

Energy and Input Costs Spark Increased Interest in Sustainable Cropping Systems

Cover crops, long-term crop rotations, integrated pest management and other practices used in natural and organic production can reduce input use, erosion, runoff, improve a farm's profits and protect natural resources. On May 2, ten Extension agents attended a sustainable agriculture tour held in conjunction with the Kansas Association of County Agricultural Agents 2008 Spring Meeting. Tour stops included the Jim and Sue Keating farm, Homestead Milling, New Cambria, KS and Advanced Enterprises, a sorghum flour processing mill. On October 2, farmer educators at the "Integrated Management Strategies for Sustainable Cropping Systems" workshop and tours described and demonstrated practices that contribute to sustainable and organic cropping systems. Tour stops included Hartter Feed and Seed and the Eugene Edelman farm, Sabetha. Twenty-five people attended the October workshop and tours.



Above: Rachael Boyle, Phillips-Rooks Extension District #5, and Ron Seyfert, Central Kansas Extension District #3, learn about organic asparagus production at the Jim and Sue Keating Farm, Minneapolis.

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, \$625,000 of state funding has resulted in the award of \$4.2 million dollars of grant funds for sustainable agriculture projects in Kansas.*

The projects funded in 2008 include:

- 2008 Kansas Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program
- 21st Century Farmers' Markets
- Promoting Kansas Farmers' Markets
- 2008 Kansas SARE Professional Development Program

* approximate amounts

Producers Adjust Grazing/Livestock Management Practices

Members of the Kansas Graziers Association were surveyed to determine to what degree low stress animal handling techniques have been implemented in their operations.

- Forty percent have attended additional low stress animal handling workshops or seminars since low stress animal handling was taught at the 2007 Winter Grazing Conference
- Fifteen percent have discussed low stress handling techniques with others
- Sixteen percent have used low stress handling techniques when rotating animals between pastures
- Twenty-two percent have used low stress handling techniques when working, loading or unloading livestock

Kansas Farmers' Markets Highlighted at State Fair

To raise awareness and encourage Kansans to shop at local farmers' markets, KCSAAC participated in the K-State Research and Extension "We Know" promotion. "We Know Farmers' Markets" cards describing the benefits of buying locally grown foods were distributed at the K-State Research and Extension booth. Bookmarks with the web link to the Kansas Farmers' Market Directory and twenty-five informational packets on how to start a local farmers' market were distributed at the Kansas Department of Commerce booth.



Left: Tim Miller, NRCS Rangeland Specialist, describes how to identify native grasses and forbs. Left to right, Nathan Geiger, Doniphan County Extension, Tim Miller, and Dottie Harris, Jefferson County Conservation District.

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

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

- Defining Food Labeling Terms - 60 Family and Consumer Science Extension Agents attended
- Value Added and Small Scale Food Processing, 50 Family and Consumer Science Extension Agents attended
- Eastern Kansas Forage School - 42 Agricultural Extension Agents attended
- Plant Identification and Cost Share Program Training Sessions - 30 Extension, Conservation District, NRCS and County Weed Department, attended
- Agritourism: From A to T - 55 Extension agents attended

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

Role of the Center

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

KCSAAC receives an average of 60 requests for assistance each month.

The most common requests involve sustainable cropping practices, farmers' market and labeling information, grant sources and grant writing resources, value-added processing, and livestock/grazing systems. 50 % of calls and emails are received from producers and 50% from extension, state agency and non-profit organizations.

The KCSAAC web site receives an average of 2000 visitors per month.

The calendar and reference library are the most commonly visited pages.

Visit the KCSAAC web site

<http://www.kansassustainableag.org>