

Rural Papers

Reporting with commentary
on agricultural and rural issues



No. 271 Spring/Summer 2019

Kansas Rural Center to Host Future of Farming and Food Town Halls



Kansans are invited to attend the Kansas Rural Center's (KRC) "Future of Farming and Food" Town Hall meetings across the state this summer. Five meetings will facilitate discussion on the food system and farming and how these are related to climate and energy issues, and rural/urban revitalization. Unlike KRC's town Halls in past summers, this one will also include Wichita and the Kansas City area so we can tackle issues common to both rural and urban communities and the rural/urban gap.

The Town Halls offer opportunities to share information and enable community dialogue on the vision for the future we want and how we get there. Discussion will include issues critical to Kansas ranging from the impacts of weather extremes and a changing climate on our food system and farming, population loss (especially of young people), health care, and present and future economic opportunities.

Dates are July 8 Emporia; Wichita, July 10; Garden City July 30; St. Francis, July 31. A fifth meeting will be held in the Kansas City area in August. Look for locations and details to be announced closer to the meetings.

The 2019 State legislative session displayed a new elevated status to some of the above issues in rural Kansas. The year started with a new Governor and a new Office of Rural Prosperity to ensure that all Kansans have access to a high quality of life, regardless of their zip code. The Kansas House established a Rural Revitalization Committee responding to the key issues impacting the rural economy and social structure: population loss and changing demographics, health care, rural infrastructure, and food systems and farming. But these issues also impact our urban neighbors.

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Rural Papers

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Rural Papers is the voice of the Kansas Rural Center, Inc. (KRC), a non-profit organization that promotes the long-term health of the land and its people through research, education, and advocacy. 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

Rethinking Our Farm, Food, and Energy Future

By Mary Fund

"Don't be afraid to start thinking!" This quip from a long time organic farmer to transitioning organic farmers could well be KRC's unofficial motto. From our earliest days, we have prided ourselves on asking the right questions, asking the tough questions, and not following the herd.

Sometimes we get criticized for this. We've been admonished in the past to stick to giving farmer advice on farming practices and farm "stuff", like building soil health or hoop houses, or marketing grass fed beef, or adding specialty crops to an operation. We were advised to stay out of the political or deeper more conflict laden topics.

After all, what does food access for the poor have to do with Kansas farms? Why do we talk about state budget revenues to provide education, transportation, child welfare, and health care for all? Why do we want to see affordable housing in rural and urban communities? Why do we support clean renewable energy like wind and solar? Why do we talk about farm and community resilience in terms of climate change? And why do we include social diversity discussions at our annual conference and weave it into our program work?

We do so because it is no longer enough—indeed it never was~ to focus on just our individual, family, farm, or business, or even community's well-being. We live within a broader economic, ecological, social, racial – and global context. So, we must broaden the conversation and our understanding of the solutions.

What happens in this larger context directly relates to who eats and how well they eat, and if they have access to food, land and resources, and a meaningful livelihood, and whether any of us will continue to have those basic opportunities. Today, to be able to respond to this larger context, our understanding of weather related extremes and response to climate change science must factor in more than shrugging these off as no different than past droughts or floods. We cannot be afraid to explore new information and data and reach new conclusions.

Some argue that the health and future of democracy is tied to how well we organize the distribution of the above, (i.e. food, land, housing, education, and health care) and to how well we respond to future energy needs and the transition to a fossil fuel or carbon free economy—or whether we even realize that that is what is needed.

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Small Farmer Commentary

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Any planning for the future (on your farm, your business, or your community) must take into consideration not only the need for a big change in how we farm and how we distribute food in order to meet future needs and to preserve the ability to meet future needs, but requires a change to the energy base for that system. This means rethinking a whole lot of things and reducing wasteful consumption.

At our Town Hall meetings this summer (see story page 1), we hope to begin a discussion of our food system and farming and how these are related to climate and energy issues, and how to plan a more resilient future for both rural/urban communities. We will ask a panel of experts (and then the audience) these questions: What do you see as the future of food and farming in the context of weather extremes and climate change? What are three things that need to be addressed that will help advance that vision? And what actions or policies at the state or national level do we need to see to advance the vision? These questions can be applied at the broad context level or at the local community level, but ask them we must.

While KRC's immediate work remains focused on practical farm and food related information and how-to's needed to build a sustainable farm and food system, we recognize the need for this broader conversation to begin rethinking our future.

So, don't be afraid to start thinking, and please join us at one of our town hall meetings this summer. We hope to see you down the road.

Contact Mary Fund at mfund@kansasruralcenter.org

Save the Date for the KRC Farm & Food Conference November 8-9, 2019 in Wichita

The Kansas Rural Center (KRC) will hold its annual Farm and Food Conference Friday and Saturday November 8-9, 2019 in Wichita at the Drury Plaza Hotel Broadview. This year, the two-day program will include a Friday evening anniversary celebration of KRC's 40 Years as the voice for sustainable agriculture and a sustainable food system in Kansas.

Under a theme of "Planting Ideas, Growing Our Future", speakers, panelists and workshop sessions will feature presentations and discussions on how biological, human, and economic diversity builds resilience and how we can make it happen on our farms and in our communities.

The keynoter for day one is Fred Iutzi, President of The Land Institute, who will address "Agriculture's role in economic justice and ecological sustainability" exploring new ways to produce food in a redesigned agricultural system that will meet our needs in a changing climate. Day two will feature keynoter Becca Jablonski, Colorado State University Local Foods Agricultural Economist, on "Bridging the Urban/Rural Divide Through Local/Regional Food Systems".

Both days will feature 12 workshops each day ranging from thought provoking presentations on a hot issues, to practical how-to's for your farm or community and organizing how-to's for advocacy and grassroots engagement.

Friday evening's 40th Anniversary Celebration will be part of conference registration but also open to non-conference attendees for "\$40 for 40" and feature an extensive local food buffet of snacks and hors d'oeuvres, local wine and beer, music and old friends.

Registration will be open later this summer, but mark your calendars now!

Power Struggles, Transparency and the Long Slog Toward Stability

by Paul Johnson with Mary Fund



The 2019 Kansas State Legislature, which usually goes out like a lamb, adjourned May 29 after taking one last swipe at the State budget signed by Governor Kelly a week earlier—and not without some excitement and political theater.

Senate proceedings were disrupted by a small group of protesters chanting, singing, and urging consideration of Medicaid expansion. The group, accused of “pure obstructionism” by Senate leadership, was escorted out by security, but not before the news media was also asked to leave --under threat of losing access to future Senate proceedings. This act prompted an angry response from the Topeka Capital Journal editorial page, aimed at Senate leadership who they argue appear “more interested in obfuscation than transparency and more devoted to rhetoric than simple facts”.

Also, it was not lost on anyone following the legislature this year, that when it comes to “obstruction,” Senate leadership has tirelessly obstructed Medicaid expansion. But once the drama calmed down, both House and Senate overrode the Governor’s veto of

an unscheduled \$51 million contribution to the Kansas Public Employee Retirement system (KPERs) and a cut to mental health crisis programs. However, they failed to override the Governor’s veto to an income tax cut benefitting primarily multinational corporations.

The Governor had argued that the extra KPERs payment was not necessary and urged stopping “non-essential” spending in an effort to get the state on track to fiscal stability. She also argued that appropriate funding already existed for the mental health programs, and that it was more important to set aside some funds for unforeseen emergencies.

The Legislature had included the \$51 million for KPERs as an extra payment to make up for shorting the state’s annual contribution for several years when the State faced shortfalls during the Brownback years. Supporters claimed to be protecting education. Critics of the override were quick to note the irony that the same Legislators who had voted to skip or delay KPERs payments over the past 9 years were now suddenly “pro-education” and champions of KPERs.

But while the Republicans won on the \$54 million in funds for KPERs and mental health programs (total state budget is around \$18 billion), the attempted override of the tax cut, which would have granted multinational corporations a state income tax exemption on overseas earnings,

failed. Opponents of the tax cut argued that to enact the income tax exemption would have been a step backward to the Brownback economic plan which decimated state program coffers and pushed the State to the brink of insolvency.

