and project management experience through owning her own business, and twenty years experience with media and communications working for various national publications and as a free lancer writer for several years. Her parents operate a family farm near Princeton, and she and her siblings are actively involved in the management and planning.

Since April, Julie has been the Kaw River Valley Our Local Food Coordinator for KRC, and in late spring at our urging, she also graciously took on the role of Event Coordinator for KRC's November 19 conference ~ before deciding to apply for the director position. Instead of running her off, that experience helped her decide to apply!

Julie will provide a more in-depth personal introduction in the next issue and we will also introduce her at the November 19 conference. All of us at KRC look forward to Julie joining us as we move forward with new leadership and energy, and continue to tackle farm and food issues!

KRC's annual conference on November 19 will explore the ideas, questions, and practical how-to's of a more local and regional food system- a food system that increases local and regional production, distribution and consumption of fruits, vegetables, food grains, meat, dairy and poultry- and the farming, jobs and business opportunities that go along with that. We hope you will join us.

“Hunger knows no boundaries” is the Harvesters motto. I hope that is something more of us understand and try to address, but do not have to experience personally. □

Save the Date! Kansas Winter Grazing Conference

January 21, 2012
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Managing Drought Risk on the Ranch

at the
Harvest House Meeting Room
1836 US Hwy 50

Emporia Ks.
More info to come



Fast Farm Bill for a Fast Food Nation

by Mary Fund

It is anyone's guess what will happen to Farm Bill programs in the budget deficit work now underway (or to the rest of the federal budget for that matter). We have the Joint Select Committee on Budget Deficit (also known as the Super Committee) charged with coming up with \$1.2 trillion in government wide cuts by Thanksgiving. And we have the Agricultural Appropriations Committee attempting to pass a budget for FY 2012, which started October 1. But it is probably safe to say that Big Ag's lobbyists are working overtime to put a deficit-cutting spin on protecting their interests, while maintaining as much funding as possible.

On October 17, Senate and House Agriculture Committee leadership sent a letter to the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction proposing a \$23 billion cut in mandatory farm bill spending over the next decade- cuts that will begin in FY 2013.

By offering the \$23 billion in cuts, the Agriculture Committees expect that they will be able to craft the cuts to the farm bill themselves, rather than leave it to the Super Committee. However, the Agriculture Committee proposal for how they envision those \$23 billion in cuts is needed by November 1- just two weeks from the day the letter was sent to the Super

Committee.

Farm Bills are rewritten about every five years—with the recent ones taking over a year of hearings, circulated bill drafts, and back room scrambling to craft. But it may be that the only thing left in the process is the back room scrambling. Public input, debate, and analysis and careful recrafting have been thrown out the window.

If the Super Committee accepts the proposal, then the House and Senate Agriculture Committees have an extremely short amount of time to develop the policies and programs that go along with the cuts. Staff of both Agriculture Committees are working around the clock to put that together. And that work is happening behind closed doors, and involves mostly the staff of the committee chairs and ranking members.

The Super Committee could still decide to accept, reject, or change the proposal offered to them. And the Super Committee could also fail to come up with a plan overall, leading to across the board cuts to all federal programs including Medicare and defense.

With limited agricultural influence on the super Committee, Agriculture is understandably nervous. About \$15

billion of the \$23 billion in ag cuts are expected to come from commodity program subsidies, with the rest to come from conservation and nutrition assistance to low-income families.

Farm organizations, commodity groups, and agricultural industry groups are scrambling to hang onto as much as they can, whether it be old style commodity program payments, now called "revenue insurance", or reworked crop insurance. Sustainable ag groups champion conservation, payment limitations, beginning farmer programs, rural development, and local/regional food systems as a way to protect long term food production, provide economic opportunities, and save money.

But as the din from ag and commodity groups increases and the back room negotiations continue, it sounds like we will end up with a farm bill that continues to benefit a narrow range of interests supporting a highly industrial, unsustainable system of production, at the cost of conservation, rural communities, opportunities for new and beginning farmers, and a healthier food system.

Although little has come out from behind the closed doors, "streamlining, combining, and cutting" are all ideas being floated. And they all aim more at tweaking the corn-bean agriculture we have, than for the thoughtful development of the diversified, more complex food and farm system we need.

