

## 2018 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 2018 established by an Advisory Committee were soil health and cover crops, and local foods and specialty crops.

### KCSAAC Initiatives

#### *Soil Health and Cover Crops*

Activities focused primarily on soil health this year. Highlights included two farm tours coordinated by Kansas Farmers Union. The first tour was a two-day visit to three, well-established organic farms in Iowa. The second was a single day farm tour in north central Kansas and south central Nebraska. Combined the tours reached about 100 farmers with valuable information shared by other successful farmers and agribusinesses.

KCSAAC also supported professional improvement opportunities for producers including the Fuller Field School in Emporia, Playa Lake Workshop in Colby, a Soil Health workshop in Holton, and the Statewide Women in Ag Workshop in Corning.



#### *Local Food & Specialty Crops*

Interest in specialty crops and locally grown food products continues to be strong throughout the state. In 2018 with passage of SB 263, industrial hemp production started to become a reality for producers. KCSAAC's coordinator served on the Industrial Hemp Advisory Committee during 2018. KCSAAC and KS SARE provide professional improvement scholarships for producers and ag professionals to attend local, regional, and national conferences. In 2018, KCSAAC assistance helped Kansans attend the following

conferences: Great Plains Growers Conference. St. Joseph, MO; Kansas Farmers Market Regional Workshops and Statewide Conference; Fuller Field School, Emporia, KS; Food Safety and Modernization Act Trainings; Our Farms, Our Future national conference in St. Louis, MO; Kansas Black Farmers Association Annual Meeting; and the Farmer Veteran Coalition National Stakeholders Conference.

## **NCR-SARE Grants**

Kansans received \$310,194 in awards from NCR-SARE in 2018. 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. Grants received in 2018:

- \$11,891 for "Improving Kernza® + Alfalfa Bicultures by Developing a Kernza® Crop Calendar, Identifying Compatible Germplasm, and Monitoring Changes in Soil Health Properties"
- \$29,495.00 for "Evaluating and Demonstrating Weed Control Options for Direct Seeded Fall Vegetable Crops"
- \$25,077.00 for "Providing Ecosystem Services Utilizing Companion Crops with Sorghum"
- \$2,000.00 for Bees 101
- \$22,500.00 for "Adding Value to Small-farm Produce by Processing and Freezing Vegetables and Fruit"
- \$7,412.00 for "Evaluating the performance of alternative horticultural crops (Lavender) under various production systems to enhance agricultural diversity in the Flint Hills region"
- \$11,999.00 for "Monitoring Belowground Arthropods Associated with Cover Crops in Great Plain High Tunnel Systems"
- \$199,820.00 for "Cover Crop Management Options to Improve Weed Control, Crop Yield and Soil Health"

### **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

### **Contact Information**

Kerri Ebert, Project Coordinator  
Department of Horticulture and Natural Resources  
KSRE Olathe Horticulture Center  
35230 West 135<sup>th</sup> Street  
Olathe, KS 66061  
(913) 856-2335, ext. 102 | [kebert@k-state.edu](mailto:kebert@k-state.edu)  
[www.kansassustainableag.org](http://www.kansassustainableag.org) | [Twitter: @KSSARE](https://twitter.com/KSSARE)

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

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