

# Rural Papers

Reporting with commentary  
on agricultural and rural issues



No. 272

Fall 2019

## Local and Regional Food Systems in Kansas: Harvesting Opportunities to Build Momentum

In late May 2018, a group of over 150 Kansans convened at the University of Kansas School of Business in Lawrence to talk about local and regional food systems and how they relate to building community wealth. Participants represented all four corners of the state, a significant feat given Kansas' diverse agriculture practices and existing market structures.

There were farmers, ranchers, processors, economic development professionals, people representing agriculture advocacy organizations, bankers, cooperative extension, local health and wellness groups, and more. There were people representing non-profits, foundations, and community development groups. There were residents of both rural and urban communities with all levels of knowledge and experience in food and agriculture issues.

These Kansans met new people, shared a meal sourced from local producers, learned from each other, and considered the information provided by speakers from states such as Colorado and North Carolina, as well as staff from the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, DC.

After the symposium, participants reported that they made new connections that helped them with their work. Some even reported that they saw local and regional food system work through a new lens.

### Over a year later: where are we now?

The Kansas Rural Center, along with Douglas County Extension and the Douglas County Food Policy Council, collaborated to put together a series of stories to follow

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Register Today for  
**KRC's Annual Farm &  
Food Conference  
and 40th Anniversary  
Celebration**

November 8 - 9  
Wichita, KS

*details on page 7*



# Rural Papers

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by the

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Reprints of articles are encouraged with acknowledgment of Rural Papers and the author.

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. 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. KRC is funded by private foundations, churches, and individual contributions.

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# Small Farmer Commentary

## Parting Reflections ~ and a Call to Action

By Mary Fund

*When I took the position as KRC Executive Director in June 2015, I never intended it to be for more than two or three years, then I would help KRC transition to the next era of leadership. It has been a bit more than 3 years, but it is now time. After nearly 40 years working for KRC, I will be retiring as Executive Director at the end of 2019.*

*My retirement has been in the works for over a year. I've spent the past year or more pushing information and instructions onto other staff, burying them in e-mails as I attempt complete transparency about my work and administrative details. I started querying unsuspecting potential candidates about their possible interest in working for KRC, and asked the board to do the same.*

*I have offered to help out after the first of the year to help ease the transition. Frankly, it will take a few weeks to clean out the home office and transfer necessary information to the new director. I have also vowed to organize KRC's archival material to send to the Kansas History Museum so the history of our efforts are not lost.*

*But it is time for me to put the bulk of my energy into my farm and my personal and family needs. I plan to do more reading and attend to some personal writing projects that have taken a backseat. KRC needs new energy and a new generation of activists built on the foundation that all past staff and board members have built.*

*When KRC started out in late 1979, there were two other organizations born about the same time. The Land Institute, now a world class research institution, started its quest toward perennial grains in 1976. Kansas Organic Producers (KOP), (now known as Central Plains Organic Farmers) was also born in 1976 of a small group of organic farmers wanting to support each other against the prevailing chemical intensive tide. Leaders within KOP soon saw a need for an organization that could tackle broader social and political issues than just organic farming. KRC was the spin off.*

*The first issue of the newsletter was a two-page mimeographed sheet (July 1980) with the first page announcing the formation of the organization and explained why: "The decline of rural society is self-evident. The survival of the family farm and small rural businesses is being seriously threatened. Such a loss would be disastrous to rural communities. The issues within this problem are the subject matter of the Rural Center's work."*

*The second page dealt with KCC hearings on the KEPCO application to do business in Kansas as a public utility. Approval meant KEPCo, composed of 26 rural electric cooperatives, could finalize its plans to purchase 17% ownership in Wolf Creek Nuclear Power Plant. Subsequent newsletters in the early 1980's dealt as often with energy issues as they did with farm issues. By the mid-1980's the pages were filled with farm crisis and foreclosure information, and the progress of KRC's grassroots farm advocate networks around the*

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# Small Farmer Commentary

Continued from page 2...

state to offer solidarity and support in addressing foreclosures and bankruptcies and stress. By the end of the 1980's, the pages were filled with news of sustainable agricultural practices that not only decreased the farmer's reliance on purchased inputs and corporate control, but had environmental benefits.

It would appear we have come full circle. Energy issues are back on the front burner. The farm economy threatens another farm crisis. The USDA Secretary of Agriculture once more says small farms are obsolete. Farming practices that rely more on biological systems are now advocated by an increasing number of farmers and even institutions, who have come late to the understanding that industrial agriculture has been slowly but steadily destroying our soil and ecosystem. But implementation of those practices is still slow and hampered by the dominant entrenched capital intensive industrial model and the public policies that support that.

Local and regional food system development was added to the KRC vision in the past two decades. This was a natural progression for KRC and other groups' thinking as sustainability ideas moved from individual farms to communities to the food system. It is now the topic of discussion across the country from county level eco devo groups and local food and farm councils to health and wellness organizations.

Climate change was not on the radar when KRC began, even though the fossil fuel industry knew by the late 1980's what the burning of fossil fuels was doing to the climate and has deliberately deceived the public. But from our earliest days, KRC and groups like ours raised questions about the wisdom of a food and farm system built and dependent on fossil fuel use and non-renewable water like the Ogallala Aquifer. Now, scientists have given us ten years to act before irreparable damage is done to the world as we know it. Indeed, some say it is already too late to prevent that, but we still have time to lessen the impact or at least plan for a very different future.

KRC accepted the climate change science back in the 90's, and by the mid-2000's we recognized the need for a radical transition to renewable energy. As wind company developers entered the state, we began an education project focusing on community wind energy.

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## Fund to Retire and KRC Launches Search for Executive Director

The Kansas Rural Center Board of Directors announces its search for a new Executive Director, following current director Mary Fund's retirement announcement in early September.

Fund announced her retirement publicly via a personal message to KRC's electronic mailing list on Sept. 3. She will work until the end of December.

"We have entered a new era for food and farming not just in Kansas but across the nation and globally, a new era in terms of the urgency of climate change, and a new era in terms of political discourse and engagement," stated Fund. "KRC needs new blood, new energy and a new commitment from its constituents and friends, its board members and its staff, to meet these challenges. I hope your commitment continues just as mine will."

The KRC board of directors will be accepting applications until October 30, and interviewing in November or December.

The Position Announcement is available on the KRC website at <https://kansasruralcenter.org/krc-launches-search-for-new-executive-director/>.

For questions or further information, contact Stu Shafer, KRC Board president, at [sandheron@icloud.com](mailto:sandheron@icloud.com), 785-691-5006.

## Declaring Commitment to a Healthier Future for All

Kansas organizations concerned about climate change are united in support of the Kansas Climate + Health Declaration. The Kansas Climate + Health Declaration aims to increase awareness of the impacts of climate change on public health, increase civic engagement on climate action in Kansas, and advance policies that build community resilience and safeguard the future of our state.

