Women Supporting Women: Women Only Tours Focus on Conservation and Farming Practices

by Mary Fund

KRC sponsored three women only conservation tours and workshops from April through June in south central, northeast and north central Kansas. Above left, Marlene Bosworth, Delaware WRAPS coordinator, explains sedimentation into Perry Reservoir by pointing out streambank erosion and farming practices upstream along the Delaware River. Above right, Lucinda Stuenkel, Palmer, Ks., opened her farm for a tour of a variety of conservation and livestock management practices including a “one-woman maternity cow barn” designed for ease of management.

Conservation measures, farming practices, and livestock management—all from a woman’s perspective as farmer and/or landowner—lots of one on one discussion with other women farmers, highlighted the tours/workshops at KRC’s spring “Mom, Apple Pie and Conservation” tours and workshops in April-June. These featured a women-only audience, many women conservation professionals as presenters (as well as a few men), and roundtable discussions about women and agriculture. We had a wild bus tour criss-crossing gravel and dirt roads to visit a variety of conservation practices in three northeast Kansas counties. We rented vans to visit multiple Reno County farms and practices as well as a very depleted Cheney Reservoir at the bottom of the watershed. And the last tour featured multiple conservation measures all on one farm—Lucinda and Sheila Stuenkel’s woman run operation on the border of Clay and Washington counties.

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KRC Launches Three-Year Farm to Fork Initiative

On July 1, the Kansas Rural Center launched its “Community Food Solutions for a Healthier Kansas” initiative that will seek to advance our farm-to-fork food system across the state of Kansas over the next three years. The program will assemble a statewide network of partners who are actively working on farm-to-fork solutions to food access for Kansas.

An early aim of the initiative will be to produce a Statewide Farm-to-Fork Plan, providing information to citizens and policymakers about the status across all sectors of our farming and food system, along with an assessment of barriers that need addressed. Ultimately, the plan will be used to inform public policy solutions needed at all levels to increase access to healthful Kansas farm foods.

Community Food Solutions for a Healthier Kansas is supported by a 3-year Statewide Partnership Initiative grant from the Kansas Health Foundation. KRC will work closely with the Kansas Health Foundation along with the four other statewide partnership awardees: KC Healthy Kids, Kansas Action for Children, American Heart Association in Kansas, and the Kansas Hospital Education and Research Foundation.

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**From the Director**

**Where Food and Farming Meet**
by Julie Mettenburg

With the mild weather we have enjoyed in Eastern Kansas this summer, there are few better places than the banks of meandering Middle Creek on our family farm.

The rustling leaves of the Oak-Hickory canopy provide background music for blue jays that swoop among the redbuds and paw paws. On the ground, rat snakes dart among the shrubs that anchor decaying leaves to rocky soil. The healthy forest contains layers of riches, whole communities that exist in an ecosystem of life-promoting activity.

Similarly, in healthy grasslands, tall grasses carry the sun and rain down into the soil through their root systems, where more life occurs than you will ever see above ground. As remnants graze, they find sweet, tender treats among the short- and mid-size forbs and legumes.

Human systems mimic nature. A healthy sociological system has multiple layers, too.

**Take our economy.** Multinational corporations carry goods to the far corners of the globe. Mid-size companies anchor communities. Mom and Pop shops are celebrated each political season. In rural communities, these are the small to mid-size farms and their associated businesses that provide local goods and services along with a sense of “place,” its personality and heritage that make life interesting.

**Past the Tipping Point?** The small and mid-size farm sector has all but disappeared in Kansas, and our local food distribution systems along with it. While a few large farms have expanded, we have seen an exodus of farmers and their children. Land is consolidated into fewer hands. Those fewer hands buy fewer goods and rely more upon distant suppliers. Economies of scale drive slimmer margins and encourage farming practices that deplete natural resources.

Small towns reach a tipping point of decline. Stores close. Church coffers shrink. Neighbor turns against neighbor as school districts fight bitterly over who will keep the regional school. Remaining farmers turn to questionable production contracts, and communities turn to the magic bullets promised by even bigger, outside operations who promise jobs, but whose impacts on the land and its people are worthy of concern.

For comfort, we like to say that we are feeding the world, but we are not even feeding ourselves.

Kansas farmers once produced a broad range of health-promoting foods for their communities. In 1920, nearly three-quarters of 165,000 farmers in Kansas grew vegetables for their own tables, and most produced vegetables for local sale. By 2007 that number had dropped 473 farms and most produced vegetables for sale, with most of those $760 million in revenues going to farmers outside our state.

Critics scoff that local food is an “elite” endeavor, or, in the words of a Kansas senator, that it will somehow prevent us from enjoying pineapples. And yet the global food system fails us too. As we have learned through the Rural Grocery Initiative, trucks will not serve community

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groceries that are too small to sustain minimum orders. More than half of Kansas citizens meet the USDA definition of food insecurity, whether due to distance or inability to afford it.

Finally, our health suffers. In 2009, fewer than 1 in 4 Kansans consumed the recommended daily amount of fruits and vegetables, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC). Obesity – a disease of malnutrition – is reaching crisis proportion, with a projected 62 percent obesity rate placing Kansas among the least healthy states by 2030.

**Toward Diversification.** Building upon years of leadership in food and farming systems, the Kansas Rural Center will be joining with the Kansas Health Foundation and four other organizations for a three-year initiative to make healthful foods the routine, easy choice, by advocating for public policy change. (See related story on page 1.) KRC will be drawing upon models from Iowa, North Carolina and Oregon, where farm-to-fork is far from elite. It is helping ease problems of rural poverty, malnutrition, obesity and more.

This work toward community food solutions is complementary to KRC’s other major focus, our farming systems work. KRC provides practical, alternative approaches to help implement a diversified farming system that is both environmentally and economically sound. We promote on-farm solutions such as crop rotations, use of legumes, managed grazing systems, and careful adoption of appropriate technologies that allow the farmer, the rancher, and the local community to keep a larger portion of the profit.

At the producer level, in addition to continuing our practical help for graziers and grain crop producers, we are developing education initiatives to increase access to polytunnel technologies (high tunnels and low tunnels) that can help farms expand fruit and vegetable production in Kansas.

At the processing and distribution levels, through our policy work, we will be addressing barriers that prevent farms from accessing markets that can allow for diversification, including challenges around retail distribution, meat processing and grain marketing. And at the community level, we will continue to work with creative Kansans who are exploring new models for food banks, buying clubs, CSA's, food hubs and more.

Like shrubs and forbs in plant-based systems, small and midsize farms and their associated businesses provide the understory and ground layer for the rural economy. Through community food solutions and diversified farming systems, for the next three years, KRC will be leading efforts in Kansas to build the bridge between our farms, our environment, and our communities. We hope you will join us.

