

## Report to the Legislature: 2013 Activity & Impact

### The Situation

KCSAAC's charge is to develop a K-State Research and Extension Center to facilitate research, education and outreach activities for sustainable agriculture, alternative food, fiber, and medicinal crops in Kansas. The Center is also home to the Kansas Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (KS SARE) Program. Advised by a committee of producers, extension agents, extension specialists, and agency personnel, the Center's goal is to provide educational training and professional development activities to producers Extension personnel, and other agency professionals.

Program focus topics identified by the Advisory Committee for 2013 were drought and climate information, educational grant programs, and improved local food production. Since persistent drought conditions have been experienced by most of the state, this year the center's major program was drought and climate outreach and education. By mid-year, producer interest in local food systems, local food production, and food hubs had shifted to the forefront. As 2014 begins, local food issues emerge as priority topics for research, education, and outreach.

### KCSAAC Response

#### *Drought & Climate*

Kansas drought educational needs and responses vary from east to west and north to south. To address these varying needs the Center was able to partner with Kansas farm organizations to co-sponsor workshops, tours, and trainings using recognized experts to address site specific drought concerns.

- 1 Kansas-focused climate change training reached 25 Extension personnel

- 7 workshops and tours around the state on the topics of drought planning and range management reached 410 people in Emporia, Salina, Pratt, Abilene, Sun City, Courtland, Jackson County, Washington County, and Manhattan
- 9 professional development travel scholarships and mini grants (\$7,100 total) were awarded for professional development and programming related to drought.

#### *Local Food*

Consumer demand and heightened nutrition awareness have created a perfect opportunity for local food development in Kansas. The Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) has significantly strengthened its involvement in local food production and marketing assistance. KCSAAC works with KDA, Extension experts, and Kansas farm organizations to support the growth of local food enterprises. Center activities in 2013 included:

- 2 Food Hub workshops; reached 125 people; locations: Hiawatha, Lawrence
- Farm and Food Conference; reached 150 people; location: Newton
- Statewide Partnership Initiative: Community Food Solutions for a Healthy Kansas; KCSAAC is a statewide partner
- Farm-To-School initiatives; KCSAAC provided letter of support for grant

#### *Grant Programs*

The Center is tasked with expanding small farm research at K-State. To meet that responsibility, a small grant program has been created. Small grants were awarded to KSU researchers to assist with baseline data collection on sustainable agriculture topics that will help those researchers with future, larger grants from other grant makers. The

Center's affiliation with SARE creates even more opportunities for grants through the North Central Region SARE (NCR-SARE) grant programs: Farmer Rancher, Youth Educator, Graduate Student, Research and Education, and Professional Development.

NCR-SARE educational grants awarded in 2013 included:

- 6 Farmer Rancher Grants (\$80,913 total)
  - Locations: Beloit, Stilwell, Kansas City, Lawrence, Leavenworth, Baldwin City
  - Topics: Ranch and Range Management Internship
  - Aquaponic Food Production System
  - Exploring Edible Cactus Production as a New Specialty Crop
  - Growing with Biochar: Test and Teach Soil Carbon Sequestration
  - Activating Soil Fertility in Mulch-Prepared Small-Plot Commercial No-Till
  - Soil Microbial Response to Cover Crop Use
- 1 Research and Education Grant awarded to K-State Olathe Experiment Station (\$158,516)
  - Topic: Tomato Grafting: Developing Grower Recommendations for the Great Plains and Enhancing Our Understanding of the Rhizobiome

KCSAAC pilot/feasibility grants in progress during 2013 included:

- Assessment of Nitrogen Dynamics in a Wheat, Cover Crop, Sorghum, Soybean Rotation
- Evaluating the Local Food System of Manhattan, KS and Identifying Market Opportunities for Producers with Retail Grocers, Schools and Hospitals
- Development and Adoption of No-Till and Minimum Tillage Vegetable Production Systems in the Midwest
- Comparison of Black Walnut Cultivars and Seasonal Variability of Flavor Properties

### **KCSAAC Enabling Legislation**

KSA 76-4, 103 –...Functions and duties of the center of excellence on sustainable agriculture and alternative crops shall include but are not be limited to:

- Emphasizing research, education, outreach and marketing for sustainable agriculture and alternative food, fiber and medicinal crops.
- Assisting farmers to increase their share of the food system dollar.
- Collecting and analyzing basic information on the Kansas food system and opportunities for production and direct marketing.
- Focusing research on value added processes and new crops that offer low-volume, high margin niche opportunities.
- Assisting small farmers to access lower input costs through a delivery system with expanded access to sustainable agricultural practices.
- Marketing assistance to promote products produced and processed in Kansas.
- Expanding small farm research to include: Organic products; less capital intensive investments; energy saving technology; and agricultural practices that reduce soil erosion and restore soil health.
- Developing and distributing a guide of all state services for small farms and value added agriculture

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