The Declaration draws attention to the specific impacts of climate change on public health in Kansas. Backed by research from trusted public health organizations like the Kansas Health Institute, American Public Health Association, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Kansas Climate + Health Declaration orients around four principles:

- **Climate disruption impacts the lives, health, and economic well-being of Kansans.**
- **Climate change is a major public health concern in Kansas.**
- **Those least responsible will be the most impacted and least able to adapt.**
- **Solutions exist at all levels to build resilience, economic opportunities, and healthy communities.**

Each section includes the specific public health concerns for Kansans. The full Declaration is available at [Resilient-Kansas.org](http://Resilient-Kansas.org).

Kansas organizations stand with leading public health organizations in making a clear call to our state's leadership to address climate change as a primary threat to public health. Climate + Health Declaration signers urge bold, comprehensive action to reduce emissions and build resilience. The Declaration states, "We need to reduce risks of climate disruption to safeguard the future of our state. We declare a commitment to a healthier future for all."

Initial organizational signers include:

The Climate + Energy Project. "CEP is committed to finding clean energy solutions that will rapidly decrease carbon and increase economic benefits for our state. Kansans health is already being impacted and we need to work together to mitigate this crisis," said Dorothy Barnett.

Mary Fund, Executive Director of the Kansas Rural Center, said, "By improving soil health and increasing soil organic matter on our farms and ranches, we can sequester carbon in the soil, which is part of the solution, and offers multiple benefits to farms and ranches and to our food system. This is why we support the Kansas Climate + Health Declaration."

Courtney Masterson from Native Lands LLC explains, "climate change has a direct impact on community health through negative effects on air and water quality, as well as sustainable food systems. Native ecosystems contribute significantly to a landscape that protects these vital resources."

Kansas Association of Community Action Programs (KACAP), the Children's Alliance of Kansas, Kansas Interfaith Action (KIFA), and the Kansas City Kansas NAACP Branch all represent populations that are most vulnerable to climate impacts. Scott Anglemyer with KACAP said, "People with limited financial resources cannot afford to relocate, mitigate, or recover from the effects of anticipated severe weather." Christie Appelhanz from the Children's Alliance said, "Children are not little adults, they are often more vulnerable to pollutants than adults, we are committed to continuously working for a safe and secure environment for children."

Rabbi Moti Rieber from KIFA said, "Climate disruption is a pressing moral issue. The Climate and Health Declaration is an important first step in recognizing the impact of

*continued on page 18*

# Sustainable Food and Farming News

## KRC Town Halls Highlight Rural and Urban Food and Farming Future Ideas

By Mary Fund

In July and early August KRC hosted five Town Hall Meetings across the state asking what do people want the future of food and farming to be in Kansas? What is their vision within the context of a changing climate and extreme weather, economic uncertainties in agriculture, and the growing political divisiveness in our society?

The idea or purpose was to start a conversation, what do we want the future to look like based on a realistic understanding of where we are today? Then we asked two more questions: what are three things we would most like to see addressed to help advance that vision? And what policies or programs could be implemented at a local, state or national level to help move the vision along?

KRC has been cautioned against using the term “climate change”. But with these Town Halls, we decided to hit it head on. We posed the above questions against the back-drop of a changing climate, extreme weather events, and the challenges and uncertainties these bring as we look to the future.

KRC set the context for the conversation with short presentations summarizing the following:

The farm economy is in its 5th year of low commodity prices (due largely to tariffs and international politics), with no respite in sight. Net farm income increased slightly in 2019

but remains 36% below its 2013 peak. Slightly more than half of farm households had negative farm income in the past few years, relying more and more on off-farm income to support the household. (USDA ERS) The depressed farm economy contributes to significant family and individual stress, which was exacerbated this year with extreme weather; heavy rainfall and flooding led to prevented planting and seriously damaged fields (not to mention roads and bridges in rural counties).

Rural communities continue to lose businesses, hospitals or have hospitals facing financial difficulties. An exodus of youth once they graduate high school or college further depresses agriculture and rural communities.

Combine this with the more broadly felt disparities in wealth nationally –i.e. the top 10% own 80% of all the wealth while the bottom 90% own 23%), and the political polarization and divisiveness that pervades the news and ravages civic discourse, the future looks challenging.

But it is not all bad news. Consumer and producer interest and support for local and regional food systems is creating opportuni-

ties for farmers and for related businesses. There is rising farmer interest in regenerative or sustainable farming practices that build soil health, reduce input costs, and provide multiple ecosystem benefits. Political divisiveness, which can make people want to run and hide, is also inspiring more people to engage – at the most local levels, and at the state and national level—in order to have a voice in determining their own future.

Over 250 people came out in five communities which included Emporia, Wichita, Garden City, St. Francis and Kansas City, Kansas, and they were ready to talk.

Bear in mind that KRC attracts mostly those who agree with many of our positions. But these meetings attracted a fair number of people who were new to KRC, who were ready to

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*Town Hall meeting in Kansas City, Kansas.*

# Sustainable Food and Farming News

## KRC Releases Video Series on the Impacts of Pesticides on Pollinators, and Farming Methods that Minimize the Risk



As part of a pollinator protection project funded by Ceres Trust, the Kansas Rural Center (KRC) and Sticky Wicket Media, produced a series of short videos aimed at increasing awareness about the harms of pesticides to pollinators and delving into strategies for

minimizing pollinator loss through agriculture practices that are beneficial to pollinators. The videos will be shown at the KRC Annual Farm & Food Conference on November 8-9, 2019, in Wichita, Kansas, and are available for viewing on KRC's website at <https://kansasruralcenter.org/krc-releases-video-series-on-the-impacts-of-pesticides-on-pollinators-and-farming-methods-that-minimize-the-risk/>.

The first video in the series is edited by Hank Will, Editorial Director of Mother Earth News, GRIT, Heirloom Gardener, Mother Earth Living, and Cappers' Farmer magazines, and gives a general overview of the impacts of pesticides on pollinators.

The second video shares the story of Kansas beekeeper, Chad Gilliland, Next to Nature Farm. Gilliland is a beekeeper and former pesticide applicator who was impacted by pesticide drift when spray from a neighboring farm field wiped out a number of his honeybee colonies. Gilliland shares his story and talks about strategies for preventing pesticide damage.

The third video in the series takes a look at a Kansas farmers, Gail Fuller and Lynnette Miller, G & L Whole Food, who farm using regenerative practices which are highly beneficial to pollinators. Fuller and Miller discuss how regenerative agriculture has the potential to build community in addition to improving soil health and biology, promoting diversity, preventing erosion, and increasing the capacity for producing nutritious food and enhancing human health.

For more information contact Joanna Will at [jvoigt@kansasruralcenter.org](mailto:jvoigt@kansasruralcenter.org).

## *Harvesting Opportunities* *continued from page 1*

up on the Symposium. The symposium's organizing team engaged Sarah Green, a writer based in Wichita with an interest in food, agriculture and community development issues, to report and write the stories, which were collected in the spring of 2019. They offer an in-depth look at the opportunities and challenges to building, maintaining and growing local and regional food systems in Kansas including:

- Diversifying agricultural operations to include more fruit and vegetable production to sell locally;
- Building relationships in the food system;
- Making good connections with community members and policymakers; and
- Opportunities for financing and investing to grow and expand Kansas food and agriculture businesses.