(Julie Mettenburg, KRC Executive Director, lives in Lawrence, but is part of her family's farm operation in SE Kansas.)

For more information, please visit KansasRuralCenter.org and subscribe to our email updates about upcoming activities. Also, mark your calendars for our Nov. 2 annual farming & food conference.

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Visitors to KansasRuralCenter.org will notice a new look to the organization’s “virtual” home on the web, with its official website re-launch on August 1. KansasRuralCenter.org has long served as a valued resource for must-have information on diversified farming systems and local food systems development in Kansas.

Now, visitors to KRC on the web will find all of this information catalogued in easy-to-find topic and resource indexes around the site. The new site also contains major new content additions, including the just-released 200-page “Finding Your Niche: A Marketing Guide for Kansas Farms,” and a short film about a featured small farm.

The new site is optimized for viewing on smart phones and tablet devices, and for search engines so that new audiences can connect with the valuable information provided by KRC. It also features easy donation links from every page, as well an email sign-up to receive ongoing notices about upcoming events and information. KRC worked with Huddle Strategic Communications, Kansas City, in the redesign.

To take a tour and get acquainted with the new site, users may visit kansasruralcenter.org and visit the following suggested highlights:

**Who we are:** learn about the history of the Kansas Rural Center from its start in 1979. Meet our staff and board, learn how you can receive our publications and events notices, and find ways to get involved with KRC’s work.

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Deja Vu for a Farm Bill Again This September
by Mary Fund

Is this the new normal? While often heard about the vagaries and unpredictability of the weather, we now wonder about Congress. It now appears that one can’t mention Congress without the word “dysfunctional” preceding it.

According to the Washington Post, Congress normally passes about 60 bills prior to the August recess. But since the mid-term elections of 2010, that number has fallen to 28 and this year to 22. And the Farm Bill and nutrition programs are part of the fallen, among a number of other critical bills and issues.

For the second year in a row, Congress has failed to come up with a new Farm Bill. Congress left town August 3 for a five-week recess and will return after Labor Day. Not only did they fail to pass a new Farm Bill, but they have not come to any real agreement on what that bill will encompass.

The Senate passed their version back on June 10. The House defeated its version a week or so later—squabbling about food stamp benefits. They then followed that by removing the nutrition and food stamp programs from the bill, which would have cut some $20 billion from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—SNAP, (or food stamps), over ten years, and passed a stripped down version of the farm bill on July 11.

The House has since proposed a nutrition title only bill to offer separate from the farm bill. And before they left town for recess, House Majority leader Rep. Eric Cantor (R-VA), leader of a special food stamp working group of conservative legislators, announced that they no longer wanted just $20 billion in cuts, but $40 billion—double the cuts they had proposed earlier, and ten times the level approved by the full Senate.

Legislative leaders from both House and Senate—both Republicans and Democrats—have expressed frustration and anger that with this announcement, the House Republicans may have effectively killed any hope to pass a 5-year Farm Bill this year. Divisions remain deep and wide among those supporting the food and nutrition programs and those opposing them.

According to the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC), it is widely understood that if the House votes and passes the draconian food stamp cuts, then the Farm Bill is dead for this year. NSAC explains that it would be “difficult to impossible for a Farm Bill conference report with a food stamp spending level at only a fraction of the Cantor—proposed levels, to win approval on the House floor once the party is on record in support of farm more draconian cuts.”

At the same time, House leaders were announcing their intent to double the cuts to food stamps, the Senate attempted to stay true to process and officially appointed their members to the joint Senate and House conference committee on the Farm Bill—the usual way a compromise bill is achieved. (Kansas Sen. Roberts is a member). Therefore, the Senate is ready to begin work, if and when the House decides to do business.

Without a bill, we are back to the current farm bill (the extension passed by Dec. 31 last year) ending September 30, and needing an extension—where we were last year at this time. However, some Senators are talking about refusing to consider another farm bill extension, so that means a large number of USDA programs would be shut down, at least temporarily, as they were last year.

If you recall, while commodity subsidy programs and crop insurance programs continued under other authority even without the extension, many Farm Bill programs that helped sustainable agriculture farmers including beginning and minority farmers, specialty crop and organic producers, and rural development and renewable energy programs, were shut down for this entire year.

All of this Farm Bill drama is against the backdrop of continued disagreement and non-action on appropriations, a looming government shutdown on October 1, and the debt ceiling. Just as there was no agreement on a Farm Bill, Congress left town.

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Farm Bill Deja Vu...  
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without making a final decision on final appropriations for a critical transportation, housing and urban development bill—numbers they had voted for earlier in the year. Most see the inability to get a decision on this bill, as a forewarning of what is to come regarding any domestic spending bills this year.

Now, it seems certain Congress will have to pass a “continuing resolution” in late September to keep the government funded after October 1. Then comes the debate—again—about raising the national debt ceiling, leading us once more to an end of the year cliff-hanger.

During the final hours of the futile House debate on the transportation and housing bill before recess, House Speaker Boehner was quoted as saying “I’m sure the August recess will have our members in a better mood when they come back.”

The real question is whether they return any smarter or wiser. As for a five-year Farm Bill, no one is taking any bets.

SNAP and Food Stamps—Why all the fuss about dividing it from the farm bill?

The purpose of the 1964 Food Stamp Program, as part of Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty, was to “strengthen the agricultural economy and provide improved levels of nutrition among low-income households.” It reached about 4 million people at a cost of about $360 million. (For more history go to http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Legislation/about.html). The Food Stamp program has been part of the Farm Bill because there were natural ties between food production and excess commodities being made available to those populations most in need. It was also part of a political balancing act between farm or rural and urban Congressional districts to compromise on meeting needs for both. Strong bi-partisan support, including former Senators Dole and McGovern, based in a sense of moral responsibility to offer a safety net for citizens, was critical.

In early August this year, House Republicans in a special working group announced they are putting together a package of $40 billion in cuts in SNAP or food stamp funding cuts. In addition to the cuts, the group intends to include a variety of wide reaching program changes, including mandatory drug testing, a prohibition on participation by former convicts, and an incentive to states to adopt workfare requirements for SNAP recipients. Reforming and redefining eligibility has been a big part of food assistance programs since they were first authorized, so additional rules are not surprising.

Opponents to providing food assistance to the country’s most needy appears to focus on their assumptions about who the recipients are, fears of fraud and abuse of the system, and fears that we are creating a “dependency” class that other taxpayers are supporting, because numbers have skyrocketed from 26 million pre-2008 economic freefall to 49 million currently. High unemployment and under-employment related to the economic downturn that began in 2008 contributes to a high demand for not only food stamps, but food banks and kitchens.

