

Report to the Legislature: 2015 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) Professional Development 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 2014 were soil health and cover crops, and local foods and specialty crops. It was a busy year in Kansas for both of those initiatives.

KCSAAC Initiatives

Soil Health & Cover Crops

2015 was the International Year of Soils and Kansas State University was actively involved in soil health projects.

In the Spring of 2015, Kansas officially joined the Midwest Cover Crops Council. The goal of MCCC is to facilitate widespread adoption of cover crops throughout the Midwest to improve ecological, economic, and social sustainability. Throughout the year, a group of Extension agents and specialists, NRCS representatives, and seed company representatives worked to modify the online MCCC Cover Crop Decision Tool with data and information to assist Kansas farmers make decisions about what cover crops to plant, when to plant, when to

terminate, etc. The Decision Tool updates will be finalized in 2016 as a useful means for making cover cropping decisions.

Other Soil Health/Cover Crops Activity included:

- Cover Crop Bus Tour – 35 Kansas producers spent a day visiting five farms in north central Kansas learning from farmers about cropping and soil management changes they had made and how those changes have worked out.
- Carbon, Climate, Crops and Soil: The Mycohorizal Connection Workshop
- Agroforestry Workshop: Incorporating Trees and Shrubs into Contemporary Agricultural Systems
- Tweets of videos from K-State Agronomy Department for the International Year of Soils.
 - [Soils Support Health](#)
 - [Soils, Culture and People](#)
 - [Soils Protect The Natural Environment](#)
 - [Soils Support Urban Life](#)
 - [Soils Are Living](#)
 - [Soil Supports Recreation](#)
 - [Soils Support Buildings& Infrastructure](#)
 - [Soils Clean and Capture Water](#)
 - [Soils Support Agriculture](#)
 - [Soils Sustain Life](#)

Local Food & Specialty Crops

Local food and food hubs continued to be a hot topic in 2015. The Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) continues to strengthen 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 2015 included:

- 4 Workshops for Women in Farming, reaching more than 200 women. Locations were: Lawrence, Linn, Bird City, and Emporia
- Farm and Food Conference; reached 200 people; location: Manhattan
- South Central Kansas Vegetable Growers Conference in Wichita reached 75 market growers, market managers, and Extension professionals
- Local Food and Value-Added Production and Processing Bus Tour in east central Kansas for Beginning Farmers reached 37 beginning and early career farmers.

Grant Programs

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

NCR-SARE grants to Kansans included:

- \$395,685 for two Research & Education Grants
 - Jason Griffin, Kansas State University, \$195,968 for the project, "Strengthening Organic Sweet Potato Propagation Systems in the North Central Region."
 - Brenda Koerner, Emporia State University, \$199,717 for the project, "The Impact of Fuel Load, Burn Season, and Fire Frequency on the Control of an Invasive Legume, *Sericea Lespedeza*."
- \$7,498 for one Farmer Rancher Grant to Gage Werner of Werner Creek Farm in Winfield for the project, "Preserving the Genetic Diversity of Acclimated Feral and Survivor Stock Honeybees for Future use as Breeding Stock in Local, Diversified Production of Queen Bees."
- \$2,000 for one Youth Educator Grant to Daniel Hissong, Oskaloosa Junior/Senior High School for the project "Oskaloosa Community Garden"

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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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

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