The stories are available on KRC's website at <https://kansasruralcenter.org/harvesting-opportunities/>. Or read the first two stories here in this issue of Rural Papers. There will also be a session at KRC's fall conference on November 9 to follow up on the symposium and cover rural economic issues.

*The Harvesting Opportunities Symposium was partially funded by The American Farmland Trust, USDA – Agricultural Marketing Service, the Douglas County Food Policy Council, K-State Research and Extension, the Kansas Rural Center, Douglas County E-Community, the Sunflower Foundation, Douglas County Community Foundation, Douglas County Farm Bureau, Kansas Farmers Union, Kansas Alliance for Wellness, Growing Growers Kansas City and the Community Mercantile.*

# KRC Farm & Food Conference

## KRC Invites You to Our Annual Farm & Food Conference “Planting Ideas, Growing Our Future: Carbon, Climate and Communities”

The Kansas Rural Center (KRC) will host its annual farm and food conference in Wichita, Kansas, November 8 and 9 at the Drury Plaza Hotel. “Planting Ideas, Growing Our Future: Carbon, Climate, and Communities” will feature two days of keynote speakers and two dozen workshops focusing primarily on building resilience and diversity on our farms and in our communities.

“The Green New Deal, climate change reports, and the emerging crisis in the farm/rural economy raise questions for many of us as we head into another pivotal election year,” stated Mary Fund, KRC Executive Director. “How does climate change affect us here in the heartland? What policies and programs will help us address it? What steps or actions can help us weather the economic problems in agriculture, and what kind of economic development should we pursue that will provide the resilience and diversity we need?”

Speakers and workshops at the Conference will address these questions and more as KRC also celebrates its 40th anniversary with a special reception on Friday evening November 8 from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. with food, drink, music and networking.



Fred Iutzi, president of The Land Institute, Salina, will speak Friday morning on “Agriculture’s Role in Ecological Sustainability and Economic Justice” building on an essay

he and Texas journalist/communications professor Robert Jensen wrote following the proposal of the Green New Deal last winter. In that essay, Iutzi and Jensen discussed the need for a new way of producing food that does not shy away from a critique of the dominant capital intensive industrial worldview or the reality of ecological disruption. The new food system allows us to go to the root of the problem, and adopts a worldview based on an economic system allowing more equitable distribution of wealth and creation of meaningful livelihoods. In the keynote, Iutzi will address what agriculture and food production needs to address in order to meet the challenges of the future.



On Saturday morning, we hear from Becca Jablonski, Colorado State University’s Food Systems Extension Economist, who will speak to the value of local and regional food systems by “Leveraging Urban Food Markets to Support Rural-Urban Linkages and Regional Economic Development”. Jablonski was a contributor to the Federal Reserve Oct. 2017 Report, “Harvesting Opportunity: The Power of Regional Food System Investments to Transform Communities.” She will also lead a workshop on assessing the economic impacts of food systems programming, policies and initiatives. See detailed agenda on page 8.

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# KRC Farm & Food Conference

## Agenda Friday, November 8 - Day 1

*\*Agenda subject to change*

- 8:00 am Registration Opens  
 9:00 am Welcome and Introduction  
 9:10 am Keynote - "Agriculture's Role in Ecological Sustainability and Economic Justice" - Fred Lutzi, President of The Land Institute in Salina, KS  
 10:15 am Break, Networking, Exhibits Open

Breakout Sessions	Resilient Communities & People	Climate and Agriculture	New Ideas, New Beginnings & Transitions	Advocacy and Collective Action
10:30 am	<b>Feeding your Neighbors: Funding Resources to Grow your Farm Business</b> Speakers: Isabelle Busenitz, Kansas Healthy Food Initiative; Tiffany Nixon, NetWork Kansas; Kerri Ebert, KS SARE; Nancy Pletcher, KS Rural Development	<b>Building Resilience in your soil to Weather any Extreme</b> Speaker: Candy Thomas, USDA NRCS	<b>Extending the Growing Season in Hoophouses</b> Speaker: Paul Weidger, Author & Grower	<b>WEALTH: Water, Energy, Air, Land, Transportation and Health- Kansas State Policy overview</b> Panel: Zack Pistora, KS Sierra Club; Jessica Lucas, Paul Johnson, KRC; Sheldon Weisgrau, Alliance for a Healthy Kansas; Dawn Buehler, Friends of the KAW. Moderated by Beth Pauley, Metropolitan Energy Center

- Noon Lunch featuring locally produced and sourced food  
 1:00 pm **Plenary Session:** Call for Action - Kansas Climate Health Declaration with Climate and Energy Project Rachel Myslivy; and Farmer Climate Action Sign on Letter, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition with Tara Ritter & Mary Fund  
 2:00 pm Break, Networking, Exhibits Open

2:15 pm	<b>Future of food and farming: Bridging gaps in community planning</b> Speakers: Hugo Pérez Trejo; Bertha Mendoza, K-State Extension Agent; Others TBA	<b>Managing Woodlands for Carbon, Changes in Climate and Biodiversity</b> Speakers: Bob Atchison, KFS; Wayne White, Landowner	<b>Basic Financial Management &amp; Recordkeeping for Specialty Crop Production</b> Speaker: Tom Buller, Douglas County Extension	<b>Farm Policy &amp; Practices to Mitigate Climate Change:</b> Speakers: Tara Ritter, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy for NSAC; Ed Reznicek, farmer; Other farmers TBA
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- 3:45 pm Break, Networking, Exhibits Open, Snacks

4:00 pm	<b>Coping with Stress and Anxiety on the Farm (and in the World Overall):</b> Speakers: Charlie Griffin, Forrest Buhler and Char Henton -Kansas Mediation Service	<b>Extreme Weather in the Plains and How Farmers and Ranchers Can Adapt</b> Speaker: Dr. Jeffrey Basara, University of Oklahoma	<b>Ecosphere Artist: An Interactive Soil Art Project</b> with Rena Detrixhe, artist in residence at the Land Institute	<b>Land/Farm owner and Land Seeker Mixer-</b> Facilitated by Mary Fund, KRC, and Julia Valliant, Indiana University  <i>*Separate registration required to attend this session – Visit: <a href="https://kansasruralcenter.org/farm-owner-farm-seeker-mixer/">https://kansasruralcenter.org/farm-owner-farm-seeker-mixer/</a></i>
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- 5:30 - 8:00 pm 40th Anniversary Reception/Social- Hotel River View Room. See full program on page 12.



# KRC Farm & Food Conference

## Agenda Saturday, November 9 - Day 2

*\*Agenda subject to change*

8:00 am Registration Opens  
 9:00 am Welcome and Introduction  
 9:10 am Keynote - "Leveraging Urban Food Markets to Support Rural-Urban Linkages & Regional Economic Development" - Becca Jablonski, Food Systems Extension Economist, Colorado State University

10:15 am Break, Networking, Exhibits Open

Breakout Sessions	Resilient Communities & People	Climate and Agriculture	New Ideas, New Beginnings & Transitions	Advocacy and Collective Action
10:30 am	<b>Assessing the Economic Impacts of Food Systems Programming, Policies, and Initiatives</b> Speaker: Becca Jablonski, Colorado State University Economist	<b>Weathering the Extremes for Grazing and Livestock Management</b> Speakers: Dale Strickler and Keith Long, ranchers	<b>Changing the World One Chicken at a Time: How RegeNERate Nebraska is Building Communities From the Soil Up</b> Speaker: Graham Christensen	<b>Is it Time for a New Approach to Renewable Energy and Wind Farm Siting?</b> Panel: Dorothy Barnett, CEP; Pete Ferrell, rancher; Mary Fund, KRC.