The tax cut also included a modest approach to reducing the sales tax on groceries over time, which was intended to lure in more support as it would have impacted all Kansans. While Kansas desperately needs to reduce if not abandon its grocery sales tax, would that small victory paired with the income tax for wealthy corporations be enough to justify a return to the Brownback era plan?

The battle over the State budget and revenues is far from over as supporters for the above income tax cut and more will return in the 2020 session and beyond. Below we take a look at more details of the State budget and the 2019 legislative year.

State Budget. The new State budget made some headway in reversing cuts to essential state services made over the last five years. Increased funding for public education was a bi-partisan success that responded to constitutional concerns by the Kansas Supreme Court. The other primary battle was over Medicaid expansion – which enjoys broad support by lawmakers and the public – but could not overcome Senate leadership opposition.

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State Policy News

State Policy...

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Political sniping over Medicaid expansion continues as a promised interim committee study may or may not happen, and the waters muddy over who is in charge. The long-term view for the State's budgetary picture over the next few years remains challenging.

The 2019 Kansas budget totaled \$17.2 billion with \$7.1 billion from the State General Fund (SGF) and an ending balance of \$866.3 million (12.2%). The 2020 budget comes in at \$18.4 billion with \$7.7 billion from the SGF with an ending balance of \$550 million (5.4%). At present spending and revenue projections, the ending balance for 2021 falls to \$180 million, and by 2022 and 2023 there will have to be spending reductions of \$300 million in 2022, and a small ending balance in 2023.

State law requires a 7.5% ending balance, which was met in 2018 and 2019, but waived in the years 2010 to 2017, and 2020 forward. The Governor is establishing a task force to completely analyze existing tax policy and recommend a new revenue plan going forward.

The Governor's proposed 2019/2020 budget was passed close to the spending recommendations but the revenue proposals were altered significantly. The Kansas Legislature speeded up a \$115 million back payment to the Kansas Public Employee Retirement System (KPERS) in 2019. The Kansas Legislature refused the proposal to re-amortize KPERS payments over

30 years saving Kansas \$145 million in payments yearly.

Despite the stark budget and revenue projections, the Kansas Legislature passed a corporate and individual tax cut bill in the waning days of the session. The tax cut would cost \$246 million over the next three years. Given the revenue and spending projections, the Governor had no alternative but to veto this tax bill and expand the debate into a reasonable revenue plan going forward. Both House and Senate, as described above, were unable to override the Governor's veto.

School finance. The decision on the constitutionality of school finance is now before the Kansas Supreme Court since the written briefs and oral arguments have been presented. Senate Bill 16 responded to the issue of inflation adjustment raised by the Court. The question now is whether an adequate inflation adjustment has been achieved?

School finance from 2002 – 2005 declined slightly to inflation, while the 2005 Gannon decision increased funding from 2005 to 2009 but declined sharply in 2010 after the 2008-2009 recession before school funding increases began in 2018. The increases in 2018 and now 2019 add over one billion dollars up to 2023 for a total of \$5.178 billion.

When adjusted for inflation from 2002, the 'inflation adjusted' spending is actually \$4.658 billion in 2023. The inflation adjusted spending in 2009 - right before the recession

and major spending cuts – of \$4.81 billion is one hundred and forty million over the proposed spending in 2023. It seems likely that the Court will accept this increased funding for now but may not dismiss the court suit in order to continue to assess the progress of actual funding. The Court did settle the Gannon lawsuit in 2005 but the promised funding by the State was not completely paid. Economic projections four years out are uncertain given whether a recession is on the horizon and depending on actual inflation rates.

Higher Education & Foster Care & Corrections. Some budgetary reparations were made. The State Board of Regents were given a \$33 million increase for higher education while the Governor requested just \$10 million and the Regents requested \$50 million to start recovering from the \$75 million in state funding reductions since 2011. The Department of Children & Families was given 42 new child welfare positions over two years to respond to the foster care crisis.

The corrections system is having tremendous staffing problems with vacant positions, turnover, mandatory overtime, uncompetitive salaries and overcrowding. The Governor requested \$27 million in additional spending that the Legislature agreed to but appropriated the funds under the control of the State Finance Council (that the Governor chairs but is dominated by Republican leadership).

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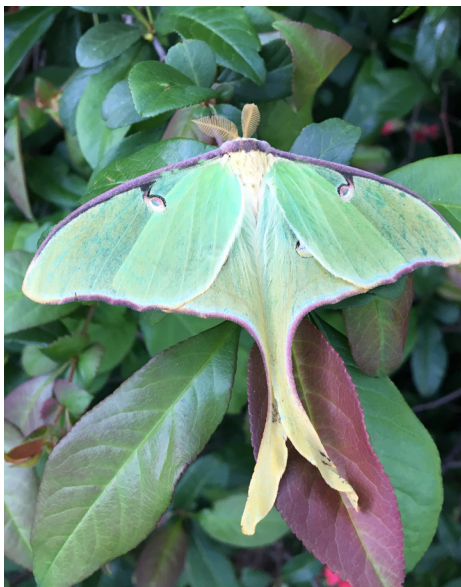
Sustainable Food and Farming News

Farming Practices Provide Multiple Benefits: Pollinator and Specialty Crop Protection and Greater Profits for Farmers

By Mary Fund

“No Bees, No Coffee” read a sign in a short video clip about pollinator decline at KRC’s recent workshop. That certainly can catch attention. “Pollinators, pesticides, and drift” were the topics covered at the May 20 workshop in Wichita where twenty people braved the forecast of more heavy rain amid flash flood watches to spend a day hearing from researchers, beekeepers and farmers.

“85% of all plants require pollination. One of every three bites of food we eat depend on pollination,” stated Joanna Will, KRC’s Pollinator Project Coordinator, in her introduction to the workshop. The importance of pollinators to food production and thus food security should be clear. “As Jonathan Lundgren (director of ECDYSIS Foundation and former USDA entomologist) has bluntly stated,” explained Will, “No pollinators, no plants, no people.”



But pollinators are in decline and have been for decades. This includes honey bees in commercial production as well as wild bees, and a host of other pollinators. The reasons are varied—habitat loss, disease, climate change, and pesticides in the environment are top concerns.

In the past, pesticide drift was not considered a cause of pollinator decline but recent research indicates there is more connection than previously thought.

40% of the nation’s honey bees were lost in 2015-2016. This counts just commercial or home hives, not the feral

wild colonies, or other pollinators. The apiary industry adds \$11.7 billion to the U.S. economy, so this is no small loss. As a beekeeper on the opening video explained, “Bees are livestock. If 40% of all cattle died in a year, you’d see action!”

“Pollinators are not just harmed by pesticide use, but also by seed treatments,” explained Will. Neonicotinoids, a family of insecticides used as a seed treatment, are used on nearly all U.S. corn, sunflower and canola seed. Thirty to 40 percent of U.S. soybean seed is treated as well. (Corn and soybeans acreage totaled about 180 million acres in the U.S. last year.) Instead of waiting for plants to show a problem, the seed is treated preemptively and the growing plant takes up the insecticide that will protect it from early season pests.

Only 2 - 20% of the neonic coating is taken up by the plant, while the rest travels beyond the plant and even beyond the field, continuing to have an impact. Some studies have shown that even on organic farms, their buffer strips are showing traces of neonics which can harm pollinators, since those strips are often where the most attractive plants are. Dust from the treated seeds that travels during planting can carry the impact beyond the field. There is also some evidence that the neonics travel through the soil. Some entomologists are recommending that farmers not use coated seed and do pest scouting to determine when and if they need to spray.

According to Angela Anderson, past Kansas Wildlife Federation president, explained that neonicotinoids do not need to be applied; pest scouting can determine whether a problem is serious and needs treating after planting. Also urban homeowners contribute to the problems because many nurseries use a neonic treatment on potted flowers and other landscape plants that travels as they are transplanted. According to Anderson, the National Wildlife Federation passed a resolution in 2017 to suspend all uses of neonicot-

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How About a Milpa Garden? (And, maybe some free seeds?)

