Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture Vol. 26, #1 • Spring 2000

Future Farms Look Promising

–Maura McDermott

On a springlike February day, an enthusiastic crowd of 250 farmers, ranchers, Extension agents, educators, and students gathered at Metro-Tech's Springlake campus in Oklahoma City for the *Future Farms 2000* conference sponsored by the Kerr Center. Jim Horne, Kerr Center president, kicked off the conference with a simple question: "Are you better off today than you were five or ten years ago?"

As each in the audience silently answered that, Horne went on to suggest that there are two roads in agriculture today, and the asphalt is crumbling on the one that most farmers and ranchers have been traveling. Producers are losing hope, he said, but he proposed a solution: the other road, leading to an agriculture that is profitable, socially responsible, and ecologically sound.

The future was very much on the mind of conference presenters. Speaker Joel Salatin challenged the audience "to create an agricultural paradigm that will romance the next generation – an agriculture that someone eighteen or nineteen-years-old would want to be part of."

Building strong rural communities was another theme of the conference. Dinner speaker John Ikerd predicted that rural communities will thrive in the post-industrial era now beginning. "Rural communities have people with potential," he said. "In the knowledge society, individuals are central. We need intuition, judgement, common sense – not high-tech, but high-think."

Throughout the conference, speakers and workshop leaders each offered "high-think"– innovative production, conservation, and marketing approaches– to inspire attendees. As one conference-goer remarked on an evaluation sheet: "This was excellent. And I go to a lot of conferences. Bravo!"

(See pages 4-7 for more on Future Farms).

Inside this issue of *Field Notes*

The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture offers progressive leadership and educational programs to all those interested in making farming and ranching environmentally friendly, socially equitable, and economically viable over the long term.

The Kerr Center is a non-profit foundation located on 4,000 acres near the southeastern Oklahoma town of Poteau. It was established in 1985.

PROGRAMS INCLUDE:
- Oklahoma Producer Grants
- The Stewardship Farm
- Rural Development and Public Policy
- Communications/Education
- Vero Beach Research Station
- Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm

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Field Notes is published quarterly and is sent free to subscribers. Address correspondence to: Maura McDermott, editor.

Design by Argus DesignWorks

Kerr Staff News

– Maura McDermott

On February 10, Kerr Center president Dr. Jim Horne spoke at his alma mater, Cameron University, as part of their Bridging the Millennia Academic Festival. "There is no greater honor than to come back to your community and be asked to share your views after twenty-five years, and I appreciated the opportunity," he said.

Horne addressed a group of agriculture students in the morning, challenging them to think about how current trends in agriculture came about. At 7:30 that evening, he spoke to the public about "The Next Green Revolution." With so many bankruptcies in rural America, he pointed out, it seems clear the current agricultural paradigms are not working. Horne suggested that the answer may lie in developing locally-owned value-added agricultural enterprises. An extensive question-and-answer period kept him at the podium until after ten. "The farmers and people in the audience asked hard, but honest questions," Horne said. "At the end I felt they were persuaded to think further about what it will take to make a sustainable agriculture in the next millennium."

The Bridging the Millennia Festival has featured speakers from around the world on topics as diverse as politics, the role of women, Shakespeare, and the global economy. "I appreciate that the university was open to hearing a speech about sustainable agriculture that challenged the old paradigms," Horne remarked.

Horne grew up in southwestern Oklahoma, attended high school in Roosevelt and spent his first two years of college at Cameron, where he served as student body president. "It was nice to be back on campus," he said.