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition reports that none of the proposals on the table for restructuring commodity crop or crop insurance titles of the farm bill include reform of payment limitation provisions. The proposals apparently still do not

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Grazing Cattle Best for Pastures, Water Quality and Calf Health

by Tom Parker

Belleville, Ks. - Dale Kirkham believes that the quality of air, water, grasslands, pastures and cattle would improve if more ranchers adopted a keep-it-simple attitude and returned to the basics. The basics in this case being an elementary law of bovine anatomy: cows have legs. Four of them, to be exact, and cows, as well as everything associated with cows, are better off when those four legs are moving.

Kirkham, a Kansas Rural Center field organizer from Eureka, backed up his belief with examples and statistics during a presentation on cattle and pasture management at the Treasure Tree in Belleville, on September 19. The workshop, sponsored by the Milford WRAPS and the Kansas Rural Center, included other experts such as Dr. Larry Hollis, K-State beef production medicine specialist, and Will Boyer, K-State watershed specialist. About 25 people attended.

Kirkham's advice—and the subject of his topic, "Cows have four legs and a rumen for a reason"—was to make cattle do the work of staying healthy, and while they're at it they'll keep pastures healthy, too. But it takes planning, a change of attitude, and a clear picture of the lay of the land.

"Cows are like kids waiting for their parents to come home and feed them cookies and milk," he said. "They're creatures of habit. And they'll sit around waiting for a handout."

Given the opportunity, cattle will bunch together, he said. When cattle loiter beneath shade trees near stream banks on sweltering afternoons or on downward slopes, livestock waste carries into creeks to pollute downstream resources. At winter feeders, waste accumulates underfoot to create biological laboratories for unwanted pathogens. When proper site management is added to the mix, both scenarios could be alleviated by simply making cattle do what they do best: graze.

"A sure way of telling if you're feeding too much hay is if any remains after two hours. If it does, you're feeding too much," said Dr. Hollis.

"I want them to be grazers, first, last and always," he said. "Keep them spread out." This includes using rotating pastures, restricting transportation corridors where erosion is prevalent, locating mineral and salt feeders at corners of pastures where grazing normally doesn't occur, providing minimal amounts of hay when needed, and rolling out hay for supplemental feeding.

Dr. Hollis agreed. "It's an equal-opportunity feeding system," he quipped. "It can be done anywhere and changed daily. They're working instead of you."

Kirkham showed a slide of a bale-wide strip of short grass bisecting a pasture of much taller grass. Cattle following rolled-out hay tend to crop underlying grasses while providing nutrients to the soil, Kirkham said. "I think of manure as minerals," he said. "It includes nitrogen, potassium and phosphate. And if you include a little cracked corn in the feed, birds will break up the cow patties for you."

Letting cattle crop native grasslands also reduces the necessity for burning. "Burning is contagious," he said. "We sometimes do it because our neighbor is doing it. We need to ask ourselves if it will have a positive impact, such as cleaning out cedars. If not, let's reconsider."

Reducing or preventing cattle congregating on calving grounds is crucial for healthy newborns, Dr. Hollis said. When cattle are spread throughout a pasture rather than bunched together, calves are born into more sterile environments. While it's hardly the same as having them delivered at the local regional hospital, steps can be taken to alleviate some of the contamination associated with grazers—excrement.

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Our Local Food News

Our Local Food Chapters



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Twin Rivers Chapter

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“Manhattan Project” Demonstrates Power of Grassroots in Local Food

by Julie Mettenburg

Manhattan, Ks.- One challenge in the local food movement is harnessing the energy bubbling up in communities, driven by consumer desire for healthier food from local, known sources. Although that energy can be a catalyst for action, it can also create a “noisy” environment in which it can be difficult to coalesce a real movement for change. Groups can inadvertently work at cross-purposes and create confusion around local food, rather than pull together for purposeful action.

Our Local Food (OLF) seeks to address this challenge by establishing several local partner committees in each chapter region. These committees will draw upon a diverse set of food system stakeholders including farmers, food business owners, farmers market managers, chefs, extension agents, food bank representatives, and nutrition professionals. The idea is that regular meetings and networking among those dedicated to the development of a regional food system will inspire collaboration.

Partner committees are integral to the grassroots approach of KRC's Our Local Food program as it allows each community to address its own challenges and opportunities. Committees receive support from the chapter staff and operate with minimal program restrictions, fostering ownership by local community members of their local food efforts, while providing stability and purpose from the program.

The newly launched OLF program

and this approach logged its first real success over the summer with the formation of the Kaw River Valley chapter's first major partner committee in Manhattan.