Noon Lunch featuring locally produced and sourced food

1:00 pm **Plenary Session: Harvesting Opportunities for the Future of Farming & Food in Kansas**  
 Lt. Gov. Lynn Rogers & Office of Rural Prosperity; Marlin Bates, Douglas County Extension; A member of The Rural Revitalization Committee (TBA); and Mary Fund or Natalie Fullerton, KRC.

2:15 pm	<b>Feeding Communities through Civic Agriculture</b> Speakers: Kathleen Webb, Children First; Ryan & Jennifer Speer, Milpa Garden Farmers, Lauren Scislowski, Legacy Garden Works; Jane Belanger, Heartland Farm	<b>Managing for Soil Health: A Farmer Panel</b> Panel: Linda Pechin-Long, Graze the Prairie; Jessica Gnad, urban farming/soil health; Keith Thompson, No-Till farming; Gail Fuller and Lynnette Miller, regenerative farming/farming for human and community health	<b>Lessons on How to make a non-traditional farm succession work</b> Farmer Panel: Mark Janzen; Leah Garcia-Dannar; Dennis Demmel and Ted Bruns	<b>CAFO's and "Right to Harm": How to Protect Ks. Citizens – 30 min. Film + Discussion</b> Speakers: Craig Volland & Ashlen Busick
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3:45 pm Break, Networking, Snacks

4:00 pm	<b>Why Local Food Matters: A Wichita Food Shed Perspective</b> Panel: Luke Snow, Farmshop; Carlos Vera, Chef; Josh Rathbun, Chef; Katherine Elder, Chef & Farmer; Others TBA	<b>Water: Why is it so Difficult to Conserve?</b> Speaker: Rex Buchanan, Kansas Geological Survey	<b>Pesticides in Kansas</b> Speakers: Paul Johnson, Zack Pistora, Joanna Will	<b>Organizing for 2020: How and why your vote matters</b> Speakers: TBA
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# KRC Farm & Food Conference

*KRC Conference*

*continued from page 7*

Each day will feature a dozen concurrent workshops covering a range of topics including practical sessions on building soil health, managing grass and livestock for extreme weather, managing farm financial recordkeeping, managing woodlands, extending the growing season in hoopouses, and coping with stress and anxiety on the farm and in the world. Other workshops will cover critical issues, policy and advocacy looking at local food development, state policy overview for 2020, federal farm policy and climate smart practices, wind energy and public opinion, and the impact of concentrated animal feeding operations.

Registration is \$75 per day or \$145 for both days. The Conference registration and price includes Friday evening's celebration of KRC's 40th Anniversary with an extended hors d'oeuvres buffet, Kansas beer and wine, and music. The celebration will be held immediately following the end of the day's workshops from 5:30 pm to 8:00 pm. The reception is also open to non-conference goers for \$40. Registration for the conference or for Friday evening's reception can be found at [kansasruralcenter.org/2019-conference](https://kansasruralcenter.org/2019-conference). Conference scholarships are also available for students and beginning farmers. Inquire at [info@kansasruralcenter.org](mailto:info@kansasruralcenter.org).

New this year will be a Special Land/Farm Owner and Land Seeker Mixer held as one of the workshop sessions on Friday afternoon from 4:00 pm to 5:15 pm. The mixer is an opportunity to network and connect those who have farms or land to those who are seeking a farm or land or an opportunity to gain experience farming. The Mixer is also open to non-conference goers who only wish to attend the Mixer.

But Pre-registration is required for both conference goers and non-conference goers. To register, please visit - <https://kansasruralcenter.org/kansas-rural-center-to-host-land-owner-land-seeker-mixer/>.

The Drury Plaza Hotel has a special conference rate of \$109 plus tax for conference goers. For hotel reservations, call 1-800-325-0720 and refer to group number 2361295 for a rate of \$109 per night. The conference hotel rate is available until October 18.

**KRC thanks our brother and sister organizations and partners for their generous conference sponsorships.**

*Co-sponsors as of this printing include:*

Mother Earth News  
The Land Institute  
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Women for Kansas  
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Climate + Energy Project  
Kansas Farmers Union  
The Community Merc  
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Socially Responsible Agricultural Project  
Central Kansas Clean Cities  
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**\*\*Scholarship sponsors are Ruth Terrill, Partridge, and Mary Fund & Ed Reznicek, Goff, Kansas\*\***

# KRC Farm & Food Conference

## KRC 2019 Farm and Food Conference - November 8 - 9, 2019

Registration Form - Deadline Monday, November 4, 2019

Please select which days you plan to attend:

\_\_\_\_\_ \$75 Friday, November 8                      \_\_\_\_\_ \$75 Saturday, November 9

\_\_\_\_\_ \$145 Both Days/Friday, November 8 and Saturday, November 9

\_\_\_\_\_ \$40 Anniversary Celebration Only

\_\_\_\_\_ Total Payment Enclosed

\_\_\_\_\_ Enclosed check payable to KRC.                      Send check to: Kansas Rural Center, 4021 SW 10th Street, #337,  
Topeka, KS 66604

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Company or organization (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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**KRC extends  
a special  
thank you to  
KCSAAC for  
their 2019  
conference  
sponsorship**

# KRC Farm & Food Conference

## Kansas Rural Center to Host Land Owner – Land Seeker Mixer

The Kansas Rural Center (KRC) will host a special “Mixer” for Land/Farm Owners and Farm/Land Seekers at their annual Food and Farm conference on Friday, November 8, from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. The Mixer is free but pre-registration is required and is separate from the regular conference registration. The Mixer is also open and free to non-conference goers.

The conference will be held November 8 and 9, 2019, at the Drury Plaza Hotel Broadview in Wichita. Registration for both the Mixer and the conference is available at <https://kansasruralcenter.org/2019-conference/>.

Many retiring farmers do not have a family successor in mind. Some landowners want to find a farmer who will use sustainable, regenerative or organic farming practices. Farm seekers are often looking for lease-to-buy opportunities, or for learning opportunities. Finding affordable available farming land or farming opportunities is a big challenge for beginning farmers.

“Sometimes we hear from those seeking a farm or land to buy or lease, or for an opportunity to work with a farmer as they gain experience. Retiring farmers or absentee landowners who have inherited farmland also call seeking a farmer to farm the land as they would like to see it farmed,” says Mary Fund, KRC Executive Director. She adds, “A common theme is that land owners want someone who will care about the land and farm as they have; or seekers are looking for a farm

learning opportunity to prepare them to lease or buy a farm, or maybe they are looking for land where they can put into practice sustainable, regenerative, or organic practices, or raise specialty crops with local and regional marketing options in mind.”