By dividing the expensive food assistance program (about 80 percent of the total Farm Bill budget) from the Farm Bill, it appears that opponents can adhere to their ideology of small government and cutting taxes, while retaining other farm program subsidies for commodity payments and crop insurance subsidies that they claim allow us to “feed the world” while turning our backs on our own. By maintaining the food assistance program connection to the Farm Bill, urban and rural Congressmen have reason to work together for a common good.

For a closer look at the face of Food stamp or SNAP recipients, KRC recommends the following program online: http://billmoyers.com/episode/encore-the-faces-of-america%E2%80%99s-hungry/
Local Food News

Outside Voices Weigh In on Re-draft of Cottage Food Regulations
by Cole Cottin

In response to public concerns, the Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) is gathering input from a broad audience as they re-draft regulations on the sale of foods that are exempt from food safety license requirements. Earlier this year, KDA introduced draft rules and regulations intended to apply to food items at low-risk for causing illness or injury. However, the long list of foods that “may” be affected shocked some producers, as did some of the proposed restrictions placed upon them.

For example, some fresh produce farmers interpreted the original draft to mean they would need to cease selling items, such as potatoes, in bulk containers, and instead individually package and label every one. But, according to KDA staff attorney Rick Scheufler, “It has never been KDA’s intent to require the bagging of every potato or squash.” In fact, the regulations were not meant to apply to fresh produce at all.

Hearing the public protest and concerns, KDA withdrew the proposed regulations, and began working on a redraft.

According to KDA, the goal of the exempt foods regulations is to protect consumers from potential contamination of processed foods and support transparency in product labeling, especially in light of rising food allergy trends.

“We understand that no one wants to make their customers sick,” said a representative of KDA’s Food Safety and Lodging department. The regulations are intended to support producers’ efforts in preventing food borne illnesses, and help build consumer confidence. KDA believes food safety protocols are a key safeguard as the cottage foods industry continues to grow and thrive.

KDA is actively working to redraft the regulations with outside input, in a way that is easy to interpret, practical to apply, and minimally intrusive for homemade/cottage food producers.

In June, KDA hosted a meeting of “thought leaders” ranging from farmers market managers to farmers, and representatives from Kansas State University Extension and the Kansas Rural Center. Participants joined KDA in reviewing and combing through the revised language. They continue to offer input and make recommendations as the draft regulations are revised.

In early fall, KDA will encourage further public comment when it releases a “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)” document revealing more details about the new draft “Regulatory Guidance for Best Practices of Cottage Foods” regulations.

After the FAQ is released, KDA will schedule and post notice of a public hearing for the revised regulations at http://www.agriculture.ks.gov/news-events/calendar. Meanwhile, anyone with questions or comments is encouraged to contact KDA’s From the Land of Kansas Specialist, Annarose Hart, at: (785) 296-0362, or annarose.hart@kda.ks.gov.

Feeding Hungry Kansas: Our State’s Rising “Food Hub Movement”
by Cole Cottin

Groups and individuals confronting the reality of limited access to and consumption of healthful foods across Kansas and the nation are identifying “regional food hubs” as a crucial missing link in our food system infrastructure. Decades of emphasis on developing national and global food networks to “feed the world” have paralleled the deterioration and decline of infrastructure supporting local and regional networks that facilitate “neighbors feeding neighbors.”

In one of the greatest agricultural states in the nation, what role can food hubs play in helping Kansans feed Kansans? And what exactly is a “food hub”?

Here is some background: In 2010, a report by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Economic Research Service noted that one of the main constraints to the entry and expansion of local foods is the “lack of distribution systems for moving local foods into mainstream markets.” Recognition of this need has spawned the creation of collaborative supply chains to market larger amounts of local food products. Many of the links along those chains qualify as “food hubs.”

In short, food hubs are businesses or organizations that offer a central connection point for linking farmers to consumers. They may offer a broad... Continued on page 7
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Rising Food Hubs....
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range of services to help facilitate and strengthen those connections.

USDA defines “regional food hub” as a “businesses or organization that actively manage the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand.”

Kansas is already home to a number of “food hubs.” The High Plains Food Co-op in Northwest Kansas is a farmer-owned cooperative regional food aggregation and distribution business serving Denver, Colorado, and several stops in-between through online food sales.

MG Honor Farms in south central Kansas, is one of a number of privately-owned farms in the state that have partnered with neighboring farms to meet rapidly growing demand by collaboratively selling their products - online food purchasing is only one of its many marketing outlets.

Meanwhile, in Northeast Kansas, Rolling Prairie Farmer Alliance has been aggregating and distributing locally grown produce and mushrooms through a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) or “farm share” model since 1994.

Still, our state is large and the demand for more farm-to-fork connections is ever growing. Food hub solutions continue to develop across Kansas, and the trend shows no sign of slowing.

In Salina, three-years of research and grant seeking recently led to the launch of “Kitchen 4 Hire,” a culinary incubator kitchen serving as a hub for local food processing. In June, the Douglas County Food Policy Council and Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition both received grant funds to develop professional feasibility studies. These will offer a deep assessment of existing food supply and demand and infrastructure needs and possibilities to help inform the creation of food hub solutions that would impact 20 counties in Northeast Kansas.

Meanwhile, three other organizations in that region are working on developing their own food hubs, prompting the meeting of the “Northeast Kansas Regional Food Hub Summit” this spring - where all area groups came together to network, discuss areas of overlap, and pinpoint strategies for “coopetition” (cooperating for mutual benefit with potential competitors).

As the “food hub movement” grows, so too does evidence that diverse scales of food production, aggregation, processing, and distribution are needed to truly feed the world (ourselves and our neighbors included). Food hubs, in their many incarnations, can provide an opportunity for commodity agriculture and local food to peacefully overlap and even collaborate in offering a more balanced and integrated systems of feeding hungry Kansas.

(See page 16 of this newsletter for more on a food hub and co-ops workshop sponsored by the Kansas Farmers Union.)

If you wish to learn more about starting, funding, or otherwise advancing the development of food hub solutions, the National Good Food Network (NGFN) offers a significant collection of resources at: http://ngfn.org/resources/food-hubs/food-hubs.

If you are interested in operating or selling to a food hub, the Kansas Rural Center provides a resource guide at http://kansastruralcenter.org/food-hubs-buzz-phrase-or-key-resource-for-thriving-food-and-farm-systems/.


is now available on KRC’s website at:

http://kansastruralcenter.org/finding-your-niche-a-marketing-guide-for-kansas-farms/

There you can access and print a full copy of the 200 page guide, Or you can view the table of contents and select (and print) section by section.

Or you can still order a hard copy from the website ($25/each), or calling the KRC office at 785-873-3431.
Farm to Fork...

