

## **2019 Activities: Report to the Legislature**

### **The Situation**

The Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops (KCSAAC) serves as a resource center for producers and professionals for information about diversified, sustainable agriculture. As part of K-State Research and Extension, KCSAAC facilitates research, education and outreach activities about sustainable agriculture practices, 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, non-governmental organization representatives, and governmental agency personnel, the Center's goal is to provide educational training and professional development activities to producers, Extension professionals, and other agriculture professionals. Program focus topics for 2019 established by an Advisory Committee were local foods, beginning farmers and ranchers, and diversified farming systems.

### **KCSAAC Initiatives**

#### ***Local Food***

Interest in and activities about specialty crops and locally-grown food continues to be high and KCSAAC continues to focus educational and outreach programs on local food initiatives. The most visible activity from 2019 was grant support for the series of six Farmers Market Regional Workshops, coordinated by the Kansas Department of Agriculture. In addition to providing funding for the workshops, KCSAAC also provided travel scholarships for market managers and farmers to attend the workshops. KCSAAC also supported the Great Plains Growers Conference in St. Joseph, MO and multiple Food Safety Modernization Act Trainings across the state. KCSAAC's coordinator also represented K-State on the Industrial Hemp Advisory Committee which reviewed all research applications for growing, distributing, and processing industrial hemp.

#### ***Beginning Farmers & Ranchers***

In 2019, the North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE) chose Beginning Farmers and Ranchers as a focus. NCR-SARE hosted a professional training workshop on the topic in October and asked each state in the region to send a team to be trained. Team Kansas members represented K-State Extension and statewide farm organizations. The multi-disciplinary team will work on programming focused on beginning farmers and ranchers during 2020. KCSAAC continues to work with the Fort Riley Warrior Transition Battalion with an on-base vegetable garden and with Servicemember Agricultural Vocation Education (S.A.V.E.) Farm, helping veterans and servicemembers transition into farming.

#### ***Diversified Farming Systems***

Farming in Kansas is highly diversified as reflected in KCSAAC's diverse portfolio of supported projects from 2019, including: Beef Production and the Working Cow Dog Conference, Statewide Women in Ag and Women Managing the Farm Conferences, Fuller Farm School, and Playa Lake Tour.

## **NCR-SARE Grants**

KCSAAC's affiliation with SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) creates opportunities for grants to Kansas farmers, ranchers, non-profits, and universities through the North Central Region (NCR-SARE) grant programs: Farmer Rancher, Youth Educator, Graduate Student, Research and Education, Partnership, and Professional Development. Kansans received \$306,238 in awards from NCR-SARE in 2019 for the following projects:

- \$8,908 for "Ancestral Mexica Farming: A Comparative Yield Analysis from the 1500s"
- \$148,700 for "Animal Fiber Production for the Fashion Supply Chain: Developing Sustainable Agriculture Curriculum for High School Young Women"
- \$32,187 for "Alternate Weed Control Strategy in Sorghum Utilizing Companion Crops"
- \$27,000 for "Research, Create, and Market Allergy-Friendly Food for Institutions Using Local Vegetables, Fruit, Proteins and Value-added Products to Increase Small Farm Sales"
- \$89,443 for "Capacity Building in Urban Food Systems in the North Central Region"

Since 1988, NCR-SARE has awarded \$3.7 million in total funding to Kansans for 155 grant projects.

### **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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**K-STATE**  
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### **Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service**

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