By Joanna Will

Have you always wanted to plant a garden but feel intimidated by the level of planning, preparation and precision that seem to be required to ensure a successful harvest? Do you find rows of single species a little dull, or the process of planting individual seeds a bit cumbersome? Is constant weeding not your thing? Does a wilder space teaming with chaotic diversity, offering abundance in a spontaneous manner, sound more up your alley? How about planting all your seeds at once, in one giant mixture, and allowing the plants to come up where they will within the garden, and when they will, and enjoying a bountiful, especially delicious, nutritious harvest? If any of these notions resonate with you, perhaps a milpa garden should be in your immediate future.

Milpa, which translates roughly to maize field, cultivated field, small field or even just field depending on who you ask, is a cultivation system that has been practiced throughout Mesoamerica, and extensively by the Mayan people in the Yucatan peninsula region of Mexico, for millennia. The system traditionally includes cutting and burning a patch of forest, cultivating it for a few years with a diverse mix of crops including corn, beans, squash, chili peppers, leafy greens, root vegetables, and spices, and then allowing it to regenerate for up to 30 years. Yields are typically large, and the system does not rely on amendments or (historically) irrigation.

The process of rotating annual crops with secondary forest allows the milpa system to move “beyond successful food production and become the central axis of a resource management system that upgrades woodlands with species useful to humans, accelerates succession, and constructs an anthrosol (soil that has been heavily modified by human activities) of ever-increasing fertility,” according to the article, “The Maya milpa: fire and the legacy of living soil”, published in 2013 by the Ecological Society of America.

Additionally, milpa is considered a sociocultural construct, as it requires complex relationships between people who share a landscape, and with the crops and land. According to one study of the history of milpa farming, “the making

of milpa is the central, most sacred act, one which binds together the family, the community, the universe” and “forms the core institution of Indian society in Mesoamerica and its religious and social importance often appear to exceed its nutritional and economic importance.”

Also, the nutritional and economic importance are not insignificant. The milpa system has provided families and communities with food since its beginning, and continues to do so today, although climate change is threatening the ability for many milperos (milpa farmers) in the Yucatan, and presumably elsewhere, to continue to grow food in this manner. A story on milpa farming that ran on National Public Radio in February 2017 estimated that there are approximately 70,000 Yucatan milperos today. While many are struggling with increasingly unpredictable rainfall, some are adapting successfully and plan to continue to feed their families through milpa gardens, adapting as need be, indefinitely.

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Pumpkins, squash, corn, and okra are common products of a milpa garden. Photo from Gail Fuller, Emporia.

Sustainable Food and Farming News

U.S. Census 2020: Why It Counts

by Caryl Hale

The US national 10-year headcount is scheduled to officially begin on January 21, 2020. A decennial tradition that seems like a blip, some random questionnaire (or even worse, junk mail), receiving seemingly flippant responses has been the focus in the media on a federal and state level over the past year. So, what exactly is the census and when is it? Why is this census important? How is it used, and most importantly, what's in it for us?

By definition the census is the "Actual Enumeration" of a Constitutional requirement established by the Supreme Court and states the responsibility is on the Congress which delegates responsibility to the Department of Commerce and the Census Bureau. The sole purpose of the count is to collect a record of the exact number of people living in the United States by district during a census, rather than using a sampling or estimation. The outcome of this actual enumeration is to count everyone once, only once, and in the right place every 10 years.

Historically, the census has been a questionnaire that is a reflection of the concerns and needs of society. The questions on the census change according to those changing needs. Collecting information to accurately record the demographics of communities including accurate records of ethnicity has been an ongoing challenge and priority and has led to more expanded ethnicity listing options.

Census workers, better known as enu-

merators, will kick off their mission in January 2020 in the village of Toksook Bay, AK (as well as other parts of rural Alaska) while the ground is still frozen enough for door-to-door visits. Beginning in March of 2020, the Census will be in full force in all 50 states with self-response options being made available. Postcards with instructions are scheduled to be sent to 95 percent of homes around the country at this time to guide through the self-response options. Households that do not respond themselves by early April may start to receive visits from enumerators who are trained to conduct census interviews and collect responses using smartphones. (Note: The Census will NOT call or email respondents)

Data collected is then used to allocate tax dollars and our national elected representatives are apportioned by population. Each person counted provides a level of representation of the places where they live. The absence of a person in the census count costs the state in political representation and federal funding. When a census occurs, every state "redistricts" in order to maintain an equal number of citizens between districts. An accurate count equals a well-funded country with factual representation.

There are hard to count populations in Kansas including homeless populations, Native American reservations, and undocumented populations. Special procedures have been used to address an accurate record of these populations including hav-

ing onsite enumerators in locations of service providers to these hard to count populations. Also, all data are protected under Title 13 of the U.S. Code. Records are confidential for 72 years by law. All Census Bureau employees swear a lifetime oath to protect respondent information. The penalty for wrongful disclosure is up to 5 years imprisonment and/or a fine of \$250,000. The Census Bureau also will be conducting special counts for people living in group quarters (college, dormitories, prisons, nursing facilities).

What data is collected and how can people respond to the census?

Eleven questions are asked requesting information including name, relationship to householder, phone number, household tenure (own/rent), age, number of people in household, sex, usual place of residence, race, citizenship, and Hispanic origin.

The Census Bureau will offer the census form in four ways, online (using the internet or a smartphone), over the telephone (by calling the Census call center listed on the Census postcard), using a paper form, or by responding to a Census enumerator. Census forms will be available in 13 languages. Language guides in video and print will be available in 59 non-English languages as well as American Sign Language, braille, and large print.

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U.S. Census...

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Why is it important (National, State, Local)?

The data collected will be used to reset political power and federal funding through 2030 according to population counts. Each state's share of representatives in Congress, as well as votes in the Electoral College, will be determined for the next decade by these new population counts. Every state "redistricts" in order to maintain an equal number of citizens between districts. Each person represents a provides a level of representation of the places where they live. The absence of a person in the census count costs the state in political representation. An accurate count equals a well-funded country with factual representation.

In addition, the Census counts are used to distribute more than \$880 billion a year in federal funds for Medicare, schools and other public services, states receive. Every year in Kansas this federal money represents \$6 billion dollars distributed for state programs. This translates to \$2,082 per person per year.

These dollars help fund: education, school lunch programs, Head Start programs, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), State Children's Health Insurance Program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), transportation, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), access to broadband services in rural areas.

Republic County Economic Development director Luke Mahin's comments speak for economic development interests around rural Kansas, "Republic County Economic Development feels an accurate Census count is paramount to our organization in strategic planning efforts assisting individual cities with quality of life resources. The North Central Regional Planning Commission uses this data for community development grant work and has also been a leader in bringing high-speed internet to the NCK region decades ago. Every leveraged federal and state dollar matters with our limited resources."

What is different? (Changes in technology, the "Citizenship Question", and Governor Kelly's Complete Count Committee)

Concerns over the 2020 Census due to funding and technological changes have been in the news for the past few years. The Census Bureau had not received funding typical of the past years to account for inflation adjustment. To provide a more cost-effective option for administering the census, the Census Bureau has implemented the use of mobile technology, geospatial innovations, and internet self-response.

Cyber security has been a growing concern while using this technology especially without thorough testing and little to no increase in funding for 2018 to do such testing.

The current political climate surrounding immigration has also increased concerns of conducting an accurate count of undocumented populations. The "Citizenship Question" proposed to be added to the census for the 2020 Census, further complicates the public perception of the intent to collect such data.

Critics of the citizenship question argue its inclusion could cause a decline in response to the census, resulting in an undercount of minority communities and costing those locations congressional seats and the loss of federal and state funding. The question itself has had a history of cycling on and off the census questionnaire depending on various priorities of data collection at the time. The US Supreme Court is expected to issue a ruling on the question in July.

From a state perspective, Kansas Governor Laura Kelly has taken steps within the first 100 days of office to establish a committee tasked with increasing statewide awareness of the upcoming census. Through Executive Order, Governor Laura Kelly established the Kansas Complete Count Committee to ensure that every Kansan is represented in the 2020 Census.

"Next year, on April 1, I encourage Kansans to respond to the Census, and be sure to count everyone living in your household," Kelly said. "That includes children and newborn babies. Everyone needs to be counted. The

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Local Food and Farming News

Town Halls...