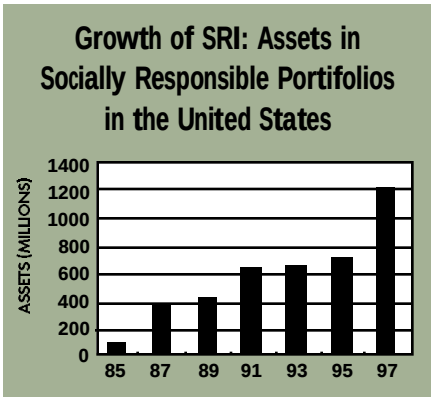
Kerr Center staff back row – (l-r) Janell Smalts, Eric Allenbach, Maura McDermott, David Redhage, Barbara Chester, Michelle Stephens, Brian Freking; middle row – Liz Speake, Janie Hipp, Lena Moore, Manjula, Guru; front row – Carol Vise, Jim Horne, Anna Anderson, Ann Ware, Alan Ware

Socially-Responsible Investing

– Anna Anderson

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has."
–Margaret Mead

There is a new revolution in America. It is a revolution of ethical investing, and with it a new sense of hopefulness is sweeping the country. In the western world, particularly in the United States, our personal prosperity continues to expand. With this expansion we are being empowered to make critical decisions that will reflect the quality of our lives, and the futures of not only our own children, but all the children of the world.



Socially-responsible investing (SRI) is about the economics of sustainability. It speaks to us of our responsibility to do more than just invest; it speaks to our responsibility to educate ourselves and others, to know how our money is working, and to know what our money is buying.

In America, there have always been those who could not, out of religious or ethical beliefs, feel comfortable investing where the reflected values of business were different from their own values. SRI is the ability to bring your particular concerns, whether they are social, environmental or ethical, to the marketplace with you. It is an opportunity to integrate your values with your money. Economic strategies are time-tested methods of creating change in the world around us. Whether through individual actions, such as simply buying the products that you like, or a national policy of embargo, financial strategies have power.

And yes, SRI is a viable way to earn profits– it is currently a $1.3 trillion industry, representing ten per cent of all invested assets, with earnings that are competitive with other investments. In fact, one fund has topped the S&P Index for the last eight years.

We would not dump trash into our rivers, streams and aquifers, or spew toxins into the air or into the sea. We would not degrade the soil that is needed to sustain us and all other life forms. We would not clear cut our remaining old-growth forests or strip mine our remaining minerals. Neither would we exploit labor or the knowledge and wisdom of indigenous peoples. Why should we give our money to companies that do? The concept is that simple.

Anna Anderson is an intern at the Kerr Center.

Three Approaches to SRI:

Screening is including or excluding a company in a portfolio by gathering information about its:

- Environmental record (Does it set environmental standards, practice conservation, recycle or prevent pollution?)
- Labor relations and human rights history
- Production of harmful products such as weapons, tobacco, or practices such as gambling
- Compensation of CEO or board members (Is compensation excessive?)

Community Investing is choosing to invest in: one, community-based financial institutions, or two, programs that provide capital to people who generally do not have access to it through conventional channels. This is a direct way of helping those in your local community, thereby helping yourself. Community support is also a tool used for international community building.

Shareholder Advocacy means working from the inside to influence a company's practices and policies through shareholder activism.

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Socially-Responsible Investing by Anna Anderson and James Horne is a new report available free from the Kerr Center. It will also soon be available on-line at www.kerrcenter.com. The report presents a persuasive case for SRI and provides practical advice for the interested investor, including a list of selected socially-screened funds. Also included: the problems of investing in extractive businesses, a comparison between Gross National Product and the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare in the U.S., case studies of three businesses: Monsanto, Mitsubishi, and Interface, and approaches to socially-responsible investing.

Future Farms 2000 Conference

February 8th & 9th, 2000
Oklahoma City

Future Farms Conference, Metro-Tech, Springlake Campus, Oklahoma City

"We need to give our children a sense of the common good"

– Joe Lewis

Joe Lewis, ARS 1999 Senior Scientist of the Year, spoke about sustainable communities.

Peggy and Richard Sechrist raise and sell organic beef in Texas.

"Eat healthy to be healthy"

– Peggy and Richard Sechrist

Dan Nagengast, director of the Kansas Rural Center, gave cooperative marketing tips

"If you think the answer (to your problems) is going to come from Washington– NOT!"

– La Rhea Pepper

La Rhea and Terry Pepper, founding members, Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative

Carol Vise of the Kerr Center and conference-goer, perusing Joel Salatin's books.

