

Farmers Market Initiative Creates Statewide Impact

A statewide farmers' market initiative, led by the Kansas Rural Center, with collaboration from the Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops (KCSAAC) and the Kansas Department of Commerce Rural Development Division has provided much needed support for existing and start-up markets across the state. The initiative, funded through five different grant programs, has included a statewide farmers market conference, eight facilitated market business planning workshops, two market manager trainings, the development of a Kansas Farmers' Market website and a complete update of the Kansas Farmers Market Directory. Between June 28 and September 30, 2009, the directory had 1,354 visitors from 113 cities to <http://www.ksfarmersmarkets.org>. The Website has sections for organizers, producers and "eaters." K-State Research and Extension produced six monthly radio segments featuring available seasonal items, as well as how to wash, store and prepare fruit, vegetables, meat and eggs bought at farmers markets. Six corresponding news articles were released throughout the market season.



Above: Nancy Peterson, Liz Boyle, Jana Beckman, Karen Blakeslee and Jeff Wichman record one of six segments on farmers' markets aired on the K-State Radio Network.



Above: The 2009 "Growing Together" Farmers' Market Conference was attended by 158 people.

The Center collaborates and facilitates with partners to develop multidisciplinary projects and activities directed towards research and outreach needs expressed by Kansas producers and other stakeholders.

Since the Center's inception in 2001, \$695,000 of state funding has resulted in the award of \$4.4 million dollars of grant funds for sustainable agriculture projects in Kansas.

The projects funded in 2009 include:
 USDA Farmers' Market Promotion Grant
 Direct Marketing for Kansas Producers
 Organic Production Training for Kansas NRCS staff
 Good Agricultural Practices Training for Kansas Extension
 2009 Kansas SARE Professional Development Program

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Producers Adjust Grazing/Livestock Management Practices

Members of the Kansas Graziers Association were surveyed to determine how producers have improved grazing/livestock production and management practices.

- Seven producers have made changes to livestock handling facilities including redesign of the work chute and corrals, and installing a Bud Box.
- Five producers have planted crops including brown mid-rib sorghum and turnips to extend the grazing season and have utilized the stockpiling of forages.



Left: Don Koster, Minneapolis rancher, explains the use of his livestock handling facilities to reduce stress when handling cattle. Reducing stress can increase feed efficiency and improve herd health.

Role of the Center

KCSAAC serves as a resource center for producers, organizations and agricultural professionals in search of information related to sustainable agriculture.

Visit the KCSAAC web site

<http://www.kansassustainableag.org>

Producers Attend Management and Alternative Marketing Options Bus Tour

On October 4, farmer educators at the “Management and Alternative Marketing Options” bus tour held in North Central Kansas described and demonstrated practices that contribute to sustainable cropping systems and alternative marketing options. Twenty-seven people attended the October tour. Cover crops, long-term crop rotations, integrated pest management and other practices used in sustainable production can reduce input use, erosion, improve a farm’s profits and protect natural resources. Diversified enterprises and alternative marketing contributes to increased income and can reduce risk. The tour was sponsored by KCSAAC and the Kansas Rural Center.

Training Sessions and Resources Provided for Extension Agents and State Agency Staff

KCSAAC conducted and organized training sessions to provide information and resources for Extension agents and state and federal agency staff who receive production, marketing and nutrition questions from producers and consumers. The topics, audience and attendance are listed below.

- Food Labels: Media Hype - Food Truths - 20 Family and Consumer Science Extension Agents attended
- Food Safety, Small Scale Food Processing, and the Nutritional Value of Local Foods - 80 Family and Consumer Science Extension Agents attended
- Pilot Organic Production Training - 30 Kansas NRCS state and field staff attended
- Plant Identification Training Session - 30 Extension, Conservation District, NRCS and County Weed Department staff attended

The training sessions were funded with a grant from the USDA North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program.