At the April meeting of the OLF Kaw River Valley steering committee, farm member Elaine Mohr met other producers, nonprofit and policy advocates, chefs, food activists, and food business managers from around the region. Energized by the positive group energy, she came away feeling that by working with Our Local Food, she could bring together a group of advocates to launch an awareness-building event in Manhattan and bring the program to the western part of the chapter in a meaningful way.

Mohr became inspired to provide an alternative to a recent \$100 per plate local food event near Manhattan. Convinced that this event's price tag delivered the message that local food is only for the elite, she wanted to present local food in an entirely different way and at a much more reasonable price point—\$10 per plate.

She invited possible collaborators to a June meeting at a local coffee shop, along with Julie Mettenburg, the OLF-KRV coordinator, who acted as a facilitator. Attendees included representatives from Little Apple Brewery, University for Man, People's Grocery, and the Manhattan Public Library, along with two local food and health activists, and Mohr, of Southside Gardens. Later other participants included included a KSU professor,

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Our Local Food News

“Manhattan Project”...

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Elaine Mohr, Manhattan, working at the Manhattan Local Food Feast in August. Photo by Odin C. Olsen

an extension agent, a KSU student group and the Downtown Manhattan Farmers Market. At that first meeting, the group brainstormed possible events and agreed to continue to collaborate.

Once the Local Food Feast planning began, partner committee members pooled resources to develop what became more than a week's worth of events running from August 28 to September 8.

The Downtown Manhattan Farmers Market hosted a kick-off event complete with a seasonal cooking demonstration. People's Grocery sponsored an “eat local challenge” where participants submitted their recipes for a chance to win a farmers market gift basket. Following the Sunday feast, University for Man sponsored a class about how to eat local. The library screened the film *Ingredient*, and OLF- Kaw River Valley chapter provided a guide of Man-

Twin Rivers Chapter Logs Busy Summer



Emporia, Ks.- The OLF Twin Rivers staff participated in two events this past summer to share information about the OLF program with local consumers: the Emporia Farmers Market's Homegrown Celebration and the Farmers Market at the Lyon County Free Fair. Member banners and stickers can now be seen at various locations around the Twin Rivers region .

In mid-October, the Twin Rivers Chapter hosted a Local Soup Supper at the Emporia Downtown Wellness Kick-Off on October 12 and plans to participate in National Food Day (October 24) with information for the public and cooking demonstrations. On November 1, a “Growing Local Connections” workshop for members and persons interested in becoming OLF- Twin Rivers Chapter members will be held. The chapter is also working with a Marketing Research class at Emporia State University in developing a research project on consumer attitudes toward buying local farmers' products. At summer's end, the 2011 OLF-TR had 22 members (19 farms, 2 farmers markets, and 1 food business) and 47 Vocal Local members. For more information, contact Tracey Graham at twinrivers.olf@gmail.com. □

hattan-area members to help participants find local food.

The Local Food Feast was a break-even venture and nearly sold out at 100 tickets, meeting its goals for the first year. As a bonus, it provided information and several hours of conversation opportunity about local food for a wide variety of participants. And although Mohr and her committee consider it a learning exercise, they agree that it achieved its purpose of making local food accessible to a wider variety of consumers. They will be re-convening soon to look ahead at what's next for

Our Local Food in Manhattan.

Based on Manhattan experience, the Our Local Food - Kaw River Valley steering committee decided at its August meeting to pursue the formation of more partner committees around the region, specifically in the Topeka area, the Atchison-Leavenworth area, and the Kansas City - Johnson County area. If you are interested in joining a partner committee in your community, please contact Julie Mettenburg at kaw.rivervalley.olf@gmail.com or Mercedes Taylor-Puckett at mercedes.taylor.puckett@gmail.com. □

Sustainable Farming News

KRC Hosts NRCS 2011 Organic Farming Trainings



Lynn and Steve Edelman, Sabetha, answer questions about their organic farming operation at the September training session. The brothers took over the organic operation from their dad, Eugene, who still helps out on the farm. They hosted the Sabetha a training farm tour. Farms toured in the trainings ranged from Edelman's 900 acre (585 crop acres & 300 pasture) to John Crisp's ten acre vegetable and poultry production farm.

About 100 NRCS staff in Kansas attended the September 2011 series of organic farming and certification trainings. In 2010, primarily district conservationists attended, with technicians and other NRCS staff attending the 2011 trainings held in Smith Center, Sabetha, and Emporia.

The trainings were organized by the Kansas Rural Center with funding from the North Central SARE Professional Development Program. Kansas NRCS also contributed to the program with support for its staff to attend the day and a half long trainings held in three regions of the state.