Continued from page 1

“The Kansas Rural Center is proud to work alongside KHF and our colleagues in these excellent organizations, to advance a healthy food environment for all Kansans,” said Julie Mettenburg, executive director.

KHF’s statewide partnerships seek to fulfill the Foundation’s goal of making healthful foods the easy, accessible, and routine choice. Said Steve Coen, president and CEO of KHF: “This initiative will provide the foundation with the opportunity to work closely with these five outstanding organizations on efforts that will have a significant and long-term impact on the health of Kansans. We all make a number of choices every day regarding what we eat and drink, and we believe these organizations, with this funding, can work effectively to increase the availability of healthy options.”

KRC’s vision and mission calls upon Kansas farms to serve an important role in reaching this goal. “We are especially pleased that KHF supports the role of our state’s farmers and ranchers, and their fellow community members, in this effort,” Mettenburg said. She added that KRC looked to other states, including Iowa, North Carolina and Oregon, for models that have established the need for local farms in food access solutions.

“We all make a number of choices every day regarding what we eat and drink, and we believe these organizations, with this funding, can work effectively to increase the availability of healthy options.”

During the first year of this program, project partners will help develop the Statewide Farm-to-Fork Assessment and Plan. The plan will enhance awareness of the status, barriers, opportunities and policy supports needed to advance the Kansas food and farming system, with a goal of increasing Kansans’ access to Kansas-grown fresh produce, whole grains and a variety of proteins at home and in food outlets.

Kansans struggling with food insecurity due to distance and economic factors live in all 105 counties. Kansans consuming a nutritionally imbalanced diet comprise more than 75 percent of our total population, according to 2009 fruit and vegetable consumption data.

During the second and third years of the initiative, KRC and their partners will engage and educate citizens and public policy makers to advance the needs identified in the plan. KRC will also train regional and local leaders in community food organizing to self-assess their needs and opportunities surrounding healthy food access via local farm production.

KRC has a long history of advocating for healthy food and farm systems. Most recently, in November 2012, KRC hosted the “Healthy Farms, Healthy People: Kansas Agriculture and Health Summit,” with support from the National Network of Public Health Institute and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

KRC’s annual farming and food conference, scheduled for November 2 in Newton, Kansas, will provide practical information for farmers seeking alternative practices, along with community food topics such as farmers markets, CSA’s, coops and more, and public policy information regarding Kansas legislation and the federal Farm Bill.

Individuals and organizations who are interested in learning more and participating in this initiative may visit www.kansasruralcenter.org and sign up for KRC information and emails, or contact Program Coordinator Natalie Fullerton at n.fullerton@cox.net, or 402-310-0177. More information about the progress of this initiative will be provided on the website and through the media as it develops.
The Kansas corporate farming law will undergo a judicial review by the Kansas Judicial Council to determine its constitutionality, according to a spokesperson for the council. But there will be no interim study by state legislators.

Although the 2013 session ended with the Senate Agriculture Committee recommending an interim study on the changes to the state’s corporate farming law, it was not included in the list of topics released by the Legislative Coordinating Council in late July.

Following the session, Senate and House agriculture leaders submitted a joint letter to the Kansas Judicial Council, requesting the review, which likely played a role in cancelling the interim study request.

According to the Kansas Legislative Research Department, corporate farming laws throughout the Plains have been challenged in the courts. They have been consistently upheld until Nebraska and South Dakota’s corporate farming laws were struck down by the Eighth Circuit Court for violating the Dormant Commerce Clause. Kansas however is in the Tenth Circuit Court which has not yet ruled on any corporate farming law cases.

The Dormant Commerce Clause grants Congress power to regulate commerce and says that any state law that conflicts with federal law enacted under the Commerce Clause will be held to be unconstitutional. So to determine if a state law has violated the Dormant Commerce clause, a court looks at whether in-state and out-of-state interests are treated differently. Kansas however is in the Tenth Circuit Court which has not yet ruled on any corporate farming law cases.

The current Kansas law prohibits any corporation, trust or limited liability company, limited partnership from owning or leasing agricultural land in the state. It does have numerous exemptions for family farm corporations. Under the current law corporations can get a county resolution to be allowed to build there.

The debate to repeal the law last session ran into opposition from those wanting to maintain local control. Repealing the law was part of a package of bills (that all passed) to “grow Kansas animal agriculture.”

The judicial review, which is not a public process, is strictly a legal review and avoids hearings with opportunities to hear from both sides of the issue. The Judicial Review Committee will issue a report later this year.

Thank you to “retiring” staff....

At the end of June, KRC said thank you and a formal goodbye to two field staff, Dale Kirkham and Mary Howell. We say “formal” goodbye, in that old KRC staff never entirely fade away. They just move to other organizations, or related work or semi-retirement, and we often find them on hand at all the same meetings, working for the same common ends.

But funding for KRC’s WRAPS water quality work that Dale and Mary were involved in part-time, ended with cuts to state funding this year. Mary and Dale have been long-time major contributors to KRC’s in-the-field work with farmers and ranchers, so will be sorely missed. Dale will continue to host our monthly teleconference grazing calls and help with occasional educational events. Mary is currently working for Kansas Farmers Union as their membership coordinator. She will continue to organize educational workshops through KFU and the Kansas Graziers Association, which KRC helped launch several years ago. The Middle Kansas WRAPS watershed will also contract directly with her for some educational outreach.

Both brought particular talents to KRC, Mary with her “party planning” for workshops and tours, and never meeting a farmer she did not remember. And Dale with his years of experience and wisdom and quiet mastery of all things related to prairie, native grass, cows, and that elusive species- the Kansas farmer/rancher. Thank you to both of them!
Sustainable Farming News

Women and Conservation...  
Continued from page 1

The tours/workshops/learning circles drew a diverse crowd including 20-something daughters with their mothers, and 80 year-old plus widows farming with their sons or tenants. Some were traditional farm wives looking for better understanding of conservation and farming practices on their farms. Some were new landowners looking for key information on dealing with problem tenants, or soil or weed problems. Some were interested in ideas for livestock management. All appeared to like the idea of a day spent with other women who are facing similar questions and problems.

Liz Sarno, University of NE Extension Educator and small farmer who attended the June 22 tour, told me she had read that at one of the tour stops we would view a maternity barn with special stalls, designed from a woman’s perspective for ease of management. “That’s when I knew I had to go! “ she said. “I thought of how many nights I’ve sat up with a cow waiting for her to calve and wishing I had a better calving facility.”

The maternity barn was a highlight for many of the women who are active in the livestock management part of their farms, or who raise cattle, goats or sheep on their own. Indeed, the number of women farmers has nearly tripled over the past thirty years, with most operating small farms in the fastest growing segment of agriculture-specialty crops and livestock. The number of women landowners is also increasing, as more wives and daughters inherit the family farm, or choose farming as a vocation.