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The shift in climate, increasing weather extremes, and the need for a transition to renewable energy impact all of us, both urban and rural landscapes, communities, businesses, and people's health. Recent extreme weather events in Kansas (flooding after two years of severe drought and the wildfires of 2017) and the attention on renewable energy developments have many Kansans thinking about how their lives are affected.

"Kansans are responding to these changes whether we realize it or not," stated Mary Fund, KRC Executive Director. "Whether our responses are wise or not is often unclear. Only through tackling the issues in conversation with our neighbors will the path forward become clearer. We want people to come away from the meetings with better understanding of our common concerns and hopefully some common goals."

Each town hall meeting will feature an expert on our food system and farming, climate and energy issues, and rural/urban revitalization and how we come together to address these. Attendees will then have time to ask questions, respond to the panelists, and share their experiences or opinions about the issues addressed to help identify what is needed to advance opportunities in their communities and/or the region.

All Town Halls will include a complementary meal featuring locally sourced ingredients with the program

following. There is no cost to attend, but registration is required to ensure a meal as a limited number of meals are available at each meeting.

Registration can be found at www.kansasruralcenter.org/2019townhalls/. If you have special needs due to a disability, please contact Caryl Hale to arrange access. If you have other questions or want to register, For questions or to register contact Caryl Hale at chale@kansasruralcenter.org or call 866-579-5469 Ext. 702.

These forums are part of KRC's "Community Food Solutions for a Healthier Kansas" initiative and Integrated Voter Engagement project, which aims to improve economy, community, environment, and health in Kansas by strengthening civic engagement and public policy support that better incorporates Kansas farms and communities into the state's healthy food supply chain.

The town halls are also partially funded by Humanities Kansas, a non-profit cultural organization connecting with history, traditions, and ideas to strengthen civic life.

Contact Natalie Fullerton at nfullerton@kansasruralcenter.org, or Caryl Hale at chale@kansasruralcenter.org.

Office of Rural Prosperity Holding Town Halls

KRC is not the only one touring the state with Town Halls. See story on page 19 for schedule of the Governor's Office of Rural Prosperity Listening Tour of 12 towns.

Kansas Healthy Food Initiative Offers Funding for Food & Farm Businesses

By Natalie Fullerton

The Kansas Health Foundation along with K-State's Center for Engagement and Community Development (CECD), and Network Kansas and IFF (a community development financial institution) partnered in 2017 to help fund projects across Kansas that increase access to healthy food.

Fast forward to 2019 and 12 projects in 10 counties have received grants or loans. While several funded projects over the past year have included grocery stores, this is also an especially unique opportunity for farmers, farmers' markets or other business' offering locally produced food. Those who may need financial support to scale up or improve capacity to grow and supply nutritious food to communities can inquire about eligibility.

Funded project types and use of funds are flexible, however a major requirement is that projects/applicants expand fresh food offerings in neighborhoods and communities underserved by fresh food retail. The initiative welcomes innovative projects which could include but are not limited to the purchase of equipment for harvest or post-harvest handling, technology to develop communications, or infrastructure to hold, move, or process fruits and vegetables or other nutritious foods

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Local Food and Farming News

KHFL..

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The Center for Engagement and Community Development at KSU helps provide initial eligibility evaluation and technical assistance. This first step will help determine eligibility based on commitment to offer fresh, healthy foods, serving a low-resource and underserved area, applicant experience and whether the project proposed is a good fit for the community it will serve.

Currently, a few of the funded projects include a combination of grants and loans to support the purchase of coolers and expansion of fresh produce offerings at several grocery stores, and equipment and communications support to expand capacity and reach for other markets and businesses. Most projects also leverage other financing such as traditional bank loans, USDA funding or owner equity to ensure the project's success.

For anyone interested in applying, visit kansashealthyfood.org or contact CECD at 785-532-6868 to learn more about the Initiative and application process.

Southwest Kansas Voices: Immigrant Perspective Video Available Online

“Voices from Southwest Kansas: Immigrant Perspectives” an 18-minute video, is now available for viewing online. It was produced as part of a broader study of the Southwest Kansas’ Food and Farm System by the Kansas Rural Center (KRC).

Southwest Kansas is a sparsely populated, largely agricultural economy set in a semi- arid climate, fueled by water from the Ogallala Aquifer. It is also home to some of the country’s largest grain farms, livestock feedlots, dairies, swine confinement facilities, and beef processing plants. The region has a long history of immigrants from Mexico and other Central and South American countries, plus a number of other countries around the globe. (The Garden City School District in Finney County has reported up to 29 languages spoken in the school system.)

Over the past two years, KRC undertook exploration of the food system there in the belly of industrial farming, which exports so much of its production, to see what the overall local and regional food system looked like for consumers. The story of the food system could not be told without interviewing the immigrant community. To do so, KRC hired Hugo Perez-Trejo, a native Spanish speaking doctoral student from the University of Mexico.

Hugo is currently complet-

ing his Ph.D in Archeology from the National School of Anthropology and History (ENAH) in Mexico City. He is an archeologist and sociologist who has worked in human rights, immigration and gang intervention, and social work with formerly incarcerated youth in southern and central Mexico. He is skilled in interpretation and translation in Spanish, and is now living in Salina, Ks. with his family. Hugo conducted a survey and interviews in three SW Kansas Communities in the fall of 2018. The video is the product of selected interviews in an attempt to tell some of their stories.

The video is available on YouTube at https://youtu.be/HFBe7_q5ubQ . The link is also available on KRC’s website at: <https://kansasruralcenter.org/feedingswks/>.

Hugo is also available for a limited number of facilitated showings of the video to community groups in Kansas. Contact KRC at 866-579-5469 or e-mail Mary Fund at mfund@kansasruralcenter.org to make arrangements.



Looking Back with KRC... 40th Anniversary Reflections

In the fall of 2019, the Kansas Rural Center will celebrate its 40th anniversary. Over those four decades, we have sponsored a number of programs and projects all geared toward building a sustainable agriculture and food system to benefit our common rural/urban future. As time passed and funding sources changed, projects have disappeared, been absorbed elsewhere, or morphed into new efforts under other organizations or institutions. This year, Rural Papers will feature a few stories of these projects and profiles of some of the participants to mark progress over the long haul and add clarity to ongoing issues and challenges.

Below is a story from KRC's Clean Water Farms Project, which ran from 1995 through 2013, and one of the rancher participants. In the next 2 or 3 issues, we will cover KRC's Community Wind and Wind for Schools efforts (2007-2009), the first statewide Kansas Food Policy Council, (2005), and the 1980's Farm Crisis Farmer Advocate Network.

Clean Water Farms Project Overview

For well-over a decade, U.S. EPA 319 funds through the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) gave KRC the opportunity to offer farmers and ranchers financial assistance and outreach/education to adopt sustainable farming practices that protect water quality.

Between 1995-2012, KRC's Clean Water Farms Project provided \$590,000 in cost-share dollars to farmers and ranchers to implement practices to protect water quality and farmers -- long before some of those practices were commonly accepted.

In 2000, the project developed a whole farm planning tool, the River Friendly Farm Environmental Assessment (RFFP), as a way to help farmers and ranchers identify problems and needed management changes and how to implement changes on their farms. Over the course of the project, over 300 Kansas farmers completed whole farm plans.

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Whole Farm Planning Supports "Natural, Sustainable System"

When Barry Barber of Cowley County was getting started back in the mid-1990's, he was excited about what he terms "a natural, sustainable system." When KRC spoke with him in late 2018, he still had that excitement, and is looking to pass the operation and enterprise on to the next generation.

The operation has changed over the years. "We no longer raise cow-calf, but only finish calves on grass for our grass-fed beef direct-marketing business," Barber says. "Our multispecies perennial polyculture especially lends itself to finishing gourmet-quality grass-fed beef under a management-intensive grazing system. We run approximately 50 beeves through this program each year." Barber was one of the initial Clean Water Farm Project farmers to use cost-share to set up his management intensive grazing system. The below description of his enterprise is excerpted from his 2001 profile and updated in 2018.

As a new tenant in 1996, Barber began the conversion of cropland and cattle feeding lots to a grazing system. Barber recognized the potential for contamination of both groundwater and surface water in Timber Creek and a farm pond. The open feedlots and the intensive tillage of the cropland increased the chances of soil loss. Heavy deposits of manure in the lot as well as high fertilizer and pesticide use for corn production increased the potential to wash nutrients, bacteria and chemicals into local streams along with the soil.