The programs began with presentations on the basics of organic farming covering the history and background of organic agriculture, the resource conserving benefits of organic

farming, and an overview of research findings. A presentation on transition strategies for producers followed, including what farmers and NRCS staff need to know about crop rotations, fertility, weed control, insect and disease prevention, and livestock practices.

This year's training included Ib Hagsten, an independent certified organic inspector, from the Kansas City area, who is one of the few NRCS technical service providers in the country on organic farming. Hagsten explained the basics of organic certification, the organic system plan and the role of the inspector.

Frannie Miller, Kansas State University Integrated Pest Management Coordinator, presented the draft results of a spring survey of organic

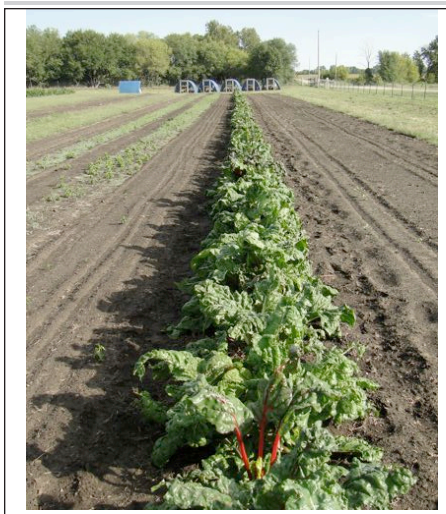
producers in Kansas, highlighting their information and research needs.

One session also focused on hoophouse construction, production and management. The NRCS' seasonal high tunnel, or hoophouse, practice standard has been a popular item among Kansas farmers in the EQIP Organic Initiative.

But attendees claimed that hearing from working organic farmers in the afternoon panel discussion and getting out on an organic farm on the second day was the most helpful for them. Ten organic farmers participated in the trainings, and three hosted farm tours.

KRC has plans to do one more training conference in 2012, this time opening it up to organic and transitional organic farmers as well as NRCS and others to participate. □

Sustainable Farming News



John Crisp's farm near Americus provided a different kind of organic farm tour than all the other trainings. Crisp raises vegetables, sheep and poultry for a 50 member Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) service plus other customers in the Flint Hills, reaching customers as far away as Topeka and Manhattan. Above middle, Crisp raises heritage turkeys, ducks, and chickens including laying hens in small hoop pens, moving the pens frequently to protect the grass and spread the nutrients. At left his open hoophouse offered a chance to see it being prepared for winter green planting. Crisp just bought an additional 80 acres to add a grass fed beef enterprise and more hoophouse production. This type of farm is very different from the typical NRCS clientele, but horticultural, small farm operations still have conservation challenges that can benefit from NRCS programs.



Each training featured a panel of organic farmers who answered questions from the audience. Above left, Ed Reznicek (facilitator and organic farmer), Steve Meyer, Sabetha, and Jack Geiger, Robinson, spoke at the Sabetha meeting. Brad Edelman, Sabetha, also participated. Above right, the Smith Center farmer panel included Marvin Whitney, Smith Center, Maria Stewart, Lebanon, Jim Rowh, Norton, and Rick Boller, Lebanon.



Above left, Marvin Whitney and Gary Weisenberg hosted the Smith Center tour. About 30 NRCS personnel attended each of the three trainings. Above right, they view the Edelman organic corn crop and discuss the crop rotation.

Sustainable Farming News

2011 Conference...

Continued from page 1

Topics that will be covered include:

*Good farming practices and production for all farmers, ranchers and market gardeners;

*Food processing and marketing challenges and realities;

*Successful production and marketing models;

*Opportunities for beginning farmers and transitioning farmers;

*Risk management information;

*and growing grassroots support for public policy solutions.

Dan Nagengast, owner of Seeds from Italy, Lawrence, and former KRC executive director, will deliver the keynote address on the topic "Feeding the World: Billions of Farmers or Very Few?"

Based on his 20 years with KRC, in farming and working in global hunger relief, Dan will present an alternative vision for how the projected 9 billion people walking the planet by mid-century will be fed. His speech will be followed by a roundtable of panelists including government officials, educators, and farmers, who will offer comments from their vantage points on the future Kansas food and agriculture landscape.

Sixteen afternoon workshops will include practical informational panels and presentations on vegetable or specialty crop production for direct and retail marketing; mentoring and apprenticeships for farm transitions; cover crops for enhancing livestock production; hoophouse production and possibilities; high and low-tech direct marketing approaches; mobile meat processing unit options; alternative business structures for local and regional food entrepreneurs;

grassroots organizing 101; and the 2012 Farm Bill- opportunities for new farm and food coalitions. Lunch will feature locally sourced foods, prepared by the culinary program at Flint Hills Technical College.

