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**Bauman Family Addresses Sustainability on Farm  
By Connie Pantle, Kansas Rural Center**

*Garnett, Kansas*—“Coopeition” was the theme at John and Yvonne Bauman’s Cedar Valley Farms Field Day in July, which was sponsored by the Kansas Rural Center’s Farmer-Educator Program. Producers from across the state gathered to tour the family’s 180-acre diversified, organic farm and USDA-licensed poultry processing facility—which is the only on-farm facility in Kansas.

“The Baumans believe that there is more to be gained than lost through working with other producers and sharing knowledge,” Mercedes Taylor-Puckett, KRC’s farmer-educator coordinator, said. According to Taylor-Puckett the Bauman family serves as an example of “coopeition”, one Rosanna’s favorite phrases.

As Rosanna—the eldest Bauman daughter—explained it to the other producers at the tour, “You are not our competition. Our only competitors are the big commercial farms.” Rosanna said she wanted to get together with other producers to spread “the word of the good food.” “I knew we’d have fun discussing ways to farm sustainably and affordably,” she said.

Rosanna said the farm is “highly diversified as everybody has their own interest and we collectively market together.” “We don’t strictly do meat chickens or eggs,” she said referencing the variety of animals on the farm, including ducks, lambs, goats, cattle, chickens and turkeys.

Each of the six Bauman children—Marvin, Rosanna, Kevin, Steven, Ivin and Joanna—have unique interests as they relate to the farm. Several of the children have an interest in different species of animals. Therefore in 2005, the family applied for and received a grant from Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) to study multi-species pasture “stacking” on their farm.

The grant allowed the family to run water lines to pasture paddocks, divided by electric netting. In turn, the family was able to increase production of their pastured poultry to about 8,000 broilers a year. Laying hens are also pastured on the farm, producing about 350 dozen eggs a week on average.

“The Baumans are self-proclaimed ‘incurable entrepreneurs’,” Taylor-Puckett said. “To me, this means their eyes are always open for opportunities. But the family doesn’t jump willy-nilly into

new ventures. They carefully evaluate an opportunity, determining if there is an existing market for the product or service,” she said.

The family markets their farm-fresh, pasture-raised chicken, lamb, beef, turkey, ducks, as well as eggs at nearby farmers markets, restaurants and grocery stores. Additionally, they recently upgraded their poultry processing facility from state licensed to USDA licensed. Rosanna said they are able to process 425 chickens a day with the facility, all while maintaining the quality of the product. “Because I am able to dress my chicken on my own farm, I am able to control the product more so. If it were processed somewhere else, I wouldn’t be able to guarantee the quality of my chickens,” she said.

The Bauman family first became acquainted with the Kansas Rural Center when establishing the farm in 2001. In researching sustainable farming practices, they were referred to KRC. The family completed the River Friendly Farm environmental self-assessment, a whole farm planning tool. According to Ed Reznicek, a field organizer with KRC’s Clean Water Farms Project (CWFP), “They saw the use of the assessment tool and the project overall as a way to specifically assess the environmental impact of their farm, clarify their farming goals and to help plan the overall development of their farm.”

To address these concerns, the Baumans were approved for a CWFP cost-share grant for cropping systems. Using CWFP funds, they inter-seeded legumes into the pasture and implemented a crop rotation system including wheat, oats, alfalfa, red clover, milo and soybeans.

After working with KRC for nearly a decade, Rosanna recently took another step and became a farmer-educator with KRC’s Farmer Educator Project. According to Taylor-Puckett, “Farmer-Educators play an important role in assisting both new producers and also those more experienced farmers wishing to branch-out in new directions or expand production.

Taylor-Puckett said KRC’s Farmer-Educators are selected not only for their expertise in an agricultural area but also their personalities. “We seek out producers that are successful in their businesses and are practicing innovative techniques,” she said.

Another quality she looks for is “the gift of working well with others”. “Each of our farmer-educators like people and are curious and open by nature—they feel as though they have as much to learn from you as you do from them. This makes for an encouraging and supportive mentor relationship; one that has the potential to impact both parties,” she said.

Taylor-Puckett said it was qualities like these in Rosanna that made her ideal for the job of a farmer-educator. “What I appreciate most about Rosanna is her ability to be both humble and assertive. She doesn’t feel as though her way is the best way. In fact, she recognizes there is always room for improvement. But Rosanna does go into things well-informed,” Taylor-Puckett said.

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