Barber's objective was to develop a model for other small family farms and ranches. Specifically, he wanted to create a profitable and environmentally-friendly operation using management-intensive grazing and value-added marketing. The grazing system he started with consisted of planted

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Looking Back with KRC... 40th Anniversary Reflections

Whole Farm Planning...

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forages on 34 acres in addition to 90 acres of existing native pasture. An additional 80 acres of native grass was cooperatively grazed with a neighbor's herd during the 45-day breeding season.

Barber began by planting a mix of Eastern gamagrass, clover and lespedeza on 34 acres of cropland in May 1996. The planting date was late because of drought. The stand was thin at first with heavy weed pressure. Mowing in July and September at a height of 8 inches kept the pigweed down and allowed the grass to grow and thicken during establishment.

High-tensile fencing was installed to create paddock divisions in both the native pasture and the gamagrass. The fencing also limits access to Timber Creek. Watering points were created in each gamagrass paddock with a pressurized water line and pop-up risers.

In June 1997, Barber hayed the gamagrass, which yielded 1.5 tons per acre. He then grazed it with 18 cow-calf pairs for 30 days from mid-August. In April 1998, the gamagrass residue was burned, then hayed in July. Barber grazed cattle on the native grasses early in the season and moved to the gamagrass in mid-summer. Because he had planted the gamagrass, which is similar to corn, into continuous corn ground, he had a strong infestation of Johnson grass. By using management-intensive grazing techniques, he found the cattle ate the Johnson grass first, the legumes second, and then

the gamagrass. In each paddock, he moved the cattle when they started eating the gamagrass. He nearly eradicated the Johnson grass by the summer of 1999 using this technique.

In the spring of 1999, he overseeded birdsfoot trefoil into the gamagrass. That summer it yielded 4 tons of hay per acre and supported 11 cow-calf pairs and eight yearlings from August 20 to the end of the season.

Barber typically hayed the gamagrass in mid-June, leaving it at a height of 8 inches. Once the grass came back on, he began paddock grazing. Because they preferred the legumes, the cattle got primarily legumes with some gamagrass. He felt this was an especially useful system for finishing calves that he marketed in late October. The gamagrass hay was stored for winter feeding.

Barber has continued to make improvements for the watershed as well. In 1999, he planted a riparian forest buffer along Timber Creek with assistance from Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CCRP). Eleven acres were planted to 2,400 hardwood trees and native grasses. In 2017, he completed a timber-stand improvement project on this CCRP acreage with assistance from the Kansas Forest Service. "We have also planted several pollinator areas and have experimented with additional native forb and cover-crop plantings," Barber says.

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Clean Water Farms...

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Use of the tool assumed a systems approach to farming. Not one BMP at a time, or one issue at a time, but an approach that looked at the cropping system, the grazing and pasture and livestock operation, the wildlife habitat on the farm, the water resources-- as well as the human resources. Then it helped the farmer or landowner identify solutions or improvements, develop a plan and timeline, and linked the farmer to financial and technical resources to achieve that plan.

KRC administered 150 cost-share projects (capped at \$5,000 per farm) that between 2000-2010 leveraged over \$400,000 in state and federal cost share. Also, a KRC survey of program participants as the program came to an end, indicated that most participants adopted additional practices beyond their KRC funded project-- most often at their own expense.

Farmers (and KRC) contributed nearly \$3 million of their own money toward those and additional projects. Many of the farmers and ranchers KRC worked with, for one reason or another, did not participate in state or federal conservation programs - too much red tape, or they were simply not eligible for the program, or too much time spent waiting for approval.

During the project, outreach and education was a strong component. KRC conducted over 90 farm tours, 145 workshops, and over 260 presentations on farming and sustainable
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State Policy News

Power Struggles...

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Other. The State Water Plan (SWP) received an increase in State funding from just \$1.4 million in 2018 to \$4.5 million in 2020. There were certain health care cost increases for nursing homes, hospitals, disability waiting lists, home and community based services, medical provider rates and community mental health centers.

The transportation dilemma continues on. A Joint Task Force on Transportation, comprised of lawmakers and numerous stakeholders, met all last year and proposed legislation for this session. One bill that passed was greater authority for communities to build toll roads with State authorization. The car registration fee was increased for electric and hybrid vehicles.

T-WORKS is the existing 10-year transportation plan that has been slowed given the transfers of \$1 billion from the highway trust fund to the SGF. There are four new construction projects that were on T-WORKS list that will be completed. The development of the next 10-year plan is just starting. The Joint Task Force did not address the fundamentals of finance but nixed any plans to increase the fuels tax. Federal funding is critical but what infrastructure plan will come from Congress and when? In the 2020 budget, \$238.1 million was transferred from the Highway Fund to the State General Fund (SGF) with a proposal from the Governor this transfer end in 2022.

The Transition. Gubernatorial transitions are dramatic especially when

party control changes. The Governor is elected the first week of November and has to start building a staff and propose a State budget by the second week in January. There are hundreds of positions to fill as the previous department heads and key staff head for the door. The agenda for the first year of governing is usually set during the election.

Governor Laura Kelly was clear on her priorities of adequately funding public schools, expanding Medicaid, fixing the morale mess in many State agencies, opposing any new tax cuts (or increases), stabilizing the revenue picture and reducing the raid on the Highway Trust Fund. Given the Governor's extensive background legislating on the State budget, she warned it would take some time to reverse the damage and build a sustainable path forward.

The Governor did most of the hard lifting in this legislative session. Neither the Democratic or Republican legislative leadership produced their own legislative list of priorities. The Democrats just left the priorities to the Governor while the Republicans with a more conservative caucus were intent on confronting the new Governor.

The Democrats could have carved out their own priorities such as affordable housing or election law reform and used public pressure via weekly press events to leverage committee hearings and floor debates. Hundreds of filed bills were given no committee hearings. Most of the committees did not meet a third of the time and always took most Mondays and all Fridays off. The Speaker of the House and

President of the Senate hold dictatorial power over their selected committee chairpersons and the members placed on key committees.

Committee chairs now initiate their own committee procedural rules as to which bills get a hearing, testimony protocols and recording committee actions. Transparency is a nice campaign slogan but is lost under the Capitol dome.

As the session winds down, conference committees take more liberty to bundle related legislation into one bill without much if any public input. These conference committee reports are brought to the floor of the chamber with no provision for amendments, which was how the State budget was handled in the veto session. The House and Senate rules need a transparent vetting with special attention to the latitude given to Committee chairs.

Citizen engagement matters little if powerful leadership positions can limit debate, control the agenda and disallow open public debate. During the time when the Legislature is not in session, citizens need to keep up the pressure to end the power struggles, improve transparency and continue working toward State economic stability.

Contact Paul Johnson at pdjohnson@centurylink.net and Mary Fund at mfund@kansasruralcenter.org.

Looking Back with KRC... 40th Anniversary Reflections

Whole Farm Planning...

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In getting to this level of healthy land management, Barber today gives credit to the Kansas Rural Center. “The KRC River Friendly Farm Project, funding and technical assistance, was instrumental in forming the backbone components needed to carry out all aspects of our grass-finishing operation in a holistic manner,” Barber says

As Barber looks to the future, he recognizes that he and his wife, Nadine, are reaching retirement and are hoping to transition the farm to the next generation. Their children and some young farmers and ranchers in the area are interested in continuing the farm with a strong land-management ethic and grass-fed beef business.

For farmers who are looking to create a clean-water farm, Barber suggests starting with the following four steps:

1. Provide alternate water for livestock away from streams and rivers.
2. Put up strategic fencing to limit livestock access to surface water.
3. Develop alternative wintering areas for cattle away from streams and rivers.
4. Plant a riparian area along a stream or river.

Barber says, from a grazing standpoint, to “keep things simple and especially flexible by minimizing the use of permanent fencing and relying on temporary low-impedence electric fencing, polywire and tread-in posts. Utilize multiple species to ‘create a grazing buffet’ and reduce monoculture planting, plus incorporate cover crops for grazing.”