The conference will provide information and networking opportunities for crop and livestock farmers, ranchers and graziers, specialty crop producers, farmers market vendors and organizers, students and educators, representatives from nonprofits and government, food business owners and restaurateurs, local food and sustainable agriculture advocates, and wildlife and conservation advocates.

Registration cost is \$35 and includes food; some scholarships are available. A complete list of workshops and presenters, and registration information is available at www.kr sustainabilityconference.blogspot.com or at the KRC website at www.kansasruralcenter.org. Or call the Kansas Rural Center at 785-873-3431. Registration Deadline is November 15.

The conference is co-sponsored by the Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops, Kansas Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program at KSU, Kansas Farmers Union, and others; and is partially funded by the USDA Risk Management Agency. □

Grazing Cattle.....

Continued from page 5

"Anyone see a problem with that?" He pointed to a photograph of a newborn calf lying on a carpet of manure-splattered hay. "It's like calving into a toilet," he said.

Unless calving is spread out over a wide area, disease can build up over time on calving grounds. The number one neonatal disease responsible for calf deaths is scours, he said, which can most often be traced back to the soil.

Simple methods can minimize or even eradicate the problem. Hollis recommended the Sandhills Calving System, a methodology developed in the Sandhills region of Nebraska, where formerly during calving season it wasn't unusual for clinics to be staffed with 50 veterinarians, and even then ranchers frequently lost five percent or more of their newborns.

The system is based upon separating cattle through a series of pastures depending on calving cycles. Once a set of calves is born, other cattle are moved to the next pasture in a sequential alignment that assures that newborns are kept separate.

"Newborn calves are never left in the presence of older calves," Hollis said. "Older calves can serve as disease amplifiers, and are the biggest source of infection for calves born later in the season." The system has been proven to reduce or eliminate scours, and when an outbreak does occur, it minimizes the number of calves affected.

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Sustainable Farming News

South Central Chapter Studies Economic Impact of Farmers Markets

by Natalie Fullerton

Wichita , Ks. - The Our Local Food - South Central Chapter wrapped up a hectic first summer of tours, workshops and events, all geared to equipping members with the new OLF tools and challenging consumers to visit farmers markets and eat local.

One focus was the economic impact of farmers markets. In partnership with KSU Research and Extension Sedgwick County, OLF-SC conducted a Rapid Market Assessment at both the Kansas Grown! Farmers Market at 21st and Ridge and the Saturday Old Town Farmers Market, both located in Wichita.

Rapid Market Assessments are a valuable tool in determining the impact of farmers markets and local agriculture on municipal and county economies. They provide important information about consumer motivations for shopping at markets, how much consumers spend and are willing to spend at markets and surrounding businesses, total volume of market traffic, as well as a reliable estimate of market day sales.

Results from the surveys suggested that together the two markets generate an estimated \$75,000 in local food dollars spent during a peak weekend in July or August. The information collected from the RMAs will be used to complete a Local Food Assessment Report, which will provide insight for local food capacity building and future OLF program planning.

As summer wrapped up, Our Local Food - South Central (OLF-SC) was 40 members strong with many members utilizing new elements in the OLF promotional toolkit. OLF-SC banners can be found at several of the



On September 17, OLF-SC partnered with SlowFood Wichita/Flint Hills to host a farm tour and potluck picnic at Janzen Family Farms, a grass-fed beef and organic crop farm near Newton. Above Norm Oeding explains the grazing system. Photo N. Fullerton.

the member's market stands while OLF stickers can be seen on egg cartons, fruit packaging, and many other food items being sold by members. Bright red re-usable grocery totes with the OLF-SC logo can also be seen being filled by local food supporters at area farmers markets.

Many program developments and activities helped expand recognition and membership this summer. In June, OLF-SC debuted an e-newsletter sent to Vocal Locals, local food supporters who are interested in finding and using local food. This bi-weekly newsletter, reaching almost 200 [and counting] followers, features local food news, events, recipes, as well as a seasonal produce calendar and profiles of OLF-SC members.

OLF-SC kicked off the month of July by challenging folks to purchase food from OLF-SC members over the July 4th weekend. Participants were encouraged to share their recipes and photos of their local food meals through Facebook and e-mail. Those who participated won goodies like

produce and gift cards from OLF-SC farm, business, and farmers market members.

