

## *Season's Greetings from the Kansas Rural Center*



## State Legislative Session-- and KRC's Policy Watch-- Set to Begin

The Kansas State Legislature convenes for the 2016 session on January 11 amid many challenges this election year. (See article page 4.) KRC will once more provide friends and supporters Policy Watch Legislative Weekly E-Updates-- a weekly e-mailed review and analysis of critical state policy discussions and decisions throughout the session.

Paul Johnson, KRC's policy analyst, will monitor state budget and tax issues, school finance, emerging water and resource legislation, judicial developments, and farm and food policy bills. Important hearing schedules, coverage of legislative discussions, and information on how to contact your senators and representatives will be posted.

The Weekly Policy Watch E-Updates are only available via e-mail. Contributors to KRC who provide us their e-mail address receive the Updates automatically. Updates are supported solely by contributions to KRC or subscriptions. To help support the Updates, go to KRC's website at [www.kansasruralcenter.org/donate/](http://www.kansasruralcenter.org/donate/). □

## Rural Papers

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Kansas Rural Center,  
4021 SW 10th St. #337  
Topeka Ks. 66604  
866-579-5469

E-Mail: [mfund@kansasruralcenter.org](mailto:mfund@kansasruralcenter.org)  
website: [www.kansasruralcenter.org](http://www.kansasruralcenter.org)  
Editor: Mary Fund

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

### KRC Staff

**Mary Fund**, Executive Director/Editor  
[mfund@kansasruralcenter.org](mailto:mfund@kansasruralcenter.org)

**Natalie Fullerton**, Program  
Director  
[nfullerton@kansasruralcenter.org](mailto:nfullerton@kansasruralcenter.org)

**Joanna Voigt**, Communications  
Coordinator  
[jvoigt@kansasruralcenter.org](mailto:jvoigt@kansasruralcenter.org)

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## Small Farmer Commentary

### On Paying Attention and Engaging

by Mary Fund

"Don't people read the news? Don't they pay attention?" asked someone at a meeting last fall focusing on the state legislature's decisions last session. Two legislators had just described the way legislative leaders had stifled open debate on critical issues in the 2015 session using parliamentary procedures and basic bullying tactics. The Veterans Day Purge where several legislators were booted from committees and replaced with representatives more in agreement with leadership was fresh on their minds. Where was the outrage beyond a few editorials? Is the public paying attention to the fraying of democracy? Do we care?

The newspaper bin at my local recycling trailer says no. It is nearly empty most days. This is in stark contrast to the early days of recycling when the newspaper bin was the first to overflow. Many have given up subscriptions to daily papers—the larger state papers most likely to carry in depth policy and political analysis. Online news availability is undoubtedly a part of that. But I question how much detailed news people read online, or how faithfully and thoroughly we read online news beyond a paragraph or two. The die-hard news junkies and policy wonks, yes, but most people no; at least I doubt they are reading too much on the more complicated issues.

However, I believe the reality of Kansas' budget and revenue crises coming home to roost on the backs of local school districts, highway projects, local hospitals and access to medical care, and public safety among other things, is so pervasive that people are waking up. They may not need the detailed analysis to understand that we

have serious problems—problems of our own making.

If the mood and energy at the KRC fall conference is any indication, people are paying attention. They care. They are worried. They want to act.

At KRC we are asking how do we build on that? We do so by having more conversations; asking more questions; challenging the elected officials, some of whom want our help and our voices.

While the conference crowd's attention focused on how to access or produce local food, and how to improve soil health, they also focused on how to engage at the community level on issues important to them. Sessions on the 2016 state political landscape, the state budget/revenue and school funding issues, and organizing skills were as well attended as practical sessions on raising winter squash or farm transitions.

"You have no choice, absolutely no choice, but to organize" was the conclusion of one of our keynote speakers. Whether you focus on setting up a local food policy council, a local group of farmers to share information about cover crops, a community group on school funding or medical care, we organize because it is how we build community, how we take care of each other in the face of great challenges.

Unfortunately, these issues must be dealt with in the context of the larger political issues of the state's budget and revenue crises. So those issues and their causes cannot be ignored—even though leadership is currently busy blaming Kansas' slow

Continued on page 3

## Small Farmer Commentary Contd.

economy on the bigger stage (“national and global economic turbulence” and “international recession”) –anything but the 2012 tax cuts that sent the state on its spiral nose dive. (Granted, all things happen within the larger global context and they are important, but why can leaders blame the poor and working classes for taking no responsibility for their lives, but it is apparently ok for our leaders to blame outside forces and take no responsibility for their decisions?)

At KRC, in 2016, we will once more provide you with analysis of the state political landscape through our Weekly Policy Watch Updates. We are planning a series of town hall/forum type educational meetings (similar to our regional summits last year but open to more than local food issues) to offer information on critical issues and opportunities for public discussion and debate. We will partner with other groups around the state to hold these, and support like efforts elsewhere by others. We will offer success stories of farmers adopting new or alternative practices and marketing strategies, and community organizing efforts. Above all, we will help you pay attention and raise your voice.

In 2016, we urge you to write at least one letter to your Congressman and/or your State representative or senator, attend a town hall meeting, write a letter to the editor, work for voter registration, or engage in a meeting or rally for something you believe in. May 2016 be a year for political engagement. □

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

## KRC Notes

### Good Luck to Departing Staff

In late November KRC said goodbye to staff members Dan Phelps and Cole Cottin and their family. Dan accepted an offer for his dream job that he could not refuse—Garden Supervisor at the Esalen Institute (<http://www.esalen.org/>) at Big Sur in his home state of California. Cole will also be working there as Farm and Garden Coordinator. Dan was our high tunnel and hoop house specialist for two years. Cole was advocacy coordinator the past three years for KRC’s Community Food Solutions Project, and primary author of our **Feeding Kansas Report** published December 2014. We owe them deep gratitude for their contributions while at KRC, and we will miss them. But we wish them luck in their new life in California, and hope to see them when they visit family and friends back in Kansas!

## Specialty Crop & High Tunnel News

### New KRC Tunnel to Table Project Launched

The Kansas Rural Center’s Tunnel to Table Project enters its second phase in 2016 with new funding (\$55,043) from the Kansas Department of Agriculture’s Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. In the new project, KRC will focus on the economics of successful high tunnel production in Kansas.

KRC’s project is one of six funded by KDA through the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program in Kansas. (See page 9.)

Dan Phelps guided the project through its first two years, reaching out to farmers across the state with a series of workshops on high tunnel production. He also completed **Growing Under Cover: A Guide to Polytunnel Options for Kansas Growers** (available at <http://kansasruralcenter.org/growing-under-cover/>).

Dan and family moved to California in November to pursue another opportunity. Tom Buller, a

fruit and vegetable producer from Lawrence has stepped in to continue the work. Tom, who has been growing specialty crops for ten years and has experience growing in high tunnels, started working part-time on the project in January.

This second phase of Tunnel to Table has several pieces. First, the project will focus upon the production practices of five successful growers from across the state of Kansas and work to develop crop enterprise budgets for the most commonly grown high tunnel crops. Previous work in other regions of the country have shown high tunnels to offer the potential of profits in the range of \$1-\$7 per square foot, but these numbers have not been tailored to the specific challenges of growing in Kansas.