Research has shown that the biggest challenge for farm succession to a non-related successor is for these two groups to find each other; and successful transitions need time for relationship building. KRC will tackle this dilemma by offering a workshop at their annual conference bringing these two groups together—the farm/land owners and the farm seekers. The workshop requires separate registration from the conference overall. Only those who pre-registered for the workshop will be allowed to attend.

Attendees will be asked during registration to complete a short survey designed for them as a farm/land owner or a farm or land seeker. Registrants will be asked to describe what they are looking for in terms of a farm, type of farm, or what kind of farm or land they have available. This information will only be used to inform the workshop format, and names will remain confidential.

“The Mixer is a pilot effort or experiment,” stated Fund. “It is not a matching service or a workshop to answer legal questions. It is an opportunity to meet like-minded people with similar goals. KRC hopes to gauge interest in how events like these might help land

owners and seekers identify each other and establish a better understand of the challenges and opportunities they encounter. Hopefully it will also help the attendees refine what they are looking for in a farm or farming opportunity, and the options available for finding a successor, or partner in farming.”

For more information on the Mixer, contact Mary Fund at [mfund@kansasruralcenter.org](mailto:mfund@kansasruralcenter.org) or 866-579-5469.

The conference theme “Planting Ideas, Growing Our Future: Carbon, Climate and Communities” lays the foundation for up to 12 breakout sessions each day and two dynamic keynote speakers. Workshops and keynote speakers will represent a focus on building resilience and diversity on our farms and in our communities; climate and agriculture; farm transitions; and policy and action.

Registration to attend the two day conference is available at \$75 per day or \$145 for both days. The price includes a Friday evening celebration of KRC’s 40th Anniversary with an extended hors d’oeuvres buffet, Kansas beer and wine, and music. The celebration will be held on Friday, November 8, from 5:30 pm to 8:00 pm. The reception is open to non-conference goers for \$40. Registration for the conference, anniversary celebration, and special workshop Mixer can all be found at [kansasruralcenter.org/2019-conference](https://kansasruralcenter.org/2019-conference).

# KRC Farm & Food Conference

## Come Celebrate With KRC! 40th Anniversary Celebration

At KRC's annual conference this year, we will celebrate 40 years of work for a more sustainable food and farm future! Come join us for food, music and Kansas beer and wine, and networking! Annie Wilson, former KRC board member also known as the "Flint Hills Balladeer" and the Tallgrass Express will provide background music plus a concert from 6:45 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. There'll be plenty of space to enjoy visiting with old friends while enjoying good food and drink.

**5:30 - 6:15 pm Reception/Social** - Hors d'oeuvres buffet and music

**6:15 - 6:45 pm Program** - Looking Back but Moving Forward; Comments from KRC board and past board and staff, and Our Partners

**6:45 - 7:30 pm Concert** - Tallgrass Express - Followed by more social time.

**8:00 pm Closing**

Conference registration includes the evening celebration on Friday November 8 from 5:30 to 8:00. But for those who want to attend ONLY the evening celebration, we ask that you contribute \$40 for 40 Years. We ask that you please pre-register at <https://kansasruralcenter.org/2019-conference/> on the Conference Registration button so we can plan food and drink!



## Building Local Food Systems Through Diverse Agriculture Operations

By Sarah Green

The cornerstone of a healthy local and regional food system is the production of the food itself.

In Kansas, the conversation has for years further centered on the production of specialty crops – such as fruits and vegetables – grown and sold directly from the producer to the consumer, or through local retail outlets.

According to Ag Census data, Kansas boasts about \$41.7 million in fruit and vegetable sales. But according to the Kansas Department of Agriculture, total economic output accounts for about \$99 million. The potential is for much more than that. Kansas now imports about 95% of its fruits and vegetables, and some argue that Kansas could and should grow much more of what it consumes.

Figuring out how to boost that industry for even more production has been a challenging conversation to have, particularly with agriculture producers who are well-suited to grow large amounts of commodity crops.

### Is that changing?

“It is increasingly becoming a conversation within this system,” said Mike Matson, director of Industry Affairs and Development for Kansas Farm Bureau. “Farmers and ranchers will make determinations or decisions related to diversification based on a number of factors, not the least of which is economics. As pressures continue to mount related to growing and producing large commodities, our members are starting to look at other revenue streams.”

Kansas Farm Bureau convened a task force of member producers ahead of its centennial in 2019 to both ensure it is meeting the current and future needs of its members, and to consider areas of growth for recruitment.

The agriculture advocacy organization has had success supporting commodity growers, Matson said – those producing wheat, corn, soybeans, milo, cattle and hogs. They have recently hired a staff member to identify and build relation-

ships with individuals and systems who are growing crops that are not those big commodities, he said.

That work is going well, Matson said, but there is much to be done to build systems to support those producers.

Christy Hopkins, director of Greeley County Community Development and past-president of the Western Kansas Economic Development Alliance, also notes the robust infrastructure that exists for agricultural commodities in her region.

“I think one of the biggest obstacles is not so much that we can’t grow different things, it’s that we don’t know what to do with it once it’s grown,” she said. “The systems are built and established to make commodity agriculture easy to understand. It’s not complex – I grow it, I take it to the elevator, or I bin it and market it later. I don’t think the systems are as well-defined or as easy to understand for the other types of agriculture that we’re talking about.”

Both Matson and Hopkins pointed to farm operations that are perfectly poised to grow large-scale grain crops, but would have to substantially retool their operations in terms of equipment, irrigation and especially labor to switch to growing a product like tomatoes or peppers.

Additional research on the varieties of fruits and vegetables could prosper in western Kansas in particular – and getting that information to producers – could help, Hopkins said.

There may be opportunities for deeper systemic work, she added. Hopkins recently heard a conversation about people in Western Kansas communities feeling like “leftovers” or “has-beens.”

“How do we change that?” she asked. “How do we do anything when we feel stuck?”

*Continued on page 17*

# Sustainable Food and Farming News

## Building Local Food Systems Through Investment

By Sarah Green

Growing local and regional food systems will require investment of all kinds – capital, capacity, and time. Becca Jablonski, an assistant professor and a food systems extension economist at Colorado State University who spoke at the 2018 “Harvesting Opportunity in Kansas” symposium, gave a handful of examples of the economic impact of these businesses. For instance, farmers’ markets have been shown to boost nearby businesses during the times they’re in operation. The markets can also act as incubators for related businesses.

Food businesses aren’t the only focus for Network Kansas, the State of Kansas’ entrepreneurship office. They are a new area of attention, however, with the 2018 rollout of the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative, a public-private partnership that provides financing and technical assistance to new and growing food ventures.



Participants at the 2018 Harvesting Opportunities Symposium in Lawrence, Kansas.

“Prior to the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative, Network Kansas lived in more of a general sense of small-business entrepreneurial development,” said Imagene Harris, director of Strategic Partnerships & Impact Investment for the organization. “Having more focused education around the food system and how it interacts with community development, economic development and entrepreneurs has been really interesting.”