Several activities are in motion to celebrate autumn and continue the momentum summer has brought to the program. OLF-SC is partnering with the Wichita Health & Wellness Coalition and others to plan and celebrate National Food Day on October 24. The groups are planning a "Set the Table with REAL Food" event that encourages people to cook a healthy meal and eat with family on Food Day.

A celebration of OLF-SC's inaugural year will take place December 3 with the first annual Local Food Connections Workshop.

More information and updates about the events mentioned above and more can be found at ourlocalfoodsouthcentral.blogspot.com or in the free e-newsletter. To subscribe to the newsletter visit the website and click on "Vocal Locals." □

Sustainable Farming News

Grazing Cattle...

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Hollis concurred with Kirkham that cattle are often overfed and pampered. By reducing the amount of hay used as supplemental feeding, excess stores could be turned into another kind of green by supplying drought-stricken ranchers to the south. "People are crying for it, and they're paying large sums of money for it," Hollis said. "It's a high price commodity."

A sure way of telling if you're feeding too much hay is if any remains after two hours. If it does, you're feeding too much, he said. He showed an image of a cow nestled cozily inside a bale feeder. "That," he said dryly, "is too much cow comfort for my tastes."

It goes back to the idea of grazing and Kirkham's theory. Hollis pointed to a photograph of a broad field of native prairie stretching to the horizon. The russet and tawny grass was deep and lush and kissed by a winter sun. "Everything," Hollis said, "works better out here."

The workshop was funded by the Milford WRAPS Watershed through funds from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment Bureau of Watershed Management. □

Tom Parker is a free lance writer from Blue Rapids, who provided this article for the Kansas Rural Center.

Farm Policy News

Fast Farm Bill...

Continued from page 4

address the loopholes that allow single farms to collect nearly unlimited subsidies.

NSAC also points out that crop insurance subsidies- the 60 percent of farm insurance premiums paid by the taxpayer- have no limit at all. (Crop insurance subsidies have exceeded commodity program payments in recent years.)

At a minimum, Congress should insist that any deficit reduction bill that cuts farm spending should include a hard cap on subsidies. Senators Grassley (R-IA) and Johnson (D-SD) sent their own letter to the Super Committee arguing this very point, which is something that can be added to either the House-Senate Ag Committees proposal or to the Super Committee's version. Also, cutting nutrition assistance to low income families is not going to go over very well at a time when more families find themselves in need.

As for FY 2012 and agricultural appropriations, the Senate is expected to send their version to the House for a conference committee vote the first full week of November.

While this is clearly not the normal farm bill debate year, it is one that will impact us far into the future. It may give new meaning to the old adage, "haste makes waste" which ironically is one of the things they are trying to address. □

For timely updates on farm bill developments, visit the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition website at <http://sustainableagriculture.net/>

Beginning Farmer Bill Introduced to be Included in New Farm Bill

House and Senate members announced that the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act of 2011 [H.R. 3236], will be introduced soon. This is a comprehensive bill intended for inclusion in the 2012 Farm Bill and will highlight federal programs that help support economic opportunities for young and beginning farmers and ranchers.

The bill addresses many of the barriers that new agriculture entrepreneurs face such as limited access to land and markets, hyper land price inflation, high input costs, and a lack of sufficient support networks.

The Beginning Farmer Rancher Opportunity Act is a bipartisan and bicameral bill introduced in the House by Representatives Tim Walz (D-MN) and Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE), and an identical companion bill will be introduced by Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) and other members of the Senate Agriculture Committee in the Senate next week once they return from their current recess.

"The scope of this bill represents a historical investment in beginning farmers. The programs will nurture the next generation of family farmers by building human capital and assets," says Steve Schwartz, founder of California FarmLink, an NSAC member group which was one of the first in the country to design and

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Local Food System News

Local Food System Grants...

Continued from page 1

In 2012, ten new crops will be added to the sixteen highlighted in previous years. To increase the diversity of crops grown in the state, K-State Research and Extension Horticulture Agents will partner with experienced growers and OLF program staff to develop crop guides focussing on production, post-harvest, and marketing best practices for at least five featured crops.

Producer education on selected crops will also be offered in multiple formats including webinars, workshops and field days. Additional partners, including the KSU Research And Extension (KSRE) Nutrition, Food Safety and Healthy Program Leadership Team and KSRE Family and Consumer Science Agents, will focus on educating consumers about specific specialty crops and how to select, store, and prepare them. OLF member farmers markets will be eligible to apply for mini-grant and cost-shares to promote Savor the Season crops at their markets.