Clean Water Farms...

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farming practices reaching thousands of people.

In about 2008, the project began shifting to the state’s Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) framework established by KDHE, where attention focused more on individual Best Management Practices (BMP’s) as the primary means to achieving TMDL’s (total maximum daily load) standards in subwatersheds with specific problems and high ranked target areas. By 2012, administration cost-share for BMP’s shifted to individual WRAPS watersheds based on extensive watershed plans to meet TMDL’s and address water quality problems in high ranked problem areas.

KRC’s RFFP assessment tool is still available on KRC’s website at <http://www.kansasruralcenter.org/publications/RFFP.pdf>. It is a bit dated, but can still be helpful.

KRC currently does not have funding for a project supporting demonstrations or assistance with whole farm planning, but hundreds of farmers and ranchers benefitted from the project. Several other groups have taken on related work (i.e. Ks. Grazing Lands Coalition and Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams, and numerous farmer based soil health networks.)

This article and the CWFP Overview include content from KRC’s Clean Water Farms Project and was adapted and updated in 2018 by Jennifer Kongs & Mary Fund as part of the KRC’s 40th Anniversary reflections.

2020 Census ...

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data collected in the Census informs how the federal government distributes funds to our state – through 55 different federal programs. And it’s these funds that help to pay for roads, schools, hospitals, emergency services and much more.”

Contact Caryl Hale at chale@kansasruralcenter.org. A special thank you to Xan Wedel, Kansas State Data Center lead and Senior Research Data Engineer at KU’s Institute for Policy & Social Research for providing census resources and data contained in the article.



Hemp in Kansas: Reintroducing a Legacy Crop

by Kelly Rippel

Over the past year Kansas has seen a dramatic shift in policies allowing farmers to become active in the reintroduction of industrial hemp. This opportunity comes at a crucial time when farmers are needing to diversify commodities due to rising input costs and market volatility.

As other countries and states have demonstrated in past years, policy changes to allow hemp cultivation have many benefits for local economies as well as environmental and ecological improvements. As researchers are finding out, regenerative agriculture principles and best practices such as no-till and cover crops are also amplified with hemp. Through scientific analyses the plant is even known to remediate soil, eliminating contamination and can increase successive yields of corn and soybean after using it as a rotation crop.

While Kansas is one of the last states to move away from laws prohibiting the cultivation of hemp and manufacturing cannabis-derived products, the Sunflower State has many unique characteristics that will once again prove it to be fertile ground for numerous industries hemp impacts. Our state has a rich history in agriculture which includes hemp. According to a USDA ag report, Kansas ranked first in the nation for bushels per acre of hemp in 1863. Joining at least 41 states that have enacted hemp legislation after the 2014 federal Farm Bill, Governor Colyer signed the industrial hemp

research act in 2018 after being voted out of the Kansas legislature. Then in 2019 Governor Kelly enacted unanimously-passed commercial hemp legislation, expanding on the previous program under the department of agriculture.

As appointed volunteers who helped develop rules and regulations, the industrial hemp research advisory board is now approving licenses until the extended June 1 deadline. The 2020 application period will be opened up during November when the advisory board will begin reviewing applications for the next growing season. With the newly-enacted commercial hemp law, changes taking effect on July 1, 2019 will include lowered modification fees and elimination of certification restrictions for seed. To find out more about what new laws mean for farmers and more about the process of getting involved in this exciting, expanding industry visit the Kansas Department of Agriculture website:
> <https://agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/plant-protect-weed-control/industrial-hemp/industrial-hemp-applications>

As of May 10th, the state has approved 202 licenses including 150 growers, 15 distributors, 30 processors, and seven universities. Over 3,605 acres will be planted in the first year representing 61 counties. In comparison, Kentucky was in its third year of cultivating hemp before it reached similar acreage numbers.

The amount of data and evidence-based information farmers will have following the first year is expected to guide best practices for future years. Approved proposals include research areas such as monitoring amounts and costs of inputs including water, fertilizer, etc; evaluation of planting and harvesting methods; identifying ideal soil and cultivation environments in greenhouses versus outdoor growing; drying and distribution practices; processing equipment and calibration, among others.

To learn about how you can get involved locally and hemp research conducted in Kansas during the 1970s please contact Kelly Rippel, vice president and co-founder of Kansans for Hemp:
kelly.rippel@kansansforhemp.com.

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/>.

Sustainable Food and Farming News

Pollinators, Pesticides, and Drift...

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inoids in the United States, much as many European countries have done in order to protect pollinators, and hopes others will help them shine a spotlight on the issue.

Kansas beekeepers and specialty crop growers also report problems from pesticide drift from nearby commodity crop farms. Vegetables and fruits are especially susceptible to drift. Growers noted that not all farmers take a proactive approach to when to spray or follow the right conditions for spraying that would eliminate or reduce the off-site damage. They sometimes face belligerent neighbors who are impatient with smaller specialty crop producers. The education need for how and when to apply as well as alternatives to use, is huge, they argued.

KRC's Feeding Kansas report (2014) identified drift as a critical issue that specialty crop producers and grape growers and other fruit producers face as they try to scale up the specialty crop sector in Kansas.

Driftwatch.org is a website that offers a voluntary registry for specialty crop growers, organic farmers, beekeepers, or any other sensitive crop grower to use to alert pesticide applicators and neighbors about locations of their sensitive fields. But how many applicators especially individual farmers who apply their own pesticides, use the site is unknown.

“The good news is that agriculture can play a big role in reversing the decline of pollinators and in reducing pesticide reliance,” emphasized Will. “Integrated pest management, organic farming practices which use no pesticides, no till without or limited use of pesticides, and regenerative or sustainable agricultural practices including cover crops that attract beneficial insects or reduce the need for pesticides, are all on the rise as farmers change farming practices. “Those changes can be made for any of several purposes, but all have multiple benefits such as reducing or eliminating pesticide use, building soil health, and reducing input costs, all while protecting pollinators.

Research done by Claire LeCanne, while doing her graduate thesis, highlighted the benefits of using a more ecological approach and focusing on biodiversity on farms. LeCann,

who is now with the University of Minnesota Research and Extension, joined the workshop via remote Zoom connection. Looking at twenty farms through the Northern Great Plains, her work compared corn production on conventional and regenerative farms through insect diversity, soil properties or soil health, yields and profitability. The conventional farms used no cover crops, GMO seeds, insecticides and some tillage, while the regenerative farms used cover crops, no till practices, and no insecticides (although a couple of farms did use GMO seed). There was also variation among the regenerative farms in the number of cover crops in the mixes ranging from 2 species to 5 to 10 to 16 species.

Results can generally be summed up like this: regenerative systems with cover crops correlated with more diversity, more beneficial species, more invertebrates, better water infiltration, and microbial biomass. Conventional systems had less diversity, less abundance of invertebrates, and ten times more pests. The research highlighted the importance of soil health and how regenerative practices, especially a diverse cover crop mix, can improve soil health and thus reduce the need for treated seed, insecticides and purchased fertilizer.

Profits were also higher in the regenerative system. Yields were 29% lower than conventional system, but profits were 78% higher. This was largely driven by the higher costs of seed and fertilizer on the conventional farms (32% of gross income went to these inputs in the conventional fields versus 12% in regenerative fields.) There was also higher revenue on the regenerative fields partly as some had organic premiums or direct marketed the grain. (LeCanne's research was funded through the USDA SARE program and a report can be found at <https://projects.sare.org/project-reports/gnc16-227/>.

Other research described by Steve Swaffar, No Till on the Plains Executive Director, also pointed to how farmers applying soil health principles will use less chemicals, have more beneficial insects, and require lower inputs such as purchased fertilizers. NTOP's research, funded by a NCR SARE producer grant, and continues this summer, is looking at use of companion strips of multiple species of cover crops to attract predator insects to the sugar cane aphid that decimated grain sorghum production in Kansas a few years

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Sustainable Food and Farming News

Milpa Gardens...