Another piece of the project will be a workshop on constructing a moveable high tunnel, to be located on the campus at Johnson County Community College. *Continued on page 18*



## State Policy

### 2016- Kansas At the Crossroads

by Paul Johnson

The 2016 Kansas Legislature began on January 11 with many challenges facing the State. Kansas is virtually broke to pay for essential state services. Revenues continue to be adjusted downward. Further budget adjustments will be required for 2017.

The future of public schools is uncertain at best. The independence of the judiciary in Kansas is under attack by the conservatives that now control the executive and legislative branches. Social services struggle under severe budgetary cuts and thousands of working Kansans go without basic medical services.

Agricultural and environmental issues will be debated in regards to local food systems and water challenges, and corporate control. On top of all this, 2016 is an election year for all 125 Kansas House members and all 40 Kansas Senators. Election year politics will dominate the tone and depth of debate of the 2016 session.

**Revenues and Taxes.** Kansas' revenue crisis and the State's budget are inherently intertwined. Even with lowered revenue estimates by the

State's consensus revenue experts in November, monthly revenue receipts going forward in 2016 are uncertain at best.

The Legislative Budget committee was told in December that the State's ending balance by June 30 will be only \$5 million. A minimum ending balance should be \$100 million to pay all bills on time. By existing law which is waived by legislators, the ending balance should be 7.5% (\$450 million). The forecast for the 2017 State budget - that starts July 1, 2016 - is a \$170 million deficit.

After a series of state budget cuts caused by the 2009 recession and the 2011-13 budget cuts initiated by the Governor to fund income tax cuts, further arbitrary, across-the-board budget cuts will likely be proposed for 2017. After signing a sales tax increase and forcing schools and local governments to raise property taxes in 2015, the Governor has removed further tax changes off the table in an election year.

**School Finance.** Having underfunded and then scrapped the existing

public school funding formula, the 2015 Kansas Legislature passed a two year fixed block grant – 2016 & 2017 – for public schools, thus buying time to write a new funding formula. Considering the pending \$170 million budget deficit for 2017 and that public schools comprise 50% of the State budget, it is hard to believe that the block grant will be fully funded in 2017.

In 2015, the Kansas Legislature withheld \$54 million in funding intended to equalize funding for poorer school districts. A district court has ruled this reduction in funding was unconstitutional. The Kansas Supreme Court may well order the restoration of this funding during the 2016 legislative session.

A district court panel of judges has also ruled that Kansas has inadequately funded the previous public school funding formula by close to \$500 million. This case will take several months to be fully adjudicated.

While many conservatives would prefer vouchers to parents to select any public or private school, it is unlikely that enacting a new school funding formula will occur in this election year.

**Judiciary System.** The independence of the Kansas' judiciary is in jeopardy. The Governor and the Kansas Legislature passed law moving the administration of the 31 district courts from the Kansas Supreme Court to the individual districts. There is now a district court ruling declaring this law unconstitutional. *Contd. on page 5*

# State Policy News

## State Legislative Session...

Continued from page 4

Just before Christmas, the Kansas Supreme Court ruled unanimously against the Legislature's just passed law, declaring that the administration of district courts is constitutionally under the jurisdiction of the Kansas Supreme Court. The Kansas Legislature bundled their law with the entire budget of the Kansas court system so that if the new law was reversed by the court, the court system budget would be zeroed out thus shutting the courts down. This provision of negating the court's budget has been put on hold until March 15 to give the Legislature time to reconsider all options.

While the Governor was successful in passing a law that gives the Governor the authority to select new justices to the Kansas Court of Appeals with confirmation by the Kansas Senate, it will take a constitutional amendment to change the selection of Kansas Supreme Court justices. This proposal has passed the Kansas Senate but has not garnered the necessary 84 votes in the Kansas House.

This battle now turns to the ballot box since sitting Supreme Court and Court of Appeals justices must face votes of retention every four years. In 2016, five of the seven Supreme Court justices along with six of the fourteen Appeals Court justices will be on the ballot. Special interest money is flowing into Kansas to influence these retention elections. Separation of the executive/administrative, legislative, and judicial branches is at stake.

**Social Services.** Social services continue to struggle under severe budgetary restraints. The state mental hospital at Osawatomie has now lost federal accreditation due to staffing shortages and inadequate security measures for staff.

Having privatized the entire foster care system twenty years ago, foster care costs keep increasing and Kansas now has a record number of foster children - 6,600 - in state custody. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is the most important public assistance program for our poorest families. Since 2011, the number of clients has fallen from 38,963 to 13,592. Over 15,000 children have lost TANF; and Kansas has little idea what happened to these kids.

**Medicaid Expansion.** Conservatives have fought hard to block the expansion of Medicaid (Kan Care) thus denying 150,000 very low income, working Kansans from having basic medical care. One rural southeast Kansas hospital has already closed and many more are in severe financial straits. Federal taxes paid by Kansans are funding Medicaid expansion in 30 other states. Kansas is losing out on hundreds of millions of federal dollars that would provide several thousand new jobs. This Kan Care expansion could be self-funded through provider taxes and savings in mental health and prison population health costs.

**Water Vision Plan and Water Issues.** Definitive funding for the Governor's 50-year Water Vision has

been delayed. After hundreds of public meetings and input from 14 water basin regions, the plan was to have a Blue Ribbon Economic Task Force in place in the fall of 2015 to have final priorities and a funding plan for the 2016 session. Now the Task Force will deliberate in 2016 for the 2017 session.

Water rights disputes and how to establish an administrative process within the Kansas Department of Agriculture to settle these disputes before court action is instituted will be debated. Because of the ongoing budget deficits, the State Water Plan will likely not be funded with State budget funds but may rely solely on water and chemical fees thus reducing the funding from \$24 million to \$14 million.

**Noxious Weeds.** Senate Bill 134 was introduced in 2015 to fundamentally amend the Kansas Noxious Weed law. The bill will move the listing of noxious weeds from being in statute to a streamlined administrative rule and regulation process. This seemingly simple administrative change actually has big potential impacts on the emerging specialty crop sector of fruit and vegetable growers, as well as organic growers.

Twelve noxious weeds are now listed in statute. Legislation must be passed to list a new noxious weed to the state list. Under SB 134, the Kansas Secretary of Agriculture becomes a 'weed czar' by taking recommendations from a hand-picked noxious weed advisory committee.

Continued on page 7

# Feeding Kansas News

## Recommendations from Task Force Due to Legislature



The State's Local Food and Farm Task force, established by the 2014 Legislature, is due to present recommendations to the 2016 State Legislature. As this goes to press, the final recommendations were completed by year's end, as the task force ceases to exist December 31.

The Task Force was charged with preparing a local food and farm plan containing policy and funding recommendations for expanding and supporting local food systems. Assessing and overcoming obstacles necessary to increase locally grown food production was an objective for the task force. The plan is to include:

\*Identification of financial opportunities, technical support and training necessary for local and specialty crop production;

\*Identification of strategies and funding needs to make fresh and affordable locally grown foods more accessible;

\*Identification of existing local food infrastructures for processing, storing and distributing food and recommendations for potential expansion; and

\*Strategies for encouragement of farmers' markets, roadside markets and local grocery stores in unserved and underserved areas

Only 10% of Kansans meet the healthy diet goal of five servings of fruits and vegetables daily. USDA produce data shows that Kansans spend \$770 million a year on produce (\$260 per Kansan per year) but only \$32 million (4%) is grown in Kansas.