A second grant, the \$99,673 USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) award, will support numerous collaborations between KRC and other partners to increase opportunities around local food production. Using conferences, electronic communications tools, workshops and other venues, the project will enhance producers ability to locate risk management information and training, and to strengthen risk management education

and training to a broadened agricultural audience.

RMA grant-supported programming includes the 2011 KRC sustainable agriculture conference, a full-day food safety workshop at the 2012 Great Plain Growers Conference, the Kansas Grazers Association's winter conference, and a two-day grazing school to be held in fall 2012.

KRC will also partner with the Kansas Farmers Union (KFU), Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops (KCSAAC), and KSRE Douglas County to develop a Strategic Marketing for Livestock Producers educational series in winter of 2012. Composed of an introductory webinar and four workshops, the program will focus on the basics of marketing, including identifying a target market, selecting appropriate outlets, developing a marketing plan, and creating effective materials.

RMA funding will also allow the Our Local Food program to expand its resources for meat and animal product producers, and are not covered by the Specialty Crop grants.

The Kansas Small Farm and Direct Marketing Guide, a collaboration of KDA's Food Safety Division, KCSAAC, the KFU, and KRC, is also funded through the RMA grant. This guide will provide base-line information that all direct marketing farms and beginning farmers need to be aware of to increase the likelihood of success and remain within regulatory compliance. Topics to be covered

include licensing, taxes, insurance, and labor topics as well as rules and regulations for processing and direct marketing diverse agricultural products.

On the national level, direct-to-consumer sales, through outlets such as farmers markets, farm stands and U-pick operations, totaled \$1.2 billion in 2007. This represents an annual growth rate of about 10% between 2002 and 2007- twice that of the rest of the food economy.

Activity in Kansas not only mirrors that national trend, but demonstrates even more potential. The number of farmers markets across the state has doubled over the past decade. Furthermore, between 2002 to 2007, Kansas rose from 45 to 33 in state ranking based on vegetable acres per 100 people. These statistics point to a burgeoning demand for local food that the USDA estimates will reach \$7 billion by 2012.

"This rapid increase, not only in sales but also in the number of small farms entering the direct marketing arena, demonstrates that the need for resources, training and networking is great. With the award of these two grants, the Kansas Rural Center and its partners are in a position to address several of the opportunities and challenges of rebuilding regional food systems," said Mercedes Taylor-Puckett, KRC's Local Food and Farmers Market Project Coordinator.

You can contact Mercedes at mercedes.taylorpuckett@gmail.com. □

Beginning Farmer Bill.... *Continued from page 12*

implement a successful Individual Development Accounts program to help new farmers save money and accumulate sufficient capital to begin farming. "The Act builds a foundation to develop jobs and farm businesses in rural communities with a very small investment of government funds."

The bill includes provisions that cut across six titles of the Farm Bill, including proposals that address conservation program set asides and incentives, access to credit, rural development, research and extension, and access to crop insurance and risk management. □ *From NSAC Oct. 25, 2011*

Local Farms, Food, and Jobs Act Introduced in Congress

On Tuesday, November 1 Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-ME-1) and 35 original co-sponsors introduced the Local Farms, Food, and Jobs Act (S. 1773, H.R. 3286), a comprehensive bill intended for inclusion in the 2012 Farm Bill.

As the Senate and House Agriculture Committee leadership work to finalize their farm bill proposal for the Super Committee this week, NSAC and its allies will advocate for inclusion of the policy provisions in the Local Farms, Food, and Jobs Act into the farm bill.

On Thursday, November 3, NSAC

Demonstration of Tire Tank Installation Scheduled for Nov. 14

The process of installing a tire tank below a pond will be demonstrated at the farm of Brian and Dixie Rees, southwest of Olpe, Ks. on Monday November 14. Herschel George, KSU Watershed Specialist, will lead the demonstration beginning at 2 p.m. The pasture site is located 3/8 mile east of the intersection of Roads 60 and H (three miles west and one south of Olpe).



Topics will include tire sizes to meet livestock needs, preparing and finishing the concrete bottom, plumbing and valve options, and creating a hardened surface around the tank. During the current drought, conditions are right to install a pipeline through the dam during pond cleanout operations. "These tank installations will provide cleaner water for better livestock performance and give ponds a longer life," stated Brian Rees, Lyon County Extension Agricultural Agent.