Over the next 20 years, nearly 70% of U.S. farmland acres will change hands, and many of those new owners will be women. Thus, decision making on a growing amount of America’s farmland will be in the hands of women.

So, KRC brought together women farmers and landowners- young and old-- to learn about conservation practices, new enterprise opportunities, farming practices and state and federal programs and resources to help them gain the understanding and skills to make better land and farm management decisions.

We chose the women-only format because research and experience in similar programs throughout the Midwest had shown that women are more comfortable asking questions in the women only environment. We greatly appreciated the men who provided presentations or opened their farms up to the tours, but we also had a good number of women conservation professionals providing information and resources.

Each tour this spring was a bit different, and we learned something new at each one. But the primary take away was that the majority of the women who attended wanted to have more of these workshops and tours, perhaps adding sessions on legal issues such as tenant agreements and contracts, farm transition resources, and new enterprise opportunities. Plus, of course, we were urged to continue the hands-on, in-the-field tours of conservation and farming or livestock management practices-- from a woman’s perspective.

KRC is seeking more funding to continue helping local conservation districts, watersheds, and others hold similar educational events in the future.

Primary funding for this series of workshops came from a sub-contract through the Center for Rural Affairs and the Women Food and Agriculture Network through a grant from the USDA NRCS CIG Program. Other support came from Kansas Center for Sustainable Ag and Alternative Crops, Kansas Association of Conservation Districts, and Delaware WRAPS, and KRC.
Above left, Lucinda Stuenkel’s “maternity barn” features stalls for up to four cows at a time, with head gates and swinging gates for ease of access. To the right, Roberta Spencer, Jackson County Conservation District staff and farmer, explains her pasture and grazing management system during the May 15 tour in northeast Kansas.

Brown County farmer David Zeit (above right) with KSU’s Will Boyer, explains how he made improvements to his livestock feeding area due to pressure from regulators. He explains it was tough to accept initially, but now says his new feeding and grazing system is the best thing he’s done for himself and his herd. Above right, women on the Reno County tour shared stories and information during a lunch roundtable.

Above, Lisa French uses a table top rainfall simulator to show the impact of rain on different soils and covers. In the Delaware Watershed, farm women on the bus visited farms featuring cover crops, solar pumps, grass and grazing management systems.
Women Supporting Women: Tour Focusses on Women’s Info Needs
by Jamie Dysart

On June 22, Lucinda and Sheila Stuenkel opened their farm, located near Palmer, Kansas, on the Clay/Washington county line, for a women’s conservation tour organized by the Kansas Rural Center’s Women and Conservation Project. The Stuenkel farm was unique to the other tours as theirs is a woman managed farm having undergone a life-changing transition in the past three years.

Lucinda and Sheila Stuenkel took over the farm management after their husbands, brothers Daryl and Kevin, died in a vehicle accident in November 2010. On top of the sadness and grief they and their children were going through and the myriad decisions that follow such a family tragedy, the two women were left with the family farm and the immediate responsibility of 65 cows that were due to calve in January and February. Faced with these challenges, Lucinda and Sheila learned to manage the farm their own way, while staying true to the plans their husbands left behind.

As she led the morning tour, Lucinda explained that she and Sheila and their kids try to honor and follow the same path she and Sheila’s husbands— and their parents and grandparents—followed in caring for the land. Conservation and stewardship were a strong part of their operation before their husbands died, and remain so in their decision making.

Lucinda credited having gone through the KRC’s River Friendly Farm Self-environmental assessment and whole farm planning process with providing her and sister-in-law Sheila the basic farm plan that guided them in their decisions.

The planning process required the couples to write down their short and long term management goals for conservation and natural resources on the farm. According to Lucinda, the plan forced her to study the FSA field maps and understand the farm layout in a way she had not before. The assessment is designed with a series of questions that help rank conditions or problems and needed management changes. It also provided them with a timeline for what needed to be done and identified resources for accomplishing goals. (The RFFP notebook assessment is available online at the KRC website at http://kansasruralcenter.org/tag/workbooks/)

The challenges of that first winter without the guys to handle the calving led to many changes in the livestock management set up. “Women can’t do physically what the guys had always done”, Lucinda explained, using an example of how they used to lift heavy wooden gates to corner a cow. “So we had to learn how to do it smarter.”

Today she has a one-woman calving barn that is the envy of her neighbors. Designed with ease of handling in mind, the barn is divided into separate pens with easy swinging gates and panels that allow for pen combinations to accommodate about every situation. A head-gate and swinging gate allows one woman, man or child to easily handle a cow with calving complications or a sick animal for treatment. Loading chutes and pens were also redesigned for ease of management and low animal stress. These improvements, Lucinda pointed out, improve safety and ease of handling for anyone handling cattle— including her young teenage farm hands or an older farmer.

Lucinda said she is especially proud of being able to move a winter-feeding area out of the flood plain onto higher ground. This was done to improve water-quality, she said. “We graze cattle all year round, but we also train cattle to come into the winter-feeding site at night beginning a month before they calve,” said Lucinda.

“Dr. Hollis, K-State Veterinarian, taught us that 86% of the cows calve during daylight when fed after dark,” she explained. “It is thought that labor is delayed by filling the rumen with roughage. Once trained, they are

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Sustainable Farming News

Women’s Conservation Tour
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waiting at the gate of the winter feeding site at dark, and willingly leave and get locked out at daylight.

While Lucinda oversees most of the livestock management, she works closely with neighbor and long time family friend Jerry Burger and two of his partners, who farm the cropland. The Stuenkel’s are conventional, dryland farmers that have adopted cover crop and no till practices.

Several years ago, after wheat harvest Lucinda’s husband experimented with fall-planting oats on half of the field. The cattle did so well grazing the oats, that it led to more use of cover crops.

Lucinda, with Burger’s cooperation, has increased their use of cover crops by adding purple top turnips and tillage radishes to the oats. She decided to use the tiller radishes to break-up the hard pan and scavenge excess nitrogen and other nutrients. They have experimented with samples of millet, cow peas, brassicas, sorghum Sudan grass, soybeans, Birdsfoot trefoil, red clover, and lentils.

Like many skeptics of no till and cover crops, Burger had at first argued that the next crop would have a hard time because the cover crop would take moisture away from the cash crop. However those arguments quickly faded when they got ten bushels more per acre from the field with the cover crop. Now a cover crop of spring oats, brassicas and legumes is planted in August into wheat stubble as part of their management strategy. Cattle graze the cover crops from November through February. Lucinda also says they have reduced herbicides due to use of both cover crops and rotational grazing.