"We have been thinking too much in the box. We need to kick the sides out of the box"

– Joel Salatin

Joel Salatin of Polyface Farms and Jim Horne, president, Kerr Center

Kay Adair, Kerr Center founder, and
John Ikerd, Missouri ag economist

Recipients of Kerr Center producer grants had displays at the conference.
(l-r) Michael Dillon, Rick Jeans, Tom Gunn, Kim Barker, Walt Davis, Wallace Olson and Charley Chambers

Kent Donica received a Kerr Center
producer grant in 1998.

"The harder the plant is to kill with 2-4D, the more they (goats) like it"

– Kent Donica

"Opportunity's favorite disguise is trouble– most new opportunities arise out of situations seen as trouble"

– John Ikerd

John Ikerd makes a point during his dinner speach
"Sustaining America's Rural Communities."

Muskogee farmer Doug Walton (l)
with workshop leader Steve Groff (r)

"We can change course– we need to change how we invest– redirect our ag research dollars"

– Chuck Hassebrook

Chuck Hassebrook (r), program director of the
Center for Rural Affairs, was interviewed
by Ron Hays for Oklahoma Agrinet.

Conference photos by Mary Logan Wolf

Conference Speakers Offer Hope For Farms

Rotational grazing lowers costs, increases production, and improves land

--Mary Logan Wolf

Popular methods to increase profits and efficiency in the agriculture industry rarely mention cutting down on the use of expensive equipment, fertilizers, or even the number of animals in production. But speakers at the recent Kerr Center Future Farms 2000 conference espoused a different approach to farm management, and backed up their methods with facts in dollars saved– and farms retrieved– from the brink of financial disaster.

Walt Davis of Bennington, Oklahoma, is a veteran cattle rancher. Tom Trantham of South Carolina owns and operates the Twelve Aprils dairy. Like the majority of ag producers in this country, both utilized the finest machinery and top notch chemical applications. Believing that bigger is better– and more profitable, Davis and Trantham put in long hours to support their growing operations. But what grew at an explosive rate wasn't profits, they told conference attendees, but debt.

While their operations differ, both operators shared a common solution. Davis and Trantham solved their problems through closely managed rotational grazing. This method monitors plant growth so that cattle graze when it is most beneficial to plant and animal. "We realized if we were going to remain in business, the cost of production had to come down," Davis said. "The obvious place to start was where our expenses were highest. We phased out our farming operation, and greatly reduced our machinery, fuel and labor costs."

Davis replaced nitrogen fertilizer applications with forage legumes which reduced the number of weeds. Supplemental feed costs dropped by adjusting calving season to fit the season of best forage production. "By providing forage at the proper stage of growth, both animal and plant health were improved, and the need for toxic pest control materials was eliminated," he said.

Today, Davis rotates his stock through 24-30 paddocks for each cow herd and 30-40 paddocks for each stocker herd. Since making the changes in his beef operation, Davis said his production per acre of pasture has increased 50 to 150 percent, pasture production and maintenance costs have dropped, and his grazing season is extended on both ends. "We now expect to be profitable every year and the condition of our land has steadily improved," he said. "But most importantly ranching is a whole lot more fun than when we were 'doing it right.'"

For the Twelve Aprils Dairy, the shift to rotational grazing saves Tom Trantham approximately 47 cents per cow per day. "At one time I was milking 125 cows, eleven and a half hours a day," Trantham said. "Today, I ve got 72 cows and I m making more money on my farm than ever. Our goal is to milk 60 cows and be able to say

Walt Davis teaches workshops on rotational grazing. For more information on these contact the Kerr Center. Davis is also a grazing management consultant. To contact him, e-mail WWDRanch@aol.com or write Rt. 2 Box 147 Bennington, OK 74723. **Tom Trantham** can be contacted at email: trandair@gateway.net; 864-243-4801. Davis suggests these books: *Holistic Resource Management* by Allan Savory, *Holistic Resource Management Workbook* by Allan Savory and Sam Bingham, *Quality Pasture* by Alan Nation and *Salad Bar Beef* by Joel Salatin. For more on the Trantham and Davis farms, see the conference proceedings at kerrcenter.com

we're making a good living."