Harris and Tiffany Nixon, manager of Referral Center Operations for Network Kansas, both attended the Harvesting Opportunity in Kansas Symposium in 2018, just a few months after the Kansas Health Food Initiative launched.

The initiative is designed to serve all parts of the food system, Harris said, from production to distribution to even the end of the “food cycle” dealing with food waste.

Rural grocery stores have been among the program’s first participants, receiving combinations of loans and grants to build or maintain stores. The initiative hopes to recruit other businesses as well.

“This work has been very important in rural communities,” Harris said. “Going forward, we are talking about how we can

be more intentional about supporting all of the pieces of the food cycle.”

Network Kansas serves rural and distressed urban areas of the state, Nixon said. They match beginning and growing businesses with resources, education, assistance and sources of capital. Their referral center receives about 300 calls a month from entrepreneurs in various stages of starting or growing businesses.

They continue to search for new partnerships. Nixon said she met a staff person from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment at the Harvesting Opportunity symposium. “We are connected with KDHE already, but this person was in a different bureau” than their other contacts, Nixon said. “I met with him after the meeting, and he started including me on a list letting people know about grants for communities. Now I know of other grants that are being sent to local health departments or economic development offices. I share the information with the team, and keep it on hand for referrals.”

For more information about the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative, visit [kansashealthyfood.org](http://kansashealthyfood.org).

*Note: Sarah Green, who wrote this piece, has provided input on the Kansas Health Food Initiative as a member of its advisory board.*

*Sarah Green is a free-lance writer in Wichita, Kansas.*

# Sustainable Food and Farming News

## The Climate + Energy Project Honors KRC Executive Director Mary Fund at September 30 Awards

Since 2017, the Climate + Energy has recognized individuals and organizations who are leading the way to a clean energy future. Among the 2019 winners is Mary Fund, Executive Director for the Kansas Rural Center who was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award at CEP's annual awards ceremony Sept. 30 in Lawrence, Ks.



The Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes an individual whose work resulted in positive long term, broad impacts in climate, energy and environmental issues across the state. According to CEP's news release, "Mary has dedicated her career to a sustainable agriculture and rural communities, working for nearly 40 years to raise issues of

environmental concern- from clean energy to clean water, healthy soils to local foods, and more. Mary never shies away from the important, if controversial issues, including most recently highlighting climate change in town halls across the state. Her no nonsense, common-sense approach has been foundational to conversations about environmental issues around the state for decades."

Other award winners were Kim Bellemere, Outreach Director for the Grassland Heritage Foundation, as the Mark Richardson Sustainer Award, a volunteer-recognition award for an individual who has regularly engaged with CEP for

at least 5 years. The Merc Co+Op in Lawrence and Metro KC Climate Action Coalition received the Changemaker Award, given in recognition of an organization(s) whose recent work has significantly advanced climate, energy and or environmental issues in Kansas. The Merc has elevated solar power and electric vehicles as clean energy solutions through installation of solar panels at their Lawrence store and electric vehicle charging stations. Metro KC Climate Action Coalition has provided a vehicle to bring together diverse local elected officials to tackle climate change at the local and state level, and lead the conversation about regional climate change solutions.

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### Finpak Opportunities Offered to Specialty Crop Growers

This fall and winter the Kansas Rural Center will offer the opportunity for to ten specialty crop growers to work with Kansas Farm Management Analysts to conduct and detailed financial analysis of their operations. Using the Finpak software, analysts will help growers gain insight into their operations that are useful for business analysis, cash flow planning and long range planning.

KRC will pay for \$350 of the standard \$450 fee for up to ten specialty crop growers to participate.

If you are interested or have questions contact: Tom Buller in Lawrence ([tombuller@ksu.edu](mailto:tombuller@ksu.edu)), Rebecca McMahon in Wichita ([Rmcmahon@ksu.edu](mailto:Rmcmahon@ksu.edu)), or Mary Fund at [mfund@kansasruralcenter.org](mailto:mfund@kansasruralcenter.org).

This opportunity is part of KRC's Risk Management for Specialty /Crop Growers Project and funded in part through a partnership with USDA, Risk Management Agency, under award number RM18MEPP522CO46/4500081830.



*Building Local Food Through Diverse Agriculture... continued from page 11*

Lifting up more stories about producers who are navigating current systems or building new ones would also help, Hopkins said.

“The more we can see local and regional success stories, or ‘how we’ve done it’ guides will inspire others to action or think differently about what they can be doing on their own property,” she said. “I think that’s the key.”

Donn Teske, president of the Kansas Farmers Union, also pointed to opportunities to help specialty crop producers build their marketing capacity.

Some of the state’s best-known farms excel at the marketing piece, he said. “How do we take it mainstream?” he asked.

Organizations such as food hubs or local food cooperatives could help build that marketing capacity, he said. Further increasing specialty crop production would have additional benefits for the environment and for communities as a whole, he added.

“Local production feeding the community is the safest, healthiest, system, and is needed desperately,” he said.

*Sarah Green is a free-lance writer in Wichita, Kansas.*

## Opportunity to Let Congress Know You Support Climate Smart Policy: Farmer-Rancher Climate Sign-On Letter

Agriculture is clearly on the front-lines of a changing climate. Extreme rainfall, floods, and delayed planting here in Kansas have brought home the urgent need to address climate and its impacts on agriculture. Sustainable, regenerative and organic farmers can do a lot to build the resilience of our farms and ranches to extreme weather events, store excess carbon in our soils and trees, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Now is the time to join thousands of other farmers and ranchers across the nation to ask policymakers and federal administrators to help us meet the challenges of a changing climate and become part of the solution.

As a member group of the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, the Kansas Rural Center is gathering signatures on a Farmer Letter on Climate Change. Beginning in the spring of 2020, NSAC and member groups will use this letter in meetings with members of Congress, USDA program leaders, and other key decision-makers to urge effective policy action to combat climate change, and especially to help farmers and ranchers weather the storm and lead the way towards a more sustainable future. You can view the letter here - <https://kansasruralcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Farmer-Climate-Letter-Text.pdf>, and add your signature at the link provided there.

\*The signature links are available in Spanish and English.

Note that we are specifically seeking signatures from farmers and ranchers at this time, as defined by USDA as producers who sell at least \$1,000 in farm products annually.

If you are a gardener, service provider, advocate, or consumer who is not making income from farm products, there are other ways that you can help in our efforts to address the climate crisis in our agricultural and food system. For starters, you could share this sign-on opportunity with the farmers in your networks or at farmers’ markets or farm stands where you shop. As this campaign grows, there will be more opportunities later for non-farming folks to get involved. But for now, we want farmers and ranchers to sign on.

# Sustainable Food and Farming News

*Healthier Future*  
continued from page 4

climate disruption on humans, on other species, and on God's creation." Richard Mabion with the Kansas City Kansas branch of the NAACP said "we believe that community leaders should take a stand to reduce the impacts of climate change and build resilience among the most vulnerable populations."

As of September 9, 2019, other organizational signers include the Metropolitan Energy Center, Friends of the Kaw, Grassland Heritage Foundation, the Kansas Natural Resource Council, and Kansas Appleseed. Additional organizational signers will be updated continuously on ResilientKansas.org.