Other conservation measures on the tour included:
- Dry lots planted with crabgrass. Most people try to get rid of crabgrass but crabgrass is drought tolerant, soaks up the nitrogen from cattle manure and has deep roots, which gives structure to the soil. Plus, cattle love to graze crabgrass, said Lucinda.
- Rock check dams and rock armor along a cutback into a crop field along a stream. The rock check dams were set 30-40 feet apart and slow the water down as it enters the stream via a waterway in the crop field, and prevents and reduces and heals the cutting back into the field, she said.
- Alternative livestock watering site. Expired CRP pasture was fenced and a water source was added to make a rotational grazing system possible in that pasture.

Afternoon presentations from Tom Meek, Clay County Conservation District, provided cost-share program information. Dale Strickler of Star Seed, provided cover crop and soil health information. Lisa French, Cheney Lake Watershed Coordinator, demonstrated how land use impacts runoff and water quality via a table top rainfall simulator.

Organized by the Kansas Rural Center as part of their Women and Conservation Project, the purpose of the tour and workshop was to provide women an overview of conservation practices in the field, introduce them to available state and federal conservation programs, and provide a women-only environment where the women could feel comfortable asking questions and focusing on agriculture from a woman’s perspective.

KRC News

KRC Website
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For farmers & ranchers: find how-to’s and resource information that provide practical information for implementing diversified farming systems on the ground, from grazing and organics to specialty crops and more.

For consumers: information about the many activities around Kansas that are growing our local food and farming system, from farmers markets to CSA’s, community organizing events.

For advocates: support public policy for rural communities, their farmers and families by accessing resources to help you stay informed and know when action is needed.

What’s new: keep up with KRC’s news feed that provides ongoing updates and information across food and farming issues.

Events: Stay connected with sustainable food and farming events across Kansas by checking out our calendar.

Answers to FAQ’s:
Looking for a specific project? You may visit “Our projects” from the bottom of the homepage or from the “Who we are” page.

Looking for something specific from the old website? You may still access it. Simply scroll to the bottom of every page, and find the address in the brown bar. It will take you a complete archive of the website as it existed on the date of transition.

Looking for a certain type of information? Simple type a topic into “search” on the left, or you may also access information by format ~ tip sheets, workbooks, conference presentations and more.

Contact Julie Mettenburg with questions or comments at julietettenburg@gmail.com.
New Statewide Farm-to-Fork Hub to Support the Growth of Kansas Ag

by Cole Cottin

The Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA), “From the Land of Kansas ©” program is rolling out a series of resources to support the marketing and sales of Kansas agricultural products and services “from the farm all the way to the fork.”

These programs include an online hub Buy and Sell portal where farmers, farmers markets, retailers, and Kansas-owned restaurants can post information about their businesses and even make direct sales connections. The hub is designed to fuel ongoing growth in local and regional agricultural marketing, making finding and purchasing Kansas-produced products easier for consumers of all kinds.

KDA’s newly launched FromTheLandOfKansas.com website will serve as the central location for these farm-to-fork connections services, which will be unveiled piece by piece over the coming year.

Farmers markets and their vendors were among the first in line to receive new benefits under this program. In July, KDA opened the voluntary Central Registration of Farmers’ Markets, pursuant to SB 120 which, at no cost to market operators, extends liability coverage similar to that already offered to registered agri-tourism sites, through the Kansas Department of Parks, Wildlife and Tourism.

KDA will use the information provided by registered markets to promote those markets through the From the Land of Kansas (FLOK) electronic food hub website, and through other activities within that program. As an agricultural business, most vendors at a farmers market are eligible for From the Land of Kansas membership.

The registry is made possible by recently passed Kansas law SB 120, which makes KDA the statewide official contact for Kansas farmers markets, and grants them permission to pursue funding to further support and develop farmers markets in Kansas.

“We want to help Kansas farms and farmers markets continue to grow and succeed,” comments From the Land of Kansas Specialist, Annarose Hart. “Farmers markets are economic and social engines for communities and for Kansas, and this registry will help us learn more about their impact and help advocate on their behalf to both consumers and potential funders.”

KDA also hopes that by reducing liability expenses for farmers markets the program will free up registered markets’ financial resources to put towards promotional activities or other market needs.

In early August KDA unveiled Kansas’ first-ever statewide online food hub by launching its FromTheLandOfKansas.com website and “Buy Sell Portal.”

The portal connects producers and consumers in a format similar to personal ads or that of the well-known Craigslist website, where “for sale” and “request” postings can be made under any of a number of categories, viewed by visitors to the site, and responded to through private one-on-one communications.

There are eighteen different posting categories on the site, ranging from fruits and vegetables to proteins, wine to dairy, farmers markets to community supported agriculture (CSA), restaurants to retailers, and more.

Hart refers to From the Land of Kansas as a one-stop-shop that integrates benefits previously offered through KSFarmersMarket.org and OurLocalFoodKS.org into a single umbrella site for coordinated services. KRC developed and maintained these sites and services for several years with grant funding, prior to KDA purchasing them from KRC in December 2012.

“It takes the infrastructure from each of those websites and builds upon them, offering a single location and consistent brand for services that connect farmers, markets, restaurants, retailers, and potential buyers.” Individuals and operations who have posted information on the Our Local Food and Kansas Farmers Market websites are encouraged to continue to keep their information up-to-date until early 2014, when those sites’ services will be re-routed to the From the Land of Kansas website.

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Farm Subsidies Lead to More Water Use

According to a New York Times article, millions of dollars in farm subsidies for irrigation equipment aimed at water conservation have led to more water use, not less. In 1996, the USDA Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) was authorized to help farmers buy more efficient irrigation equipment to save water. But researchers at the University of California at Davis have found that some Kansas farmers who received payments under the conservation subsidy have used their water savings to expand irrigation on other cropland or to grow thirstier crops, not to decrease consumption.

Another study from researchers at New Mexico State University reached the same conclusion for an area running from Colorado to New Mexico.

US Geological Survey data shows that water consumption in the U.S. has tripled over the last fifty years. Agricultural irrigation accounts for 80 percent of the water used nationwide, and areas like western Kansas, have seen their groundwater resources diminishing.

The EQIP program received attention during the Farm Bill debates earlier this summer, when provisions were introduced to try to ensure that water saved with more efficient systems would not be used to expand irrigation operations. (New York Times, June 6, 2013)

Federal Food Safety Regs... Continued from page 5

Modernization Act, which President Obama signed into law in 2011. FSMA is the first major update of federal food safety laws since 1938, and it gives FDA broad new powers to prevent food safety problems, detect and respond to food safety issues, and improve the safety of imported foods.