Trantham rotates his herd over pastures averaging 2.7-3.2 acres. His 60-acre farm is fenced and cross-fenced with 3,000 feet of road for cattle to travel from pasture to pasture. A variety of cool and warm season annuals and perennials, including a grazing type alfalfa, are utilized to keep young, tender forage in front of his milk cows at all times. According to Trantham, young and tender is the key to milk production. "Crude protein goes down and digestible energy goes down as the forage quality declines," he said.

Nothing is wasted at Twelve Aprils. Trantham bales the lower quality, bottom portion of the plants to use for dry cows and heifers. Trantham admits his grazing system isn't fool proof yet. "Mother Nature doesn't allow us to keep Holsteins on quality grazing year round," he said. Still, grass-based dairying has allowed Trantham to eliminate costly fertilizer applications and retire $150,000 worth of silage equipment as well as a $477/month month Harvestore lease. Overall, Trantham estimates his input costs have decreased 25 to 30 percent, along with his stress level.

> "I've been able to meet my financial obligations and I'm a happy dairyman again"
>
> –Tom Trantham

"I've been able to meet my financial obligations and I'm a happy dairyman again," he said. "Ten or twelve hours a day versus sixteen... I almost feel like I'm on vacation."

Trantham pointed out that varying climate and growing conditions prevent every dairy from enjoying twelve Aprils. "But you can have six, eight or ten," he said. "Pick what works in your area and apply it to your situation."

Conference Topics: FYI

Conference Proceedings are on-line at www.kerrcenter.com

■ **Agriculture Policy**
Chuck Hassebrook
The Center for Rural Affairs
P.O. Box 406, Walthill, NE
402-846-428 www.cfra.org
(monthly newsletter, publications list, programs and projects)

■ **Cooperative Marketing, Agriculture Policy**
Dan Nagengast, Kansas Rural Center, 304 Pratt, Whiting, KS 66552, 785-873-3431*(monthly newsletter, reports, programs and projects)*

■ **Cover Crops**
Steve Groff, www.cedarmeadowfarm.com, sgroff@epix.net. Video: *No-Till Vegetables: A Sustainable Way to Increase Profits, Save Soil, and Reduce Pesticides* $21.95, order from web or 717-284-5152

■ **Entrepreneurship**
Pastured Poultry Profits: Net $25,000 in 6 Months on 20 Acres, and *You Can Farm: The Entrepreneur's Guide to Start and Succeed in a Farming Enterprise* by Joel Salatin. Available from Acres USA 1-800-355-5313; Stockman Grass Farmer 1-800-748-9808 or bookstores

■ **Organic Beef**
Richard and Peggy Sechrist
Rt. 2 Box 184-A
Fredericksburg, TX 78624

■ **Organic Cotton**
La Rhea Pepper
Organic Essentials (products)/ Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative Rt. 1, Box 120
O'Donnell, TX 79351
1-800-765-6491
TOCMC@juno.com

■ **Value-Added Agriculture, Marketing**
Okla. Dept. Of Agriculture Market Development Services 405-521-3864, OSU Food and Agricultural Products Center 405-744-6071

■ **Wildlife on the Farm**
Russell Stevens, Noble Foundation, P.O. Box 2180, Ardmore, OK 73402 Monthly newsletter, consultation service. Information online at www.noble.org

Peach Grower Tries New Approaches

Leon Kelley needed help in his small orchard to cut his pesticide costs and determine whether cheap and available chicken litter could supply his fertility. A producer grant from the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture is helping him do both things.

Kelley, a retired engineer, bought the small orchard just northeast of Red Oak four years ago. He and his wife sell peaches, apples and plums directly to the public on the farm and through the McAlester farmer's market. He also wholesales some of his crop to local grocery stores. He recently added honey bees to his operation, and says honey is now his best-selling item--even better than his peaches.

Many of his customers come to the orchard to pick their own fruit, and he takes pride in keeping a neat, pleasant place for them to come.