States such as Iowa, Michigan and North Carolina have developed detailed 'local food' plans that contribute not only to healthier diets but to local and state economies. The 2016 Kansas report will provide a beginning for a comprehensive plan with detailed recommendations for financial incentives, technical support, local food infrastructures and funding needs to make fresh and affordable locally grown foods more accessible.

Final meetings in December provided a preview of the draft recommendations which include creation of a position at the Kansas Department of Agriculture focused on current specialty crop growers and growing the industry and increasing local food production systems in Kansas, continued budget support for Kansas State University to fund specialty crop positions and research, and a recommendation to lower the state sales tax on food to 5.3%, which is simply a return to the sales tax before the recent increases.

Key to progress is the Task Force's recommendation to extend the Local Food and Farm Task Force through 2016-2017, in order to allow the committee time for development of more specific funding and financing strategies. SB 314 to extend the task force has been filed for consideration this session. □

# State Policy News

## State Legislative Session...

*Continued from page 5*

The KDA Secretary will also have special emergency powers to declare any plant a potential 'noxious weed', as will county commissions with the Secretary's approval. There is no definition of a 'noxious weed' in statute and no policy on using the safest, least toxic methods to control weeds first, and no definition of drift.

**Local Food and Farming.** A seven member 'local food and farm' task force - created by the 2015 Kansas Legislature - met throughout 2015 to develop recommendations for the 2016 session. The task force will provide a statewide analysis of promoting and expanding specialty crop agriculture such as produce and grapes. (See article page 6)

The task force 2016 Kansas report is a beginning to develop a comprehensive plan with detailed recommendations for financial incentives, technical support, local food infrastructures and funding needs to make fresh and affordable locally grown foods more accessible. The report will be presented by the task force to the Legislature in January.

**Other Issues.** There is no way to predict every important issue for the 2016 session. There are several hundred bills held over from the 2015 session that could be debated. Some high profile issues like guns on college campuses in Kansas will garner a lot of attention. The exclusion of colleges, municipal governments and libraries

from allowing concealed carry of guns in buildings without metal detectors expires on July 1, 2017 so legislation will be proposed to enact a different policy. The prisons in Kansas - that now have 9,463 beds - are over capacity by at least 100. Projections are that in a few years the over capacity will be 1,000. There will be a debate over paying counties to house these prisoners or building a new wing at the prison in El Dorado.

Many conservatives are still opposed to the EPA's Clean Power Plan rule that will reduce greenhouse gases by 30% through burning less coal, relying more on natural gas, expanding the use of renewable energy such as wind power and improving the use of electricity through conservation and efficiency. Lawsuits will continue to block this plan.

**2016 Elections.** 2016 is an election year with all members and seats up for election. In 2014, 248 candidates for the Kansas House spent \$3.6 million on their campaigns and the average cost for the winners was \$22,080. Political action committees (PAC) and out-of-state organizations spent an additional \$1.9 million. In 2012, an average Kansas Senator spent \$94,000 to win their seat and this does not include the out-of-state and PAC money. In the 2014 Kansas House campaigns, PAC's and out-of-state organizations spent over 50% of the campaign costs and one has to wonder what they want for their contributions?

Kansas is truly at a crossroads. The

quality of life in Kansas is at stake. The solid, stable sensible Kansas revenue policy of balancing property, sales and income taxes has been broken as Kansas lowers and eliminates the income tax for the wealthiest Kansans while working Kansans struggle with the nation's second highest sales tax on groceries . One in six Kansas households are food insecure.

The existing tax plan severely limits any restoration of budget cuts to vital state services, while keeping Kansas on the path to completely eliminating the income tax for individuals and then corporations. The Mississippi model of greater income disparity, failing public schools, second class universities, shattered social services, inadequate public safety and deteriorating highways is the path that Kansas is on with the Governor's tax experiment.

Will Kansans vote based on their displeasure and dismay at the 2015 Session and behavior of their elected leaders? Will another vision begin to take shape? 2016 is your electoral chance to support candidates with that alternative vision. Let the games begin. *Paul Johnson can be reached at pdjohnson@centurylink.net*

# Organic Farming News

## Organic Grain Production Opportunities & Challenges For High Plains Farmers

by Ed Reznicek



About 35 Kansas Organic Producers (KOP) members and guests from western Kansas and Nebraska and eastern Colorado met, along with KOP staff, on December 8, 2015 in Oakley, Kansas to discuss organic grain production and marketing activities.

Kansas Organic Producers is a marketing/bargaining cooperative representing member farmers since 1992 in Kansas, Nebraska and bordering states in the marketing of a wide range of organic grains and forages for both feed and food use. The focus of this meeting was on improving the quantity and quality of organic wheat production to meet a growing demand.

Soil health, long a primary concern for organic farmers, was a focus for this meeting. Dale Strickler, prominent Kansas speaker and practitioner on cover crops, addressed the membership on strategies and benefits for integrating cover crops into organic crop and livestock systems on the high plains.

KOP farmer members Lennis Koehn, David Unruh and Dennis Demmel in a panel presentation discussed fertility practices they use on their farms, including crop rotation, systematic applications of conditioned livestock manure and diversification with field peas. Nebraska KOP members and grain equipment contractors, Kent and Kurt Brauer, spoke about grain handling systems and management practices to prevent insect infestations and maintain grain quality.

Rich Little, University of Nebraska at Lincoln, spoke about research on wheat breeding for organic cropping systems. KOP staff presented marketing updates on wheat, millet, forages and fall harvested grains.

The demand growth for organic grain in the U.S. has dramatically outstripped increases in production. The major organic food and feed grains – wheat, corn and soybeans – are in short supply, stimulating

steady increases in imports. The primary sources for organic grain exports into the U.S. are China, India, southeast Europe and Argentina.

The organic feed grain demand in the U.S. is driven by growth in the organic poultry and dairy sectors. This increase in demand and the growth of organic grain imports presents both challenges and opportunities for central plains grain farmers.

Strong organic grain demand and price premiums present production and marketing opportunities for U.S. farmers. On the other hand, the growing flow of organic grain imports into the U.S. presents potential marketing and pricing challenges for U.S. organic farmers. For U.S. farmers to meet the challenges of increasing imports, the key elements are to increase organic grain production in the U.S. and coordinate marketing through cooperative efforts.

*Continued on page 9*

## Organic High Plains Meeting...

Continued from page 8

KOP staff report an increasing number of calls from farmers asking about organic production practices, certification requirements and marketing avenues. This interest appears to be driven by several factors: growing concern about soil quality, currently low conventional grain prices; the high cost of conventional farming inputs, increasing weed resistance to Roundup herbicide, and

**“...to meet the challenges of increasing imports, the key elements are to increase organic grain production in the U.S. and coordinate marketing through cooperative efforts.”**

farmers' desire to achieve greater control and autonomy with their operations.