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) has a Food Safety website with resources for farmers, on-farm processors and consumers at http://sustainableagriculture.net/fsma/, and issue pages on manure and composting, domestic and wild animals, conservation, and recordkeeping, with more issues pages to come.

NSAC’s site provides an overview and background of the Food Safety Modernization Act, information about the two proposed rules, and instructions on how to comment.
Events and Resources

KRC Sets 2013 Farming & Food Conference for November 2 in Newton; Announces Early Bird Exhibitor Opportunities

Farmers, ranchers, community food organizers, wildlife enthusiasts, landowners and others interested in farming practices and our local food system will want to reserve Saturday, November 2, for a day of workshops and networking at the Kansas Rural Center’s 2013 Farming and Food Conference.

This daylong event will take place in Newton at the Meridian Center, 1420 E. Broadway Ct., and will be packed with opportunities to learn about topics such as low-input farming alternatives, diversification for risk management, soil and animal health, local foods development, health-agriculture connections, beginning farmer and rancher resources, farm legacy transitions for landowners, state and federal farm and food policy, and more.

The conference is an annual event presented by the Kansas Rural Center, in partnership with organizations including the Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops.

Companies and organizations interested in reaching attendees from across the farming and food spectrum – including family farmers, ranchers, conservationists, wildlife advocates, food activists, chefs, health practitioners and more – can sign up for Expo sponsorship at an Early Bird rate of $200 until August 30, when the rate will rise to $250. Exhibitors will receive listing on the conference program, a link from the conference page on the KRC website, and an opportunity to provide materials to attendees. In addition, a limited number of booth spaces are available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

A formal announcement with keynote speaker information, the day's agenda, and registration information is expected in early September.

KRC’s previous conference, held in 2011, focused on topics related to the theme, “Options, Opportunities and Optimism: Cultivating Our Farm and Food Future,” and featured workshops on grazing, soil health, value-added foods marketing, food policy councils and community food organizing, and more. More information about that conference is available at http://krcsustainabilityconference.blogspot.com/; conference presentations are available at kansasruralcenter.org.

In 2012, KRC presented the Healthy Farms, Healthy People, Agriculture and Health Summit, which launched a dialogue in Kansas about issues surrounding the intersections of health, public health, food and agriculture. Farmers, ranchers, health professionals, grocers, chefs, school and government officials were among those who attended. The Summit was supported by the National Network of Public Health Institutes and Centers for Disease Control, and the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas Foundation.

The Kansas Rural Center 2013 Farm and Food Conference will follow up on some of the conversations initiated at last year’s event.

Expo exhibitor spaces can be reserved by contacting Executive Director Julie Mettenburg at 785-393-9996 / juliemettenburg@gmail.com Additional 2013 conference details will be released as they develop and can be found by visiting www.kansasruralcenter.org, or by contacting Event Coordinator, Natalie Fullerton at nfullerton@kansasruralcenter.org, or 402-310-0177.

KFU to Host Food Hubs and Co-Ops Workshop

The second workshop in the Kansas Farmers Union “Food Hubs and Co-ops: How local family farms can feed our communities” series will be offered August 29, 2013, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. in the Douglas County Fair’s Dreher Building, 2110 Harper St, Lawrence, KS. The workshop will provide farmers, community organizations, and local governmental entities with information on the multiple phases of food hub development.

Using the Wisconsin Food Hub Cooperative as a case study, the workshop will explore best practices in food hub development and outline the project phases including: identifying opportunities and need, conducting a feasibility study, developing a business plan, and launching the food hub.

There is a $15 registration fee. For more information contact Mary Howell at kfu.mary@gmail.com or Mercedes Taylor-Puckett at kfu.mercedes@gmail.com. Or go to www.kansasfarmersunion.org/calendar.html.

Page 16 Rural Papers, July-August 2013
Cover Crops Boosted Soybean and Corn Yields in 2012 Drought

During last year’s historic drought, farmers who planted cover crops, a soil-enhancing conservation practice, managed to improve their yields by as much as 14% compared to those who did not, according to a survey conducted by the Conservation Technology Information Center with funding from the USDA North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (NCR-SARE). “We think cover crops will be a key management strategy for farmers dealing with extreme weather situations in coming years, while providing a number of environmental benefits in watersheds across the country.”

The yield improvements provided from cover crops in 2012 were likely the result of a combination of factors. Plant residue left behind from cover crops creates a blanket that slows down evaporation, leaving more moisture in the soil for the following crop. Where cover crops have been used for several years, soil organic matter typically increases, which improves rainfall absorption into the soil and allows the soil to store more water. Improved soil organic matter also allows corn and soybean roots to travel deeper into the ground where more water can be found.

Surveyed farmers reported planting an average of more than 300 acres of cover crops per farm in 2012, a 350% increase from 2008. They used cover crops on a total of about 218,000 acres in 2012, and expected to increase that to over 300,000 acres in 2013. Nationwide, an estimated 1.5 million to 2 million acres of cover crops were planted in 2012.

Farmers cited a variety of reasons for planting cover crops, the key benefit being improved soil health. Reduced loss of sediments, nitrogen and phosphorous from fields, and reductions in soil compaction from heavy tractors and harvesters were other key benefits cited.

Full results of the survey are available online at: www.northcentralsare.org/covercropsurvey. (From NCR-SARE, July 15, 2013)

Pesticide Use Spikes in Midwest

Pesticide use is skyrocketing across the Midwestern U.S. corn belt, as biotech companies like Syngenta and AMVAC Chemical watch their pesticide sales spike 50 to 100 percent over the past two years, according to a report from National Public Radio (NPR) in July.

Why? Bt corn—a type of genetically engineered corn with insecticide built into its genes sold by large multinational corporations like Monsanto and Syngenta—is giving rise to Bt resistant insects and worms.

NPR reports that Bt resistant corn root worms are decimating entire cornfields across Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Nebraska. Some farmers are other versions of biotech corn. Others are trying additional pesticides. And a few are trying what some scientists urge: a move to rotate crops. “Starve the rootworm”, some argue. Even one rotation can help.

But high corn prices appear to be driving farmers to hold on to every acre of corn they can.

Monsanto downplays the severity of the damage wrought by Bt corn, assuring customers that many farmers ‘have great success.’

You can see/hear the NPR report here: http://www.npr.org/blogs/thesalt/2013/07/09/198051447/as-biotech-seed-falters-insecticide-use-surges-in-corn-belt

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On any given summer night during my teenage years, my father's old 55 blue and white Ford was a common sight parked along the road near a neighbor's pond. Many evenings after chores, he would pack away the day's cares and stresses, and grab his fishing pole to sit an hour or two at the edge of a pond until sunset.

I do not recall that he brought home many fish. But eventually I realized his end was not the fish, but the fishing—the time spent clearing his head, pondering the day's problems, or to just relax by the water and think.

