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Dear Friends of KRC,

As Spring finally hits us full force, and before life gets any busier with farming, gardening, and summer activities, KRC wants to say thank you for your past support and all you do for us! KRC has always been about the people we serve and the relationships we make, and how together we can accomplish great things. So we'd like to update you on recent activities, our plans for the next few months, and let you know some exciting news.

KRC is coming off a busy schedule of winter workshops, trainings and events, all designed to help young farmers get into farming, or established farmers and ranchers explore new ways to increase productivity and profitability through sustainable management systems. Our Sustainable Agriculture Conference last November was a huge success drawing over 150 people, and continues to inspire program growth.

We've sponsored several well-attended how-to workshops on grazing management, food safety and high tunnel construction and operation. KRC staff are very involved in the North Central Region SARE "Scaling-Up" local food system effort, exploring next steps in growing production and processing opportunities in Kansas. Farmers markets around the state are ramping up for the season, as are KRC's market outreach and education efforts. We continue to work to insure that low income and at-risk Kansans can use their benefits to buy fresh, local products at farmers markets. And as a new Governor took office, the KRC organized Kansas Food Security Task Force presented him with another set of recommendations on ways to help feed our state's hungry.

We continue promoting good farming practices in watersheds throughout Kansas, assisting farmers and ranchers as they develop whole farm plans to protect water quality and the environment, at a time when fence-row to fence-row production is once more becoming the norm. We train NRCS and Extension agents in organic production and certification on crop and livestock farms, and high tunnel management. Our Wind for Schools Project now works with 18 schools, installing small wind turbines.

The list could go on. For over thirty years, KRC has been the progressive voice of agriculture, always seeking to balance food production, opportunity for rural people, and concern for maintaining a clean environment. No one else does what we do in Kansas.

But Spring is here, and things are changing.

After 20 years as Director of the Kansas Rural Center, I am stepping down to pursue an activity that I expect to take me well into retirement. My wife Lynn and I are purchasing an Italian vegetable seed distributorship. The company is called Seeds from Italy and you can look at the present website now at: www.growitalian.com/. We are traveling to Italy in June to meet with the Franchis, the present members of the family who have owned the company since 1783. So this is a time of transition for the Rural Center also. I am of the opinion this represents a great opportunity for increased effectiveness, embracing new staff, and empowering another generation of passionate food and farming advocates. KRC's goals and activities have never been more vital. The issues have never been more interesting.

Mary Fund, long time program manager of our Clean Water Farms Project and Rural Papers editor, has agreed to serve as interim Executive Director as we undertake a search for my replacement. If you know someone who might be good, please don't hesitate to introduce us. I can testify that for someone passionate about food and farming issues, the position of Executive Director of the Kansas Rural Center is absolutely the best job in Kansas!

The staff and board will work hard over the next few months to fill the position, but work at KRC will not stand still! In addition to the search for a new Executive Director, KRC's very able and committed staff will undertake a number of events and continue tackling the tough issues:

*The 2011 Kansas Sustainable Agriculture Conference is scheduled tentatively for November 19, 2011, in Emporia, Kansas. The conference will feature speakers on Building Local Food System Opportunities, and a host of practical how-to workshops on topics as diverse as scaling up from farmers markets to wholesale and retail markets, hoophouse management, grass fed beef marketing, marketing alternatives, using the cooperative model as a business model, and sustainable farming practices such as cover crops, organic, and grazing systems.

*A series of five grazing workshops from August 16-20 across the state will feature grass and forages expert Jim Gerrish, laying out the basics for a more grass-based livestock system. An Eastern Kansas Grazing school is scheduled for September __ in Holton, Kansas, also aimed at developing a more grass-based livestock system better for the environment and with greater opportunities for producers.

*Our Local Foods Project will spur development of community-based food systems by rolling out regional networks of local farms, farmers markets, food businesses and consumers in Emporia and Wichita this month. A new 'Our Local Foods' website will also be launched in May.

* KRC will host three trainings for NRCS and Extension personnel on organic farming and certification in September to enhance implementation of USDA's Organic Initiative under EQIP.

* KRC's website (www.kansasruralcenter.org) will continue to offer up-to-date calendar and event information, as does our blogspot at <http://kansasruralcenter.blogspot.com>, and the Kansas Farmers Market website at www.ksfarmersmarket.org. They will be joined soon by the Our Local Foods website.

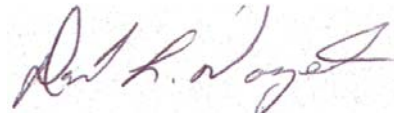
* and KRC's Legislative and Policy Watch Program will continue to monitor the federal budget cuts to conservation and sustainable agriculture programs and other Farm Bill developments to alert you to critical decisions and your chances to be heard.

So you can see that KRC's plate is full, work continues, and the board and staff will carry on for the long term. But KRC needs your support and commitment. We can't pretend the future looks rosy for non-profits. Competition for grants is high, and the economy is still creaking toward recovery. And opposition to our views is ever present, and well funded. But this is the place for you to do something about it.

KRC makes a big difference--on farms, within agencies, at markets, in homes. We are the voice for fresh local food, a clean environment, a new generation of successful farmers and food-related businesses, and policies that increase food security for all of us. We are the voice for the future that you want.

I thank you for your long-time support over my 20 years as Executive Director, and encourage you to continue supporting KRC. The Kansas Rural Center will be our voice for a long, long time.

Sincerely,



Daniel Nagengast, Executive Director