The High Plains organic meeting ended with discussion on cooperative action to better address both the production and marketing needs of organic farmers. KOP plans similar meetings this winter in the central and eastern parts of its Kansas/Nebraska membership region. For more information contact Ed Reznicek, KOP General Manager, amerugi@jbntelco.com or 785-939-2032. □

# Specialty Crops & Tunnel to Table

## Specialty Crop Grants Awarded in Kansas

The Kansas Department of Agriculture has been awarded \$319,419.76 through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program designed to increase opportunities for specialty crops. According to the USDA, specialty crops are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture. KDA will redirect the grant award resources to projects throughout the state to help grow the specialty crop sector in Kansas.

The following is a list of Kansas projects that will be funded by the Specialty Crop Block Grant:

- Developing Enterprise Budgets for Alternative Crops, Seward County Community College/Area Technical School, \$62,097 - KDA will partner with SCCC/ATS to develop eight customizable templates for specialty crop enterprise budgets.

- Specialty Crop Incubator Program, Seward County Community College/Area Technical School, \$47,200 - KDA will partner with SCCC/ATS to provide a specialty crop incubator program which helps small specialty crop businesses enter the industry. Conferences will also be offered focusing on business management and specialty crop knowledge, while mini-workshops will be held allowing the community to pick produce at the site to increase fruit and vegetable consumption.

- Expanding Vegetable Production and Distribution in Western Kansas, Western Prairie Resource & Conservation District, \$51,000 - Along with the High Plains Food Coop, efforts will be made to expand

fruit and vegetable production and distribution in western Kansas.

- Savor the Season Campaign, Kansas Department of Agriculture, \$16,100 - KDA will develop and distribute recipe cards showcasing and promoting at least 40 different specialty crops. Recipe cards include nutrition information, and facts promoting the specialty crop industry in Kansas.

- Growing Communities: Modeling School and Community Collaborations for Specialty Crops, Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education (KACEE), \$63,985 - KDA will partner with KACEE to create a model of community collaboration that integrates gardening and specialty crops into school, afterschool, and summer settings. Partnerships will be recognized and implemented in an effort to provide youth and students with viable year-round solutions for specialty crops.

- Tunnel to Table: Increasing Kansas Specialty Crop Production and Profitability with High Tunnels, Kansas Rural Center, \$55,043 - KRC will extend upon a previous Tunnel to Table project by providing production and profitability information for specialty crops grown in high tunnels. (See page 3 for more).

For more information, visit KDA's Specialty Crop Block Grant webpage at <http://agriculture.ks.gov/ksda-services/grants-and-cost-share-programs/specialty-crop-block-grant>. □

# 2015 KRC Conference

## Building Communities- Soils and Human- Focus of Conference

by Mary Fund

How soil health translates into healthy food and healthy people and how working for social change translates into a healthy society were the focus of the KRC fall conference Nov. 13-14 in Manhattan, Ks. 220 participants in the two-day event listened, shared information, and went home energized to make a difference on their farms and in their communities.

**Healthy Soils-Healthy People.** Day one focused on soil health- the relationships between organic, no till and cover crops in building healthy soil. “Healthy soil = healthy food = healthy people,” stated keynoter Jeff Moyer, Rodale Institute, the primary organic farming research institution in the U.S. This saying was the early mantra of Rodale’s founder, J.I. Rodale back in the 1940’s.

“It said nothing about organic farming,” noted Moyer. But it was evidence of Rodale’s acknowledgement and understanding that soil is critical to all civilizations. Historically, Moyer noted, we know that civilizations that did not take care of their soil were destroyed.

If we understand that our goal in agriculture is to produce healthy people, we ask very different questions about how we farm and ultimately how we treat the soil, Moyer explained.

Dr. Bianca Moebius-Clune, the director of USDA-NRCS’s Soil Health Division, also spoke to how improving soil is the key to solving water quantity and quality problems plus feeding a growing global population. "Soil health is at the core. If we can manage for healthy soils, we can solve a lot of problems," she stated.

Klaas Martens, New York organic farmer and advocate, stated in his presentation that he has learned that every problem he has on his farm is related to soil health. “All things we do in a field—even years in advance, effect what grows,” he stated. “We need to look at farming as a system. Adding a good practice to an unsound system will not change anything,” Martens told the crowd.

Moyer and Martens both stressed that their messages about how to manage resources for better soil health applied to both conventional and organic systems. Moyer,



*Conference speakers for day one, Jeff Moyer, Rodale Institute,(2nd from left) Bianca Moebius-Clune, USDA NRCS Soil Health Division Chief, and Klaas Martens, New York organic farmer, joined Mary Fund (far left) KRC Executive Director.*

however, made it clear that “Organic farming is modern state of the art, science based agriculture. It is not ‘40 acres and a mule’ farming. We use state of the art biology, agricultural engineering and seed breeding— just like conventional ag.” But organic manages the resources differently

“Whether conventional or organic, you can change the soil health,” explained Moyer.. “Organic makes it easier as you are not fighting the unintended consequences of sulfate fertilizers and herbicides. You are replacing chemistry and biotechnology with biology.”

Chemistry is a clean science, he explained. A chemical reaction is the same today, tomorrow and at different locations. Roundup, for instance, reacts the same wherever it is used. But biology is messy. It is dynamic. It is complicated.

5,000 to 20,000 pounds of microbial life live underneath the soil surface. If we accept that soil is living and dynamic, we understand that everything we do to it impacts its health. “Just as we feed our livestock above ground, we must feed the soil,” he explained. ‘If you didn’t feed your livestock, the authorities would come, or the SPCA or Peta,’ he joked. But if you don’t feed the soil no one comes. “

*Continued on page 11*

# 2015 Conference and Year in Review



David Hunt, keynote speaker on day two of the conference, challenged participants to become engaged in issues and community organizing.



A packed crowd listened to the farmer panel on soil health and challenges for working farms. Farmers represented a range of operations and regions from central Nebraska to northwest, northeast, and southeast Kansas, and included organic and conventional no till farms.

## Conference...

**Continued from page 10**

"There is no easier way to improve soil health than cover crops," Moyer stated. "No matter what your system—conventional or organic—adding cover crops makes it look like magic."

"The cover crop is the #1 crop we farm on our organic farm," he said. "If you get the cover crop right on your farm, you'll grow a cash crop. If you get the cover crop wrong, you'll have trouble with the cash crop." Cover crops often don't work because they were planted too late or the timing was wrong, or they were planted at half the recommended seeding rate. "You can't expect to get all the benefits if you plant late or half the rate." Cover crops must be treated not as an after thought but as the primary crop or at least as important as the cash crop.

Martens agreed and discussed the need for more diversity. Martens rotates crops for the biology of the soil not just the crops, pointing to examples within his own operation where he thought he had a great rotation, but still had weed or pest problems. Only when he added more diversity to his rotation with cover crops like yellow mustard and buckwheat, which fed soil biology and created healthier conditions, did he solve his problems.

He also focused on how different crops impact soil, introducing decades old concepts. "Every crop should be

planted after its most suitable predecessor, so that the enhanced vigor of the crop alone checks the weeds and pests." Healthy soil can help suppress disease and weeds.