The public is invited to sign the petition urging Kansas leaders to take bold, comprehensive action to reduce emissions and build resilience. The full Climate + Health Declaration and petition are available at ResilientKansas.org.

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*The Climate + Health Declaration is powered by the Climate + Energy Project with broad support from organizational signers. Generous funding for the Climate + Health Declaration and supporting work comes from the Kansas Health Foundation and the Turner Foundation.*

*Small Farmer Commentary*  
continued from page 3

Then KRC director Dan Nagengast and others crossed the state talking to county commissioners and communities about the value and necessity of community wind development. There were few if any takers. Now rural communities are rising up against big wind development as being one more way corporations are exploiting them, thus halting construction of new developments. But the need for rapid transition of our energy infrastructure to renewable sources is even greater now. Working with opponents to find compromise for siting and community concerns is critical.

Social justice has always been part of KRC's mission. Our values statement says "Farm policy is food policy. It should not benefit the few at the expense of the many.... As farmers and consumers, we cannot pursue our own narrow self-interest at the expense of the hungry at home or abroad." A broad statement to be sure, but one that infers compassion and social equity. It recognizes society's responsibility to the most vulnerable, and equal opportunity for minorities and for those who come to this country in search of a better life.

Recently I was asked what makes me optimistic that society will make the changes it needs to make as social and cultural habits that limit our ability and our will to change are deeply entrenched. I am optimistic because I see a growing awareness of the problems we face and the connections that link them. I am optimistic because I see more willingness among more people to engage and act. I am optimistic that a new generation of youth will hold us all accountable. I am optimistic because organizations like KRC have been right all along in our work toward sustainability.

I have been privileged to work for one of the most progressive thinking organizations in Kansas for most of my adult life, working with wonderful people who shared my concerns and my passions, who have been committed to asking the tough questions—not only of those in power but of ourselves as we imagine and work for a more sustainable future for all.

Support is growing for the kind of future that KRC has been working toward all along: a healthy, resilient world made up of a healthy food and ecologically based farming system, protecting our ecosystems, while providing meaningful livelihoods within a socially just society.

Our greatest challenges lie ahead, but we cannot do it alone or as individuals, or piecemeal. As climate activist and author Bill McKibbin stated at the Prairie Festival in late September, "We desperately need a new ethic of solidarity to replace the hyper-individuality that marks our culture and economic system."

I am proud of what KRC and its many partners have accomplished over the years. I urge you to continue to engage in the issues, to connect with each other (and perhaps more importantly, connect with those you don't agree with), and to act with care and compassion for all.

Thank you.

Mary Fund can be reached at [mfund@kansasruralcenter.org](mailto:mfund@kansasruralcenter.org).

# Sustainable Food and Farming News

*KRC Town Halls*

*continued from page 5*

ask questions and offer opinions. The conversations were different at each community, but each were energizing, thoughtful, and of the “to be continued” variety.

The urban communities of Wichita and Kansas City were included because we wanted to hear if there were commonalities among the urban and rural perspectives, and if there were places where needs, goals and values intersect. Indeed, there were.

Surprisingly, we found only a small number of climate change deniers among attendees, or at least only a small number who were willing to speak up. What was most interesting to us was the lack of direct participant conversation or focus on it was interesting. People were more comfortable talking about the future for food and farming in Kansas and the issues, policies and actions needed to create that future, without acknowledging that these things often hit indirectly on the very things needed to address a changing climate or build resilience.

Each town hall featured 3 or 4 speakers, who primed the pump with ideas, giving short comments to the above questions. Then the evening was turned over to the audience to ask questions and share their own thoughts. Speakers varied at all the meetings but included Jeremy Cowan, KSU, Manhattan; Gail Fuller, Emporia farmer; Rachel Myslivy and Dorothy Barnett, Climate and Energy Project; Linda Pechin-Long, Flint Hills rancher; Tom Giessel, Larned farmer; Bertha Mendoza, KSU Extension, Garden City; Nina & Jeter Isely, Bird City farmers. Aubrey Streit Krug, The Land Institute, Stu Shafer, JCCC and KRC board, and KRC staff Mary Fund and Natalie Fullerton facilitated the discussions.

**Below we provide a summary:**

**Vision:**

Diversify, decentralize, connect (or reconnect), and communicate were key words that described the future we need and want.

\*Build a sustainable local/regional food economy to

focus on feeding ourselves and our neighbors, and shift away from “feeding the world”. This is a myth, according to several of the speakers and audience members. Local & regional doesn’t mean we do not have global and national supply lines but these can be disrupted by a variety of things (weather extremes and climate change, border and other political conflicts). We will need greater regional resilience in the future, and decentralizing the food system to include healthier local/regional production and related businesses and services will contribute to that.

\*Good communication with our neighbors and within our communities. Currently social and cultural barriers to change of any kind are a concern; communication and crucial conversations are critical to approaching these issues. We need to focus on common values.

\*Involve more diversity in all aspects of our food system, our environment, and our society. Diversity is the basis of ecological farming that will reduce reliance on fossil fuels, pesticides and herbicides, and help us adapt to a changing climate. Diversity of people can also bring rich cultural knowledge to the landscape and communities. As diversity in nature builds resilience, so will diversity in people and ideas.

\*Build soil health through following agro-ecological principles & practices; and embrace regenerative/sustainable farming practices. This will help not only with immediate issues of soil health, water quality and quantity, nutrient cycling, and producing nutrient dense foods, but will help us adapt to climate challenges of drought and flood and more.

\*Develop better rural/urban relationships. In a local or regional food system, the two will not be separated but will develop an interdependency or symbiotic relationship. This too creates resilience to disruption and conflicts.

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# Sustainable Food and Farming News

*KRC Town Halls*

*continued from page 19*

Some of the actions and policies that were suggested that will help advance the vision at local, state and national levels:

- \*Recognize/accept that change is coming— along with economic, social and cultural, changes.

- \*Talk to our neighbors and to those who may disagree with us to find common ground and based on values.

- \* Learn from our history.

- \* Engage in community dialogues, sponsor community conversations, and engage in civic activity, volunteer, and lead.

- \*Fix the health care system. Have a serious exploration of adopting universal health care. Health care costs including pharmaceuticals ruin too many lives, and prevent people from pursuing education, starting businesses, and changing employers. Costs must be addressed.

- \*Buy from farmers and ranchers adopting regenerative or sustainable practices. Or buy their products from local businesses to support the local/regional food system.

- \*Support policies and programs that provide education on regenerative/sustainable practices, and help them transition and maintain these practices.

- \*Advance clean energy via more renewable energy options (individual, community and developers) and adopt energy efficiency standards. Provide citizens and communities education and information to better understand options and needs.

- \*Develop a Kansas Energy Plan, and a Climate and Health Plan. Enact aspects of these within local planning

- \*Target subsidies and government programs to agriculture that incentivizes agro-ecological farming practices

- \*Develop affordable housing in both rural and urban areas.

- \*Enforce greater transparency in policy making.

- \*Adopt size appropriate rules and regulations for cottage food industry.

- \*Remove major barriers to value added production.