Kelley applied for a grant from the Kerr Center in 1998, requesting to do a demonstration/research type project. He was awarded a three-year grant for nearly $7,500 for his project. He will measure his successes by fruit yield and tree health.

After one year of trying new methods he has maintained good yields and says his soil tests show the composted chicken litter and commercial fertilizer have produced the same levels of fertility. Based on chemical analysis, he uses either 150 pounds of composted litter or nine pounds of 10-10-10 commercial fertilizer per tree.

The abundance of chicken litter in southeastern Oklahoma could lower his fertilizer costs, Kelley thinks, and possibly increase organic matter in the soil. In turn, it's possible that more soil organic matter might increase fruit yields over time.

Kelley will host a field day at his orchard on June 23, from 6 p.m. until dark. A free hamburger dinner with peach ice cream will be served. Advance registration is required, call the Kerr Center.

The proper use of chicken litter in his orchard meets the Kerr Center's goals for sustainability because it takes animal wastes which might otherwise cause pollution and puts them to use as fertilizer at the proper rates to prevent such problems.

Just as important, Kelley has reduced his pesticide usage, and therefore his personal exposure and his financial risk. He does this by using insect traps and spraying for pests only when needed. Before he began using these Integrated Pest Management (IPM) methods, he just sprayed for insects on a regular schedule, as do many orchard operators.

Now, he uses traps in the growing season to monitor the presence of his four main pests–apple maggots, peach tree borers, peach limb borers and coddling moths-- and sprays insecticides to control them only when "threshold" levels show there is an economic pay-back.

IPM makes his operation more sustainable by reducing financial risk. This can increase profit margins in normal years, and may be even more important in years when freezes take the entire crop. He doesn't have as much at risk.

"It's not as bad now when I lose a crop, since the Kerr Center's been helping me keep my costs down," Kelley adds.

In March, the Kerr Center's Oklahoma Producer Grant Program awarded its grants for this year. (Descriptions will appear in the next newsletter). This fall, the program will accept grant applications for 2001. For more information contact Alan Ware or David Redhage at 918-647-9123 or mailbox@kerrcenter.com.

Grazing Control Makes the Grade for Grant

Howard "Pudge" Beavin wants to take better care of his land. The NRCS wants to reduce sediment in the flood control lake on Beavin's land. The Kerr Center decided to help.

To make that short story longer, Pudge Beavin and wife Joyce could see that the half-section of land they had leased for many years just west of Cheyenne was getting worse and worse. The pasture was getting more bare ground and the upland wheat ground was getting poorer and poorer.

"I told my wife one day, 'If we don't take this back, all we're going to leave the kids is an old weed patch,'" Pudge says.

"The whole place looked like that bald knob over there," he says. In other words, mostly bare ground and red shale pebbles with some broomweed and a few sprigs of ragweed and annual grass here and there.

Greg Allen, the NRCS district conservationist at Cheyenne, agrees: "The place really was abused. Pudge came to me and said I'm tired of seeing it that way. I'm taking it back."

Allen had more reasons for wanting to help the Beavins than just his basic responsibility to help landowners. Running through the Beavins' land is the Sergeant-Major watershed and on their land is one of six upstream flood control dams. These lakes are some of the oldest in the nation, and the NRCS wants to reduce sedimentation into them, hopefully extending their lives.

Pudge Beavin's desires fit with NRCS goals, and those fit the Kerr Center's specifications for a more sustainable agriculture. Beavin applied for one of the Center's producer grants last year and was approved. He requested help converting some of his wheat ground to grass, laying water line to create new water points and cross-fencing the property for rotational grazing.

"Pudge" Beavin's native pasture will be subdivided once when he starts rotation grazing.

The Kerr Center's selection committee approved Beavin's proposal because well- run rotational grazing does several things to improve sustainability. It conserves soil by increasing the number of plants and improving their health. Soil loss is nearly irrevocable, especially in the western Great Plains. When erosion is reduced it improves water quality downstream and extends the life of ponds. Rotational grazing also reduces the need for off-farm, purchased inputs. Over time, grasses and forbs of higher quality almost magically return to the land, increasing the nutritional plane for livestock and the amount of forage produced. Further, Beavin was converting crop ground to permanent cover, another measure which saves soil and reduces reliance on purchased inputs.