"You don't need a better pesticide, but you do need to know why the plants are susceptible. Whatever is the best adapted species on that field will have biological advantage over the other species. It doesn't mean there won't be other species, but when everything is competition, if we can make our crop be the best suited species for that field we just planted, we will have an advantage over weeds."

Martens also stressed the value of observation and local research. What works on his farm in New York, or Moyer's farm in Pennsylvania, or even from field to field on the same farm, may not work the same elsewhere. "Soil can teach us a tremendous amount—if we just observe it."

All of the soil health speakers noted that tillage is problematic. Soil degradation – erosion and compaction—occurs from too much tillage.

"How do we get out of tillage addiction?" asked Dr. Moebius-Clune. "You try to get off tillage, and soils crust or pond. And you need to till to fix that." She says the solution is found within the four basic principles of soil health: minimize soil disturbance, maximize crop diversity, keep soil covered, and maximize live roots. It will be a slow process to improve soils. *Continued on page 16*

# Women in Farming

## Farmer Profile:

### Organic Farming Helps This Farmer Think Outside the Box

by Jean Stramel

Whether she is cultivating her corn, doing administrative tasks for her Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA) chapter, or serving on the Farm Service Agency County Committee, there is no doubt Jackie Keller is fully devoted to advocating for farmers and helping create a healthier food system. She is one of the few women in Kansas who is managing and doing the primary labor raising row crops.

Jackie is working the farm her parents bought in 1969 where they moved to from the City of Topeka when she was 11 years old. Jackie loved to ride, jump and show horses until she was in her early thirties. Then a light bulb went off in her head while she was studying organic agriculture in Cuba while earning her MA in International Relations at San Francisco State.

"Why don't I move back to Kansas and transition mom and dad's farm to organic?" She gave notice to her boss at the San Francisco Department of Environment where she worked on the Pesticide Reduction Program, handed in her thesis on sustainable agriculture, and got on the plane.

When she was ready to take over the farm and suggested organics, it took some convincing. Ed Reznicek, organic farmer who worked at the Kansas Rural Center (KRC) at the time, came out and walked the farm with her, which convinced her mother that there was help and other people

doing it. Jackie's sister also pointed out that the farm was too small to make much from just renting it out, and an organic premium price would be helpful; plus using organic farming methods fit Jackie's philosophy of stewardship better than conventional farming.

Jackie's farm is 200 acres of certified organic land, which includes 112 of cropland, filter strips along the creek, some timber and the farmstead. The farm is in Shawnee County west of Topeka along Mission Creek. Jackie raises corn, soybeans, wheat, milo, alfalfa and red clover hay. In previous years, part of her acreage was rented to a Shorthorn cattleman, who was pleased with the gain from the red clover pasture. "There were 60 acres of row crops on either side this year. If they get out, they can do \$2000 worth of damage real quick." She decided it was "OK to take a break this year".

Jackie participated in the KRC Clean Water Farms program in 2002, completing the River Friendly Farms whole farm plan and assessment notebook. By 2004, half her acres were certified, then the whole farm in 2005. Since 2003, she has been the administrator for the Eastern Kansas Chapter #2 of the Organic Crop Improvement Organization (OCIA), a certifying agency with about 30 local members. She finds it provides networking, mentorship and support.

Starting out in farming was



Jackie Keller owns and operates a 200 acre certified organic farm near Topeka, Ks. and is the administrator for the Eastern Kansas Chapter of the Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA) - certification agency offering farmers information and assistance to for organic certification.

frustrating. "How many people are going to let some first timer cultivate for them? You just have to get out there and do it. I was lucky to have a farmer show me how to plant rows – that was critical information. We're farming fields here that aren't square, you have to back up, back up – that's where the grass buffer is helpful – for turning around instead of end rows."

Jackie feels organic farming is a mindset. "I used to see just the weeds. But now I see the cup as half full – look at all those beans! I had to gradually learn that. I remember the inspector being here in 2005. He said, "Jackie the worst thing about all those weeds is your pride. Weeds are just part of the deal". Contd. on page 13

# Women in Farming News

**Continued from page 12**

Jackie occasionally tries a new crop, last year it was triticale. About 90% of her crops are marketed through the Kansas Organic Producers Marketing Cooperative, but she makes a few deals on her own. She sells lesser quality grains to pork producer near Manhattan who sells to Organic Valley. "He likes it because it's cheaper, I like it because I get rid of it and still get a premium". This also fulfills one of her NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program "enhancement" requirements, in that she is selling to a local (within 400 miles) market.

She sold corn in 2014 to an organic egg facility near Lyons, Kansas and ended up buying 2 semi loads of certified organic chicken manure from them, which was applied as raw manure at 1 ton/acre with her manure spreader, purchased used. In 2014, she spread pelletized chicken litter at a target rate of 1 ton/acre, which took three passes since the rented fertilizer buggy had a maximum application rate of 700 pounds. Soil tests show Zinc and Boron levels have come up a bit, something that was needed. With recent drought conditions, it is hard to say what results these fertility enhancements have produced. Crop yields are not optimal, but the ears look good this year. Organic matter (OM), runs 2.5 to 3, which she is told is typical of her area but would really like to see it much higher.

Crop pests are not a big problem, but she has spread "semaspore" bait around the barnyard as grasshoppers have been bad the last few years. She has also tried 20% acidic vinegar on

bindweed. The sun has to hit the plants after application, and multiple applications are usually needed. She buys the vinegar in 55 gallon drums.

Jackie finds that the crop rotation required in an organic cropping system is the best way to control pests. Because of the red clover in her rotation, it varies how many years of row crops are grown, rarely up to three before re-seeding the clover. She is ready to try alfalfa again after a long break, "it's often hard to deal with hay, but it's the best to build soil, address poor drainage and feed the newly arrived bees!"

Jackie participates in USDA conservation programs through the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Through USDA NRCS's EQIP she secured watering systems for livestock and an animal walkway between two fields to facilitate summer grazing for Johnson grass control.

The Conservation Stewardship Program "enhancements" include interseeding red clover into the pastures, seeding pollinator strips, incorporating manure pellets within 24 hours of applying, plant tissue tests, and extending a field border of native grasses, which was originally a CRP filter strip along the creek. Another enhancement is "Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for Organic farming" which is basically crop scouting and record keeping of application type and timing.

Jackie would like to see more support from Extension and Conservation Districts for organics. She is currently taking the Shawnee County Master Gardening class and

feels there is a need for more education regarding organic certification and inputs. After attending a Soil Health workshop, someone asked if she was going to quit tilling so much now, as tillage is often touted as the bane of organic farming. Her reaction is that she would like to have access to a No-Till roller crimper to rent like a grass seed drill program through the Conservation Districts, then she could try Organic No-Till.

Maybe her "out of the box" ideas will trickle down and become mainstream one day. In the meantime, Jackie will get on her tractor and keep planting the seeds of organic agriculture, both on her farm and in the minds of the people she meets with each day. □

*Jean Stramel is a free lance writer, retired from USDA NRCS. She interviewed women farmers for KRC's Women in Farming Project in 2015. )*

**Join KRC for our  
Monthly Grazing  
Teleconference Call  
on the second Monday  
of every month  
7:30 to 9 p.m.**

Hosted by Dale Kirkham, and joined by KSU's Gary Kilgore and Keith Harmoney pm grazing system management. Join the toll-free call by entering 1-877-304-5632 and enter conference room number: 300 346 2424#

For more information, contact Dale Kirkham at 620-344-0202

## KRC Beekeepers Still Learning, Still Keeping Bees

by Joanna Voigt

During the spring of 2014, KRC launched eight new beekeepers in Douglas County, Kansas, as part of a year-long Pollinator Project made possible by a grant from the Elizabeth Schultz Environmental Fund. KRC kept in touch with the beekeepers during the first year, and recently checked in again to see how they were faring after their second honey season.