- \*Provide beginning farmers education and resources to access land and markets. Including minorities and so

cially disadvantaged farmers and future farmers.

- \*Address the barriers to youth (and adults) remaining in Kansas, especially rural Kansas.

- \*Build cooperative efforts wherever possible (i.e. use cooperative structures for owning land and farming operations with diverse enterprises, and aggregate production for marketing, storage and distribution (food hubs). This helps create community ties and buy in.

There were more suggestions—some were very specific such as ending sales taxes at farmers markets, or developing a regional food system plan complete with projected food needs, acres and ability to provide that food, processors needed, or ending rules and regulations that hamper small producers or business development. But the general theme was “diversify, decentralize, and connect or communicate” to get the future we need and want.

KRC will share our summary with policymakers and others working on a new food system and on energy issues, and with those addressing the economic inequities that must be part of any solutions and plans for the future. We urge you to share this summary with your community and state leaders as well. Above all, we will continue to push the conversation.



*Participants at the Town Hall meeting in Emporia, Kansas.*

## Risk Management on Specialty Crop Farms Highlighted on Tour

About 20 people, including a couple crop insurance agents and RMA regional staff and area farmers, attended KRC's farm tour at Scot Thelman's Juniper Hill Farms north of Lawrence, Ks. on September 18. Thelman is a that rare bird—a first generation farmer. His parents bought the farm



*Thellman and tour attendees look over specialty crop harvesting equipment used at Juniper Hill Farms.*

he operates now when he was 8 years old, and his first experience farming was to follow the guys leasing the farm around. He spent his teen age and college summers running a custom haying business. In 2011 he built his first high tunnel for vegetables using the USDA NRCS high tunnel cost-share program. After graduating from Iowa State University in 2014, he started farming full time, expanding his vegetable operation from year to year.

Today he has some 60 acres of vegetables (both under 12 high tunnels and in the field) plus about 1200 acres hay and alfalfa, corn and soybeans, and does custom hay work for area farmers. He has a farm manager and a couple other fulltime employees but also hires seasonal employees for the vegetable operation. Thelman also built a 4000 square foot packing shed with cold storage, and handles aggregation, distribution and marketing for other specialty crop farmers including several Amish farmers in northwest Missouri.

For Thelman, risk management has meant diversifying. When one thing does poorly, another will take up the slack. For instance, this year's rains made vegetable production hard, but the hay did great. He uses the Non-insured Crops Disaster Assistance program or NAP, a crop insurance program that provides some protection for specialty crop growers. He has had to submit a couple of claims over his farming career, but finds the dollar values USDA uses for vegetables do not reflect the market value here. Still it was better than a complete loss.

He hopes to use the newer Whole Farm Revenue Insurance in the future. Up to now he feels there has been a lack of information and training available to agents. "We're in corn and bean country," he said. "So specialty crops are not understood."

While most of his marketing is at the whole sale level, this last summer he also sold at the Lawrence Farmers Market. This allowed him to focus on customer relationships, which he said provides invaluable information on quality and consumer preferences.

The farm tour was part of KRC's Risk Management for Specialty Crop Growers Project funded in part through a partnership with USDA, Risk Management Agency, under award number RM18MEPP522CO46/ 4500081830.



*Participants of the farm tour exploring high tunnels and field-grown specialty crops at Juniper Hill Farms.*

# Sustainable Food and Farming News

## Save the Date! SE Kansas Specialty Crop Workshop Planned for February 15, 2020

Mark your calendar for the first annual Southeast Kansas Specialty Crops Workshop scheduled for Saturday February 15, 2020. Both experienced and beginning specialty crop producers from across Kansas are invited to attend. The workshop will cover production, marketing, and management in Burlington at the Coffey County Fairgrounds 4-H Building, 8 am to 5 pm. Speakers will include former KSU horticulture specialist Chuck Marr.

This workshop will provide valuable information covering many aspects of specialty crop production, marketing and management including: 1) Direct Marketing with an emphasis on Farmers Markets, 2) Crops to grow with variety suggestions, 3) Effective growers and groups helping to promote Specialty Crops in Kansas, 4) Equipment information and Other Resources for success, 5) Importance of Business Planning and Enterprise Budgets and conclude with a Farm Tour of a veteran Specialty Crop operation.

The cost including a local sourced lunch will be \$30.00 for the first person and \$20.00 for additional family members. Look for more information about registration from KRC in January 2020. For more information, contact David Coltrain at [coltraindavid@gmail.com](mailto:coltraindavid@gmail.com) or 620-330-3951



*Pallets of squash, pumpkins and more line the inside of Thellman's packing shed. See story on page 21.*

## 24th Annual Soil Health Conference Set for January 28 & 29

Registration is now open for the 24th annual No-till on the Plains Winter Conference. Online registration is open for growers, industry partners and soil health enthusiasts to attend the popular soil health expo and educational event. The Conference will take place January 28-29, 2020 at the Hyatt Regency and Century II Convention Center, Wichita, Kan. This annual event offers great networking opportunities for attendees, and Wichita offers ample entertainment and dining options. Registration is available at [www.notill.org](http://www.notill.org).

## MOSES Conference Set for February 27-29, 2019

The 31st Annual MOSES Organic Farming Conference will be Feb. 27-29, 2020 at LaCrosse, WI. Early Bird registration starts December 3.

Conference information should be available on their website in late November at [www.mosesorganic.org](http://www.mosesorganic.org).

**For a complete listing of upcoming Kansas Rural Center events and activities, as well as a number of events that other organizations will be hosting in the near future, please visit the Events Calendar on our website - <http://kansasruralcenter.org/calendar/>.**

## KRC Grazing Calls to Shift to Kansas Grazing Lands Coalition in 2020

KRC has been hosting free monthly conference calls for graziers for several years. Dale Kirkham has facilitated the calls along with Gary Kilgore and Keith Mahoney, who have fielded questions and provided information.

In September, KRC and the Kansas Grazing Lands Coalition (KGLC) worked out a transfer of the coordination of these calls to KGLC. For the next few months, the same call in number will work until KGLC has set up a new system. So stay tuned for an announcement from KRC and the KGLC for that new number.

Currently, the calls are the second Monday of each month, from 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm, and the call in number is:

**1-877-304-5632 Pin Code: 300 346 2424#**



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**Change Service Requested**



**It was pumpkins for days at Juniper Hill Farms during a recent tour hosted by KRC and KSRE.**

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- Fund to Retire: KRC Launches Search for ED
- Declaring Commitment to a Healthier Future for All
- KRC Town Halls Highlight Rural and Urban Food & Farming Ideas
- KRC Releases Video Series on Impacts of Pesticides on Pollinators, and Farming Methods that Minimize Risk
- KRC Invites You to Annual Food & Farm Conference
- Conference Agenda and Registration
- KRC to Host Land Owner - Land Seeker Mixer
- KRC to Host 40th Anniversary Celebration
- Building Local Food Systems Through Diverse Agricultural Operations
- Climate + Energy Project Honors Mary Fund
- Farmer/Rancher Sign-ons Requested
- Risk Management Highlighted During Farm Tour
- Specialty Crop Workshop in SE Kansas in Feb. 2020