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In the US, interest in milpa gardens has been growing in recent years. This is owed to increased focus on improving soil health and efforts to increase and expand access to healthy, nutritious locally-grown food to a much broader swath of the population, particularly in areas deemed to be food deserts and in communities that are otherwise underserved. A project in West Chester, Pennsylvania, offered community members the chance to learn about and participate in planting a milpa garden that included corn, beans, squash, tomato, tomatillo, quelites, cilantro, sunflowers and marigolds. The course and materials were presented in Spanish, as well as English, to better accommodate the Latino community in the area.

In Oklahoma, several regenerative farmers and ranchers partnered with the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma to create milpa gardens to provide fruits and vegetables to the Food Bank. According to Green Cover Seed out of Bladen, Nebraska, who helped sponsor the project, in 2017 6880 pounds, or about 5440 meals, of fresh fruits and vegetables were donated to the Food Bank from the gardens.

Green Cover Seed points out that in addition to providing food to the community, the gardens also add soil-building cover crops that improve soil and water health in the area and provide habitat for pollinators and other wildlife.

Kansans are getting into the milpa scene as well. Emporia farmers Gail Fuller and Lynnette Miller turned to their own version of milpa gardening when it became clear to Gail that “in the same way cover crops perform better in a polyculture, all crops need to grown this way.” Fuller and Miller plant mainly squash, corn, beans, cucumber, zucchini, pumpkin and okra, as well as flowers, some of which are edible, as well (sunflowers and marigolds, for example). Finding the produce come harvest time can be a challenge but is also half the fun. Including multiple generations in the picking makes the deal even sweeter.

Green Cover Seed has been growing milpa gardens at their plots every year recently, and according to Dale Strickler, a Green Cover Seed representative from Courtland, Ks.,

“The kids absolutely love going in and picking the stuff - it’s like a scavenger hunt in the jungle.” And, best of all, in his opinion is that “due to the diversity of root exudates, the plants tend to take on an excellent flavor from all the microbial activity.” Win-win.

To encourage the spread of milpa gardening while increasing soil and community health, Green Cover Seed has initiated a program which will provide an acre’s worth of milpa seed mix to any farmer who is interested, so long as the farmer agrees to donate a portion of the harvest to a local food bank. They also strongly encourage the farmers to host a field day to demonstrate the milpa garden, whether with a small group like 4-H or FFA, or open to the public. In addition to these requests, they would also love to have photos from the project shared with the.

If you’re interested in planting a milpa garden, there is still time this year. Contact Noah Young at Green Cover Seed at noah@greencoverseed.com, to request your free seeds and support your local food bank, or you can still purchase the seed so you can get them in the ground between now and mid-July!



Three generations harvesting from the milpa garden at Lynnette Miller and Gail Fuller’s farm near Emporia. Photo from Gail Fuller.

Sustainable Food and Farming News

Governor's Office of Rural Prosperity Tours

The State will kick off the “Office of Rural Prosperity Listening Tour” on June 17, visiting 12 rural communities across the state to gain citizen input. Lt. Governor Rogers will head up the community visits and listening sessions. Because the Lt. Governor strongly believes this initiative must be grass-roots driven, he and others will meet with local leaders to spend the day touring their communities and hearing about the tools they use and the initiatives they’ve created that allow them to thrive.

This will be followed by public listening sessions in the evening designed to give Kansans the opportunity to share their thoughts directly with the Lt. Governor during a 90-minute facilitated conversation. Dates and towns are: Nickerson June 17; Atchison, June 20; Colby, June 24; Phillipsburg, June 25; Winfield, July 8; Lindsborg, July 10; Garnett, July 22; Independence July 23; Ulysses, July 30; Concordia August 1; Sabetha August 5; and Dodge City August 7.

These sessions (most starting at 5:30 or 6 p.m.) will begin with brief opening remarks, and attendants will then be divided into small facilitated groups to answer three questions:

1. How do we define prosperity – what does it mean in your community?
2. What has the community done well to prosper?
3. What barriers or roadblocks stand in the way of future prosperity?

For more details on each session, including exact location of the listening sessions and registration details, visit www.ruralkanprosper.ks.gov.

Pollinators..

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ago. Many farmers abandoned growing sorghum rather than spray multiple times. But, thus far the companion strips show promise on producing predator insects, and are also improving soil health and lowering costs.

Andy Burr from the State Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) office covered the conservation practices and technical assistance that NRCS can help producers adopt or implement. “Pollinators were a part of the 2004 and 2008 farm bills and although not absolutely clear on the current USDA emphasis, there are many conservation practices that can protect or establish pollinator habitat on the farm and/or reduce pesticide use.” These include cover crops, conservation crop rotations, field borders, prescribed grazing and burning, pollinator habitat.

The question summing up the day – if regenerative farming practices with cover crops and soil health building practices are good for pollinators, good for the soil, reduce pesticide and fertilizer reliance, and are more profitable for farmers—why are more farmers not adopting them? And how do we get more farmers to make these changes? “That is the \$64,000 question,” answered NTOP’s Swaffar. Or perhaps we should call that the “\$64 million dollar question?”

Chemical and fertilizer companies and seed companies (the GMO companies that is) do not profit from regenerative farming systems if those systems reduce farmer reliance on them. They have powerful lobby groups. Farm policy does not yet provide enough incentives to support more food production

as opposed to commodity crops. But clearly, local and regional food production, and long term food security depends on these alternative farming practices taking greater hold of the farm and food sector. These practices are gaining traction and support.

The Pollinator, Pesticides and Drift workshop was funded by the Ceres Trust. Contact Joanna Will at jvoigt@kansasruralcenter.org for more information.

KRC Receives Humanities Kansas Grant

Humanities Kansas recently awarded \$4,000 to the Kansas Rural Center (KRC) in support of the “Kansas Future of Farming & Food Town Halls.” KRC will host a series of five town hall meetings across the state in July and August focused on engaging the public in conversations about the future of food and farming, climate and energy issues, and rural revitalization.

“Humanities Kansas supports projects that create dialogue about important issues,” said Julie Mulvihill, Humanities Kansas Executive Director. “This series of public events asks scholars, policy experts, producers, and community members think critically about where we’ve been and where we are going with food and farming in Kansas.”

Support for this project is provided through the Kansas Town Hall program, a partnership between Humanities Kansas and the Eisenhower Presidential Library & Museum that encourages citizens to discuss public policy issues facing Kansas today.

The KRC town halls are part of KRC’s “Community Food Solutions for a Healthier Kansas” initiative and Integrated Voter Engagement project.

KRC Welcomes New Board Members

By Caryl Hale

At its March 2nd, 2019 board meeting the Kansas Rural Center (KRC) welcomed four new board members at the Spring board meeting held in Salina, Kansas. The new members, include Luke Mahin, Courtland; Brenda Gutierrez, Salina; Angela Anderson, Allen; and Nina Isley, Bird City.

The following board members were also re-elected to the board: Barry Barber, Winfield; Laura Fortmeyer, Fairview; Jackie Keller, Topeka; Linda Pechin-Long, Beaumont; Zack Pistora, Linwood; and Karen Wiley, Baldwin City. All will serve three-year terms.

Officers elected for 2019 are: Stu Shafer, Oskaloosa, President; Jennifer Kongs, Vice-President; Jackie Keller, Topeka, Secretary; and Laura Fortmeyer, Fairview, Treasurer. Officers make up the Executive Committee which meets quarterly to provide oversight and direction to staff. Three additional board members were appointed as at large representatives to the Executive Committee: Zack Pistora, Troy Schroeder, and Wayne White.

KRC also thanked outgoing board members Spencer Wood, Manhattan, and Lisa French, Partridge, at the board meeting. "We extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to our "retiring" board members for their hard-work and dedication to the organization. Like most boards, ours is a volunteer board and we rely on these folks from all across the state and from all ends of the farm and food

community for information, direction and guidance as we develop goals and programs," stated Mary Fund, KRC Executive Director.

New board members will add new perspectives and energy, and include a watershed restoration coordinator, an economic development director, an organic farmer, and a community program director/advocate. Brief descriptions of each follow below.

Angela Anderson of rural Allen, Kansas is the Twin Lakes Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy Coordinator for the Morris County Conservation District. In that capacity, she works with producers to implement best management practices to address phosphorus and sediment issues in the Twin Lakes Watershed. She provides demonstration workshops and other educational opportunities for conservationists of all ages including the Twin Lakes Water Festival. She represents the WRAPS group in her capacity as Chair of the Neosho Regional Advisory Committee under the Kansas Water Authority. She presently is the Regent of the Emporia Chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution, Vice President of the USD #251 School Board, and is the Immediate Past-President & Advisor for the Kansas Wildlife Federation.