The new beekeepers were chosen from a pool of more than 100 applicants, and included an organic farmer, a firefighter, an electrician, a homemaker and avid gardener, an accountant, a teacher, a sheriff's deputy, and a high school student. Their locations ranged from rural Baldwin City to Lawrence, Bloomington, North Lawrence, and Eudora.

Each of the new beekeepers received beekeeping supplies and equipment, including an unassembled hive and frames; beeswax foundation; a beekeeping suit, helmet, veil, and gloves; a smoker and hive tool; and the promise of a package of bees and a queen, slated for arrival in late-April 2014. KRC arranged for nine hours of beginning beekeeping training for each new beekeeper prior to the arrival of their bees, and paired each new beekeeper with a mentor from the local beekeeping community to help guide them through their first year of beekeeping.

Scott Seratte, a Lawrence firefighter, reported that his bees are doing well. He added a second hive in 2015 and plans to add a third in 2016. He harvested honey from both of his hives this past summer. Seratte said that harvesting honey was very rewarding

and a definite highlight of being a beekeeper. He says that keeping bees has been very enjoyable overall, with no negatives to report, and that he plans to continue to keep bees for the foreseeable future.

Sue McGee is a homemaker and an avid gardener who lives near Eudora. She reports that her bees are flourishing in their new habitat which includes a large garden and an orchard. McGee harvested 20 pounds of honey the first year and said, "The experience of harvesting honey was amazing, as was the quality of the honey the bees produced." Her first hive swarmed but she captured and re-housed them, also adding a new hive from a package of bees she purchased in Horton, Kansas. McGee said, "I love the hum of the hive when I go by and to just examine them and see how they're doing."

Jess Pierson and Jen Humphrey, who own and operate the certified organic Red Tractor Farm near Lawrence, have two colonies of bees. They added their second hive when they captured a

swarm from the original colony and housed it in a spare hive body they had on hand. They are planning to install a "Sun Hive" in 2016 as part of a sculpture and sustainability project for a University of Kansas course this spring. Sun Hives are an "intermediate form between a fixed-comb hive and one with a movable comb system," designed by German beekeeper and sculptor Guenther Mancke. The design is based on wild bee nests, which tend to be egg-shaped, and the hives are meant to be hung or mounted off the ground in a manner that mimics hive placement of wild colonies.

Brett LaRue, a Douglas County sheriff's deputy, keeps his bees on land near Baldwin City that he and his wife own. They plan to build a house on their land and live in a manner that increases their connection to, reliance on, and care of the natural environment.

*Continued on page 14*



*Jess Pierson introduced new bees to a hive on her farm near Lawrence.*

# Women in Farming News

## Beekeeping Update...

*Continued from page 14*

LaRue purchased a second hive at the same time that he received the bees through the KRC project in 2014 and harvested approximately 10 gallons of honey that first year. LaRue had the tough experience of losing both hives the first winter but he regrouped, ordered new bees, and harvested 12 gallons of honey the second year. The LaRues plan to purchase two more hives in 2016.

LaRue said that discovering the dead hives was pretty discouraging. "There were a few days of total disappointment, but we realized it was a good learning experience and we turned it into a positive."

Leslie Grey was a sophomore in high school at the time she received her bees. She was at an out-of-town track meet on the day the package bees arrived, as was her mentor, so Grey's dad installed the bees with help from KRC staff.

The Greys lost the original colony the first summer, but did not give up. Instead they rethought their management strategy, including moving the hive body to higher ground in preparation for installing a second package of bees in the spring of 2015.

The new bees have a much different personality than the original colony, according to Grey, who says she could tell right away that they were going to fare better than the first colony. The second colony built up quickly and Grey was able to harvest honey this past summer. She really enjoyed harvesting honey. Grey has a neighbor who is an avid beekeeper, who arranged for a community honey harvest and included Grey. Grey had a

proclivity for uncapping honeycomb with the hot knife and ended up doing that part of the harvest for all the beekeepers who were harvesting honey that day. Grey noted that the honey from her hive was a lot darker than the honey from the other beekeepers' hives and had a woodsy taste.

**"A 'hive on every farm'... widespread, small-scale, thoughtful management of honeybee colonies has a role to play in sustaining (bee) populations."**

Matthew Stephens, a Lawrence accountant, currently has two hives. His first hive did not survive the winter, but he installed a new hive last spring from a package, and obtained a swarm from a friend. He harvested honey this year from his package hive.

Stephens' favorite part about keeping bees has been sharing the experience with others. He enjoys showing people his hives and bees and answering their questions about bees and beekeeping. He also enjoys the honey. He doesn't love getting stung, but said it was preferable to seeing his original hive perish the first winter, noting that losing that colony was a dispiriting event. However, he said that the experience shaped his management going forward for the better.

Stephens still keeps in touch with his mentor, Robert Burns, on a regular basis. "He was probably the most

important part that you all provided in this process," said Stephens. "Without his input and guidance, I think that my first year would have been much more daunting and stressful on me."

Becky Tipton, who is a Master Beekeeper, and officer for both Northeastern Kansas Beekeepers' Association and Kansas Honey Producers' Association, once commented that she thought it would take "a hive on every farm" to save the honeybees from the rapid and drastic population collapse they have been experiencing in recent years. Tipton is not alone in postulating that widespread, small-scale, thoughtful management of honeybee colonies has a role to play in sustaining populations, as impacts of industrial-scale migratory pollination services have been implicated in contributing to colony collapse.

Farms and ranchland with natural areas and significant plant diversity can provide critical habitat for honeybees and other pollinators. In turn, adding a hive or two of honeybees has a host of benefits for the farmer or gardener, providing pollination services, the potential of extra income, and a whole lot of fun.

If you're interested in starting beekeeping this spring, here are a few resources to get you started - <http://kansasruralcenter.org/pollinator-resources/>. □

*Joanna Voigt can be reached at jvoigt@kansasruralcenter.org. Joanna is also an experienced beekeeper.*

## Conference...

*Continued from page 11*

But soils didn't degrade overnight, and we won't rebuild them overnight," she says.

While Moyer described the no till organic research at Rodale, explaining that they have been adapting equipment and developing systems to plant into thick layers of cover crop mulch with use of specially adapted planters and the roller-crimper he invented, Martens argued that tillage is a useful tool. But it has to be used right. "It is an expensive tool- biologically and dollar wise, he said. " So if we use it, we should know its costs. But if tillage would help in a certain situation, and we are not using it, then we are missing out."

"Let's work together, let's learn together- whether conventional or organic," concluded Moyer.. " Let's bring these processes to the table, have open dialogue and improve the health of our soils for healthy people."