The project is also designed to improve water quality in area streams and reservoirs, an initiative that involves assistance from the Lyon County Conservation District, USDA NRCS, KSU Extension, Kansas Rural Center, and multiple Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) watersheds in the Flint Hills. Representatives will be on hand to explain the financial and technical assistance available for water and grazing projects.

Registration is not required and no fee is involved. In case of rain or inclement weather, the demonstration will be rescheduled to Friday November 18. For additional information, contact Brian Rees at brees@ksu.edu, or 620-341-3220.

and other farm and food organizations will host a Washington, D.C. fly-in for 50 farmers, ranchers, and other local and regional food advocates to voice support for the Local, Farms, Food, and Jobs Act.

The legislation helps farmers and ranchers by addressing production, aggregation, processing, marketing, and distribution needs to access growing local and regional food markets. The bill also assists consumers by improving access to healthy food. The measure

provides secure farm bill funding for critically important programs that support family farms, expand new farming opportunities, create rural jobs, and invest in the local food and agriculture economy. □ (*From NSAC Nov. 1, 2011*) See more on at NSAC's website at:

<http://sustainableagriculture.net/>

Resources and Events

Douglas County Local Food System Report Issued

The Douglas County Food Policy Council, in collaboration with researchers at Kansas State University, have released an analysis of the food systems of Douglas, Jefferson, and Leavenworth counties in Kansas. The report, "Building a Deep-Rooted Local Food System", identifies the benefits, challenges, and opportunities for creating a sustainable local food system in our region.

Dr. Rhonda Janke and her team at KSU researched current agricultural production, spending habits of regional consumers, key health indicators, food access issues for low income community members and the economic impact of agriculture on the region. "The most striking findings," according to Janke, "were the significant gaps that exist between what we currently produce in this region today (primarily corn, soybeans and beef) and the other staple food groups our community members eat

(eggs, fruits, vegetables, other proteins)." The acres in fruit and vegetables in the region account for only 0.1% of total agricultural production.

Other key findings in the study were that processing infrastructure is a key missing ingredient in the region's local food economy. The lack of food infrastructure enterprises: cold storage, light processing, packaging and small meat processing plants make it difficult for schools and restaurants to participate in the local food economy. Also food access for the low income community members is an issue. Over 10,000 residents in the tri-county area live in neighborhoods defined by USDA as "food deserts" where they lack access to healthy food options.

The Executive Summary and the full report can be found online at www.douglas-county.com/depts/ad/su/su_home.aspx; or at the KRC website. □

Rural Residents Rank High Among the Uninsured

According to analysis provided by Health Policy and Research Solutions (HPR), Kansas counties with the highest percentages of residents without health insurance were in rural and western Kansas. 2007 U.S. Census data reveals that the state average for the uninsured is 12.7 percent, but varies from 9 to 29 percent. The largest percentages are found in Stanton and Hamilton Counties of far western Kansas, with 28 and 29 percent. New numbers based on U.S. Census Bureau 2008 and 2009 statistics will be available later this fall.

Lack of health insurance in rural Kansas adds to the other barriers of shortages of adequate health care providers and the travel time necessary to secure health care services. For more information, contact HPR at hprsolutions@hprsolutionsllc.com □



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Go to www.kansasruralcenter.org for copies of back issues.

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Calendar

Monday, November 14, 2011 **Grazing Teleconference Call**, 7:30 p.m. Contact Jason Schmidt for more information at jason_schmidt20@hotmail.com; or call in to 1-888-387-8686; followed by room number: 4699043#.

Monday November 14, **Tire Tank Installation Workshop**, near Olpe, Ks. Contact Brian Rees at brees@ksu.edu, or 620-341-3220.

Saturday November 19 **KRC Sustainable Agriculture Conference, Emporia, Ks.** See registration information at the KRC website at www.kansasruralcenter.org; or call 785-873-3431.

Friday and Saturday December 2-3, **Kansas Farmers Union Convention** Topeka Ks. Jim Hightower, Keynote Speaker. For more information, go to www.kansasfarmersunion.org/2011-Convention.html; or call (620) 241-6630.

January 5-7, 2012 **Great Plains Vegetables Growers Conference**, Missouri Western State University, St. Joseph, Missouri. Contact Buchanan County Extension 816-279-1691, or go to www.greatplainsgrowers.org

Saturday January 21, 2012 **Kansas Winter Grazing Conference, "Managing Drought Risk on the Ranch"**, Emporia, Ks. Contact www.kglc.org or Mary Howell at 785-562-8726.

Please check the KRC website for updated and more detailed calendar and announcement information on the above and for additional events at:

www.kansasruralcenter.org/calendar.

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