This memory came to mind because my husband's question of the summer for friends has been, “Well, have you done any fishing?” They may not know it, but his question, too, has less to do with fish, than the fishing. It is really a query as to whether they have taken the time to slow down, relax, and value what is most important, and to think.

A few respond yes. Most respond no. Their vacations or freetime is not spent sitting still by a pond or river, but marking things off their never ending list of “To Do’s” - even on vacation. Certainly no time for reflection there.

If I read the news right about the recent Kansas City Federal Reserve Bank’s annual meeting on the future of world agriculture, I think we’d be better off if the Federal Reserve staff and all those investment bankers went fishing.

The theme this year was the “Shifting Nexus of Global Agriculture”. In addition to talk about high land prices and declining grain prices and speculation for the future, at least part of the discussion centered on the assumed inevitable move to mega-corporations controlling ever more of our lives. According to reports from the meeting, the high-rolling world of investment bankers and CEO’s predicts the rise of bigger and bigger agribusinesses and value chains that in the future will make today’s ag corporations like Monsanto and Tyson look paltry.

Risk and “staggering sums of capital”, according to at least one speaker, will be spread across the globe in agriculturally rich though politically unstable areas including “South America’s Amazon Basin, the Black Sea Region, and southern Africa.”

A significantly larger share of future farm profits will come from international trade—hardly a new prediction—but will not just be commodity crops but value-added agricultural products. And of course, part of this new world agriculture will be a serious reduction of small farms—here at home and around the world, relegating small to mid-sized operations to the bins of history.

Missing from this is any discussion about people-- what we want and what we value. And this does not just apply to the peasants in South America and around the globe. It applies to all of us too.

It only takes a quick look at poverty rates, labor and human rights issues, and the impact of increasing concentration of land and resource ownership in any of these places to sense that a critical piece of this grand plan is being ignored.

What about local people? those shoved aside into urban slums and poverty in the above mentioned agricultural rich areas? Or to U.S. farmers turned into low-paid contractors to support the behemoths of corporate agriculture?

As KRC asked at its annual conference two years ago, “What will nine billion people do?” It seems right that food production and the care and stewardship of local and regional natural resources should be a big part of what we do. But ownership, engagement, and opportunity is a big part of that.

Also missing (but part of another essay for another time) is consideration of what 400 ppm (and climbing) CO2 in the atmosphere will do to a fossil fuel dependent global agriculture. Emerging questions about the environmental impact of a chemical based agriculture on soil and water, and the health of our soils to produce food is also missing from the investment banker vision.

Investment bankers and their investors focus on profits, but you and I care about clean water, safe and healthy food, and meaningful work where we live. We care about time to enjoy family and friends. We want a world where our kids and grandkids can live safely, dream their own grand plans

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Small Farmer Commentary

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and have a chance at seeing them come true.

The nexus of global agriculture may be shifting, but the direction it takes may surprise investors and profit takers as people engage at the local and regional level in the decisions that impact them and follow a different path to meeting our needs.

When individuals and then communities plan and act on local and regional food production on behalf of local economies, we not only throw a wrench into the vision of a global agriculture dominated by investment bankers and technology companies, but we implement Plan B — the one that meets not only our basic needs but our hopes and dreams.

What does this all have to do with fishing?

Appreciating nature, understanding where our food comes from and how it is produced, and the ecological and biological systems it is based on, require time and thought. Addressing the challenge to reduce our fossil fuel consumption will also take time and thought. You don’t get that kind of thinking inside a corporate board room or on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, or on the treadmill of every day living.

My father was a simple man. He did not study nature in books and he did not adopt new technology readily. He grew alfalfa and rotated his crops, and applied the manure from the livestock to the fields long after his neighbors quit the practice. He was not out to compete to be the biggest landowner/operator, and he had no delusions about feeding the world. But he knew nature, and in addition to raising grain crops and milking cows, he grew bumper crops of tomatoes and potatoes every year.

And he went fishing.

(Mary Fund, Rural Papers editor, and her husband farm in Nemaha county.)

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Event

Kaw Valley Annual Fall Farm Tour October 5-6

The 9th Annual Kaw Valley Farm tour will be Saturday and Sunday October 5-6. Nearly 30 farms are opening their doors to the public. You can find details at http://www.kawvalleyfarmtour.org/index.html. The website includes maps and lists of the farms.

Tickets are $10 per carload and are good for both days. They are available after September 15 at the following locations in Lawrence, Ks.:

The Community Mercantile, 9th and Iowa; the Lawrence Visitors Information Center 402 North 2nd; K-State Research & Extension Douglas County office 2110 Harper St.; Downtown Lawrence Farmers Market; Cottin’s Hardware and Rental, 1832 Massachusetts; and online via PayPal.

KANSAS RURAL CENTER

Contributors to the Kansas Rural Center’s work to promote sustainable agriculture in Kansas receive KRC’s newsletter, Rural Papers, 5-6 issues/year, and Policy Watch E-Updates, and other Center special reports and information alerts. A donation of $35/year is suggested, as the first $35 goes toward Rural Papers and our Weekly E-Updates.

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

Rural Papers, July-August 2013
Calendar

August 28, 2013 Trees & Tributaries Tour, Sponsored by Delaware WRAPS and Kansas Forest Service, 4 - 8 p.m. 238th & Barton, Arrington, Ks. (10 miles east of Holton on K-116) Contact Marlene Bosworth 785-284-3422.

August 29, 2013 Food Hubs and Co-ops (a.m. to Noon; Douglas County Fair Dreher Bldg, Lawrence, Ks. $15 registration; Sponsored by Kansas Farmers Union. Contact Mary Howell at kfumarry@gmail.com or Mercedes Taylor-Puckett at kfumercedes@gmail.com

September 7, 2013, Kansas Rural Center Board meeting, Camp Wood, Elmdale, Ks. Contact Julie Mettenburg at 785-393-9996

September 11-12, 2013 Eastern Kansas Grazing School, Ottawa, Ks. Sponsored by KSU Research & Extension, $50 for first person from each ranch & $25 per additional person. Contact Rod Schaub 785-828-4438, or rschaub@ksu.edu

September 27-29, 2013 35th Annual Prairie Festival at The Land Institute, Salina, Ks. For details go to www.landinstitute.org

October 5-6, 2013 Kaw Valley Farms Tour. For more information go to kaw valley farm tour.org/index.html.

October 10-12, 2013 Mother Earth News Fair, Lawrence Kansas. Come by the KRC booth. Go to: motherearthnews.com/fair/kansas.aspx#about

Please check the KRC website for updated calendar and announcement information on the above and for additional events at: www.kansasruralcenter.org