**Social Change.** Just as building the soil community is critical for healthy soil and ultimately healthy people, building the human or social community is critical for our future. "You have no choice absolutely no choice but to organize," stated David Hunt, keynote speaker on day two. We must return to our roots as Kansans to organize for our rights and to protect our communities and quality of life. Hunt, a community organizer and trainer, argued that organizing is what we do as Americans. It is not radical. It is a fundamental right—and responsibility.

"In a democracy there are two types of power," he explained. "—organized money and organized people. Right now organized money is winning. Just look at Kansas." He was referring to the state budget and revenue crises, school funding changes, erosion of social program funding, and erosion of democracy as public discussion and debate of important issues is stifled by leaders.

"How do we come together as a unified force to build the community we need?" he asked. Using the example of hunger, he stated, "We live in a country where no one should go hungry. There is no reason why one in four children go to bed hungry. How do we beat this twin-headed dragon of greed and ignorance that keeps us from feeding and helping each other?"

According to Hunt, we do it by sharing our stories, by

taking control of our own power, by going out and talking about what we need, and speaking to those who don't agree with us. We are told to be afraid of each other, he explained. Skin color, religion, gender, Democrat or Republican, —all are used to keep us afraid. These differences keep us from working together.

"The only way democracy will survive is if we start owning our own power. And we are told to be afraid of power. We give it away because we are afraid of it," he explained. Sharing our stories and sharing our values is key to working together. Farming and food issues cut across all issues, he claimed. "Organizing is what you have always done as Kansans, what our grandparents did, and what Americans do," he explained. "Organizing is important because it is how we build community."

Hunt used the classic "Wizard of Oz" tale as an example of a magical organizing journey about speaking to power, and learning that the power was ours all along. Four individuals were sent unprepared on a journey. The Scarecrow had no brain; (how often are we told we don't know enough to have an opinion or an idea?). The Tin Man had no voice. (If you want to crush a people, you take away their voice.) The Lion thought he had no courage, and Dorothy thought the answers came from someone, somewhere else.

"This is what organizing is about," Hunt said. "How we take our people on a journey where they get a sense of their own voice, their own intelligence, and they find their courage so that their children and their children's children have a better life."

The 2016 KRC conference was sponsored by the Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops; Kansas Agricultural Mediation Services; Kansas Forest Service; Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams; Kansas Farmers Union; Kansas Association of Conservation Districts; Ks. Department of Agriculture; Mother Earth News; Kansas Organic Producers; Eastern Ks. Organic Crop Improvement Association; OFARM (Organic Farming Association of Relationship Marketing); The Land Institute, Tallgrass Savory Network; Cromwell Solar, Kaufman Seeds, Green Covers, The Nature Conservancy, Center For Rural Affairs, & Ks. Wildlife Federation. Scholarship sponsors include No Till on The Plains, Kansas Center for Agriculture, Resources and the Environment, and The Land Institute. Videos of the keynote speakers will be posted on the KRC website in Feb. 2016. □

# Resources

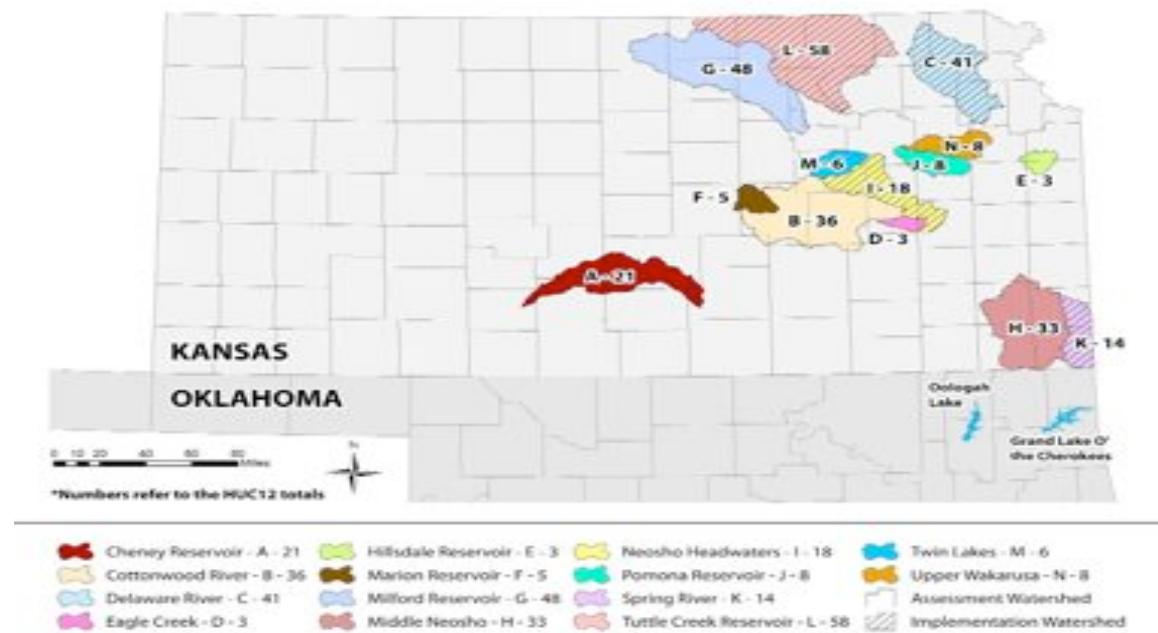
## Kansas Forest Service Project: Saving Fields- Saving Water

A \$13 million dollar grant that covers the majority of costs to plant trees and improve the quality of woodlands will be available to Kansas landowners sometime in January 2016. Through the Resource Conservation Partnership Initiative (RCPP), landowners located in 13 high priority watersheds in eastern

Kansas, may apply at their local NRCS offices. See map below.

RCPP is offered through the USDA NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Research documents that healthy well-managed woodlands improve the quality of water in watersheds. Research also

suggests that planting trees adjacent to our streams and rivers is a direct deterrent to the sedimentation of our federal reservoirs which provide water supply to two-thirds of the people in Kansas. Interested landowners should contact the Kansas Forest Service at 785-532-3300 or by e-mail at [atchison@ksu.edu](mailto:atchison@ksu.edu).



## Organic Research Grants Available; Deadline February 8, 2016

The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) recently announced its Spring 2016 Request for Proposals. OFRF completed its 2015 National Survey of Organic Farmers. 75% of farmers designated research on soil health as a high priority. This led OFRF to prioritize funding for soil research in the 2016 request for proposals (RFP).

OFRF is particularly interested in funding projects that research the issue of how to improve soil health.

Research on better understanding soil structural and biological activates related to soil functions will allow farmers and ranchers to apply soil management practices to rejuvenate and improve soil health. These functions are especially critical for growers living in changing water environments (arid regions, flood-prone regions or growing non-irrigated crops). Understanding ways in which soil health contributes to resilience to drought or flooding will allow farmers and ranchers to be able to respond to

these adverse conditions.

Applicants residing in Canada, Mexico and the United States are invited to submit proposals. For more information or to apply for a grant, please visit OFRF's website at [www.ofrf.org](http://www.ofrf.org).

The deadline for proposals is February 8, 2016. OFRF will notify applicants about funding decisions in early spring 2016.