Luke Mahin is a native of Courtland, Kansas and a 2010 graduate of Fort Hays State University with a BA degree in Communication Studies. Luke is a partner with JenRus Freelance, a marketing firm based in Courtland.

JenRus Freelance was hired to direct the Republic County Economic Development office in 2010 and Luke has served as the RCED director since 2013. Luke is a board member on the North Central Kansas Food Council and an active participant in the Kansas PowerUp movement. Locally Luke serves on the Courtland Fun Day Committee, Art Council, Pride Club, and Fermentation Club. Professionally he serves on North Central Regional Planning Commission board of directors, North Central Kansas Food Council representative, Republic County Community Foundation board member, and North Central Kansas Rural Development Council president. Luke believes the KRC mission aligns with the work of Republic County Economic Development in diversifying our rural economy.

Nina Isely of Y Knot Farm in Bird City, along with her husband Jeter and family moved to Kansas after pursuing careers and moving around the country with their family from Nevada to Idaho to Chicago and Philadelphia. When Jeter retired in 2004, they bought a boat and spent three years sailing up and down the east coast, until they purchased a farm near Bird City in 2006 and sold the boat in 2008. They rebuilt the homestead, while the two youngest children pursued their equine passion. In their interest and drive for higher value crops, healthier eating, and wanting to produce higher quality foods, the Isleys transitioned the farm to organic starting in 2007.

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New Board ...

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In 2014, they built their first hoop house, followed by a second one in 2018. The surprising outcome of their organic specialty crop production is they have sold out year after year while seeking to satiate the local market. The Isleys want to provide hope to younger farmers that it is possible to make a smaller acreage farm work through diversification. They believe in good stewardship to the land and animals, and want to help represent KRC in the local foods movement in Northwest Kansas.

Brenda Gutierrez and her husband Michael live and work in Salina but most weekends they are at home in Downs in Osborne County where her family farms. Brenda and her two brothers are a third-generation farm family. Brenda works as the Salina Area United Way director and leads in the areas of program development, partner, and community relations. She has experience in both the non-profit and for-profit settings. Brenda draws on a strong background of marketing and public relations as she works to improve communication while increasing interest and participation, leadership and development. Brenda serves on several steering committees and leadership teams including North Central Kansas Food Council, Live Well Saline County, Salina Area Local Food Task Force, Salina Area Community Services Council, Salina's Summer Meals Coalition, Kansas Hunger Roundtable, Saline County Back to School Fair, and the Kansas Storytelling Festival.

KRC's Risk Management Workshops Offered Training to Growers

Over 100 specialty crop growers attended the six workshops held by KRC between November 2018 and March 2019. Training focused primarily on record keeping for business planning and managing financial risk. Additional workshops are on break until this coming fall and winter.

Two specialty crop farm tours this summer will showcase production and marketing approaches and challenges. Agricultural professionals from FSA, NRCS, and crop insurance agents are encouraged to attend to develop a better understanding of this underserved sector of agriculture. The first tour was June 24 in the Wichita area. Stay tuned to KRC's electronic notices or check our website for dates and details of the second tour later this summer.

This fall and winter the project will

also offer opportunities to ten growers to work with Finpak analysts to develop enterprise analysis for their operations. KRC will pay all the Finpak fees except for \$100 for up to ten specialty crop growers as Finpak analysts train additional Extension agents to work specifically with specialty crop growers on finances. This will take place after the growing season, but if you are interested or have questions, please contact Tom Buller in Lawrence at tombuller@ksu.edu or Rebecca McMahon in Wichita at Rmcmahon@ksu.edu. Or contact Mary Fund at KRC at mfund@kansasruralcenter.org.

This project is funded in partnership by USDA, Risk Management Agency, under award number RM18MEP-P522CO46/ 4500081830.



About twenty specialty crop growers and agricultural professionals attended the Community Based Systems workshop in Lawrence in late March to chart the challenges and solutions for growers as part of understanding how to manage risk in specialty crop production and marketing.

Sustainable Food and Farming News

Over 200 Groups Support Agribusiness Merger Moratorium Bill

In May, KRC joined a broad-based coalition of 219 farm, food, and rural groups in signing a letter to Congress endorsing food and agribusiness merger moratorium bills introduced by Senators Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Jon Tester (D-MT) and Rep. Mark Pocan (D-WI.)

The Food and Agribusiness Merger Moratorium and Anti-trust Review Act of 2019 would establish a moratorium on large agriculture food and beverage manufacturing and grocery retail mergers to allow time to assess the impact corporate consolidation has on farmers, workers, consumers, and communities. The legislation would also create processes for recommending improvements to antitrust enforcement.

According to the Organization for Competitive Markets, 82% of agriculture is controlled by four transnational corporations. OCM's executive director Joe Maxwell argues that with many recent mergers happening between foreign interests. This is not only an economic issue but a food security issue. National Farmers Union president stated, "lax antitrust enforcement has greatly reduced competition in the industries that supply and buy from farmers and ranchers, saddling them with higher input costs and fewer choices."

In the past thirty years, the top four firms in each industry have come to

control 85% of cattle slaughter, 71% of pork packing, 86% of corn processing, and 60% of the seed supply. As a result, farmers now only receive about 14 cents for every dollar spent at the grocery store. Net farm income has declined by half since 2013, and currently half of all farmers have negative on-farm income.

Agricultural Appropriations Debate Reaches Critical Point in Congress

Funding for federal farm and food programs for FY 2020, which starts October 1, is under discussion this summer in Congress. On June 7, the House Appropriations Committee passed a bill including agricultural appropriations which will now go to the full House for consideration. It is expected that the agricultural appropriations bill will be moved forward by the end of June. As of this writing, the Senate has yet to release any write ups for any of their FY 2020 spending bills including agriculture. But they are expected to start taking action soon.

The House bill strongly rejected the President's proposed cuts to overall spending for food and farm programs, and provides \$24.3 billion in discretionary funding. Importantly, the House bill has no cuts to conservation programs, increases funding for the local agriculture marketing program, increases funding for farming opportunities training and outreach (the beginning farmer programs), and increases funding for the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program.

It also dramatically increases funding for the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network that provides not only financial counseling, but family and individual assistance. Because of the importance of timing and a need for up to date information, you can read more details about program funding levels and current status of bills and action on the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition's website at:

<http://sustainableagriculture.net/blog/>.

There is a long road ahead to full House and Senate passage of agriculture's funding bills before the September 30 deadline. Contacting Kansas Congressional representatives, especially Kansas Senators, to urge support of conservation, local food marketing and beginning farmer programs, research and other programs will help advance or maintain sustainable agriculture interests. KRC will be sending out informational alerts all summer via our e-list. Contact Mary Fund to be added to the list.

Matching Grant Campaign Met

Thank you to everyone who donated to the matching grant campaign! KRC will receive a \$15,000 grant from the Nell Newman Foundation due to the support shown by our friends and contributors! The funds will be used for our Special Projects Fund, which helps us cover emerging issues or conduct additional educational events, or to supplement funds available for general support (i.e. printing, website upgrade, and workshops.)

We also want to thank Whole Foods, Wichita, for including KRC in a Percent Match Day in April! Funds for KRC that day went to meet our challenge grant.

Fullerton Appointed Assistant Director

Natalie Fullerton, KRC Program Director, currently coordinator of KRC's Community Food Solutions work, has been appointed Assistant Director at the Kansas Rural Center.

She will handle more administrative and grant writing tasks. Natalie has been with KRC since 2011. She has a Master's of Science degree in Public Horticulture Administration with a minor in Community & Regional Planning from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln where she conducted high tunnel research.



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WEALTH Day: The nexus of Water, Energy, Air, Land, Transportation and Health (WEALTH) state policy was the focus of the annual WEALTH Day at the State Capitol in March.

The day featured educational issue sessions, citizen lobbying time, and displays around the Rotunda. Above Lt. Governor Lynn Rodgers spoke to the crowd.

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