# Briefs

## USDA Issues Rule to Allow Unlimited Subsidies for Mega Farms

In mid-December, USDA passed final rules preserving access to unlimited subsidies for the biggest commodity farms in the country. In writing the final rule to implement the 2014 Farm Bill, the Obama Administration chose to accommodate mega farms instead of choosing a path to real reform.

They issued a previous final rule on payment limitations in 2010 to implement the 2008 Farm Bill. That rule, like this one, kept payment limit loopholes in place, allowing big farms to easily avoid the statutory subsidy cap intended to limit subsidy abuse that gives the biggest farms unfair advantages in the marketplace. The new rule goes a considerable step further, however, by directly writing the loopholes into regulation.

"In 2008, candidate Obama said he would 'take immediate action to close the loophole by proposing regulations to limit payments to active farmers who work the land [...] Every President since Ronald Reagan has had the authority to close this loophole without additional action by Congress, but has failed to act,'" noted Ferd Hoefner, NSAC Policy Director. "Unfortunately, President Obama has chosen not to take this needed action, leaving family farmers at a competitive disadvantage and taxpayers on the hook for excessive subsidies."

"According to USDA, the new rule affects less than four percent of farm operations," Hoefner continued. "By leaving the loophole door wide open for the other 96 percent, USDA has issued an invitation to farm reorganizations undertaken to maximize subsidies beyond the

payment limit. Even for those farms who choose to keep their business structures organized as part of the four percent, the new rule provides for a limit over \$1 million a year for the largest farms. This is the antithesis of reform."

To its credit, the proposed rule tightens the farm management definition, requires recordkeeping to back up management claims, and adds a quantifiable test for farm management. These steps could become key ingredients for real reform if any future Administration should decide to enforce the payment limit and actually close the loopholes.

"Despite these attempts at key aspects of reform, the final rule is fatally flawed and will result in very little change to the status quo other than mega farms scrambling to reorganize to ensure their business structure fits within the changing landscape of sanctioned loopholes," concluded Hoefner.

The payment limit and "actively engaged in farming" debate has broad popular appeal. Bipartisan majorities in Congress approved closing the loopholes in the "actively engaged" rules and tightening payment limitations. Early in 2014, however, in the waning minutes of behind closed doors negotiations of Agriculture Committee leaders, this important, democratically-arrived-at farm bill reform was overturned, payment limits increased substantially, and changes to the actively engaged in farming rules

punted to USDA. In fielding that punt, USDA has decided to do only the minimum the farm bill conference report asked of them, turning its back on comprehensive reform and its legal obligations to effectively implement the law. □

*The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition is a grassroots alliance that advocates for federal policy reform supporting the long-term social, economic, and environmental sustainability of agriculture, natural resources, and rural communities. The Kansas Rural Center is a member.*

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### Tunnel to Table Project... Continued from page 3

Movable tunnels are a state of the art solution to some of the problems faced by traditional fixed high tunnels, such as depleted soils through intensive use.

By focusing upon the economics of high tunnel production and specialty solutions like moveable tunnels, this project will show how high tunnel production can be a practical and profitable part of agricultural production in Kansas and provide growers better information for decision making.

The information gathered will be compiled into a second edition of the **Growing Under Cover** manual to be distributed to growers throughout the state later next year to hopefully help increase specialty crop production across the state. □

# Resources and Events

## Specialty Crops: Production, Marketing & Management Workshop

Do you market at Farmers Markets or have another type of small business enterprise? If so, you should attend "Specialty Crops: Production, Marketing, Management that will be held on Tuesday, February 2, 2016 in Liberal at Seward County Community College. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the conference ends at \$45 p.m. with a tour of the SCCC/ATS Specialty Crops facilities at 4:00 p.m.

Cost: \$20 (includes Lunch)  
Topics and speakers include:  
\* What's happening with Specialty Crops? - David Coltrain, SCCC/ATS Faculty  
• Insect Management of High Specialty Crops - Sarah Zukoff, KSRE Entomologist  
• How Do I Sell this at a Farmer's Market? - Londa Nwadike, Food Safety Specialty

- USDA's Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) - Daryl Meierhoff, GAP Training
- Importance of Post-Harvest Coolers - Cary Rivard, KSRE Vegetable & Fruit Specialist
- Hydroponic Production - Jim Tucker, Hydroponic Grower
- Enterprise Budget Consideration - David Coltrain, SCCC/ATS Faculty
- Grafted Vegetables in High Tunnel Production - Cary Rivard, KSRE Vegetable & Fruit Specialist.

## Videos from KRC Women in Farming Workshop now online!

Sad that you had to miss the KRC Women in Farming workshop last July? Wish you could remember what that one presenter said?

Well, you are in luck! Presentations are now available on the Kansas Rural Center You Tube Channel. Simply google "Kansas Rural Center You Tube" Watch all of the great presentations! Also keynote speakers from the 2014 KRC Fall Conference are available on You Tube.

You can find an agenda and registration form on KRC's website at <http://kansasruralcenter.org/calendar/specialty-crops-production-marketing-management/>.

If you have questions, contact David Coltrain 620-417-1354 or [david.coltrain@sccc.edu](mailto:david.coltrain@sccc.edu). □



\*Suggested donation of \$60 /year provides KRC "Friend" benefits: KRC e-mail alerts, one-year of Rural Papers Newsletter, and Policy Watch E-Updates.

Subscriptions to Rural Papers (\$35) and Policy Watch (\$25) are still available separately.

You can also sign up and donate online at:

[www.kansasruralcenter.org](http://www.kansasruralcenter.org)

Please remember KRC in your estate planning or will. Contact us for more information at [ksrc@rainbowtel.net](mailto:ksrc@rainbowtel.net).

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info@kansasruralcenter.org  
www.kansasruralcenter.org

## Change Service Requested

## Calendar

February 4-5, 2016 Kansas Natural Resource Conference, Wichita, Ks. More information at <http://www.kansasnrc.org/>

February 8, KRC Grazing Conference Call, Join the toll-free call by entering 1-877-304-5632 and enter conference room number: 300 346 2424#

February 11, 2016 Slow Money Northeast Kansas 2nd Annual Entrepreneur Showcase, Dreher Building Douglas Co. Fairgrounds, Lawrence, Ks. For more information, e-mail: [slowmoneynekansas@gmail.com](mailto:slowmoneynekansas@gmail.com)

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Please check the KRC website for updated and more detailed calendar and announcement information on the above and for additional events at: [www.kansasruralcenter.org](http://www.kansasruralcenter.org)

## Inside This Issue

No. 259 December 2015/January 2016

- \* State Legislative Session~ & KRC Policy Watch~ Set to Begin
- \* Small Farmer Commentary: On Paying Attention and Engaging
- \* KRC Notes; Saying Goodbye to Staff
- \*New Tunnel to Table Project Launched
- \* 2016 - Kansas At the Crossroads Recommendations from Task Force Due to Legislature
- \* Organic Grain Production Opportunities & Challenges for High Plains Farmers
- \* Specialty Crop Grants Awarded in Kansas
- \* Building Communities~ Soils and Human~ Focus of 2015 Conference
- \* Women in Farming Profile: Organic Farming Helps This Farmer Think Outside the Box
- \*KRC Beekeepers Still Learning; Still Keeping Bees
- \* Resources & Briefs