In addition to approving Beavin's basic proposal, the Kerr Center sent him to one of the grazing schools it sponsors. These concentrate on the rudiments and function of cell grazing.

"This cell grazing is pretty interesting," Beavin says. "Once you commit to it, it's a completely different way of thinking."

Pudge has laid his water line and begun setting fence posts. He will start with five paddocks – three paddocks of Old World bluestem and two of native pasture. In the long run, he expects to add more paddocks and get more control of his grazing. As a side benefit, he hopes he'll be able to stock more cows than the county average and do it with fewer inputs.

"If we could run 10 acres to a cow and improve our land it would be fantastic," Beavin says. "I hope to see the tall grasses come back."

Attitudes Concerning Biotechnology: Survey Results

– Manjula Guru

The Kerr Center conducted a random survey in November 1999 to assess the existing level of awareness regarding biotechnology issues among consumers and producers. The survey results have been published in a booklet, *Attitudes Concerning Biotechnology*.

We feel that the results of this survey will be of great value in implementing future regulations and policies with regard to bio-engineered products, keeping in consideration not just the views of farming communities, but also of non-farming communities. Both producers and consumers need to critically weigh the various issues regarding genetically modified foods and make their own decisions.

The survey was designed to provide sound statistical results and conclusions (using actual, not simulated data). It is for this reason that we conducted an analysis of not only the overall agreement, disagreement, and indecision among those surveyed, but also analyzed and compared the attitudes held by people of different age groups. A sampling of comments from those surveyed are also included in the report.

Survey questionnaires were sent all over the U.S. to urban as well as rural communities, and to agricultural as well as non-agricultural ones (the survey format mailed out along with the compiled results is presented in Table 1).

We mailed out a total of 3,343 surveys and received back 1,006 completed surveys by our deadline, which was December 10. One hundred and fifty surveys were also conducted at the University of Arkansas and Oklahoma State University. Out of the total of 1156 survey responses received, 106 were from people below 20 years of age, 223 were from those in the age group of 20 to 40 years, 498 were from the 40 to 60 years age group, and 327 responses were from those over 60 years.

A majority in all age groups agreed that laws regulating biotechnology are urgently needed. In response to many of the other questions, however, opinions often varied between age groups.

While the majority of people felt that biotechnology as such has a lot to offer us, biotechnology when applied to agriculture might not be as beneficial. This seems to be the opinion especially among the 20-to 40-year-old group and the 40-to 60-year-old group.

A large percentage of those surveyed were undecided about the role of biotechnology in increasing farmers' profits.

Table 1. Compiled survey results.

#	QUESTION	AGREE	DISAGREE	UNDECIDED
1	Today's food is safer than it has ever been?	50.59%	34.97%	14.88%
2	Genetically modified seeds have increased the quantity of agricultural production?	66.84%	15.38%	17.78%
3	Genetically modified seeds have increased the quality of agricultural production?	40.23%	33.75%	26.08%
4	Biotechnology is good for the environment?	38.41%	27.56%	29.08%
5	Biotechnology is good for agricultural communities?	44.15%	27.73%	26.76%
6	Laws regulating biotechnology are urgently needed?	63.25%	11.61%	25.14%
7	Use of antibiotics in animal feed is a threat to human health?	43.64%	34.94%	21.42%
8	We have more to gain than lose with biotechnology?	35.42%	37.36%	27.21%
9	Biotechnology increases farmer's profits?	38.89%	27.14%	33.97%
10	Biotechnology is good for agricultural trade?	31.88%	31.57%	36.56%

It is also interesting to note that the majority of those surveyed below the age of 20 agreed that today's food is safer than ever before. In contrast, those between 20 and 40 years of age disagreed, while sentiment varied among the remaining groups. The number of people in all age groups who were undecided about whether biotechnology is good for the environment was also high when compared to the responses to the other questions.

Many people who filled out surveys noted that they were interested in learning more about biotechnology and how it could be a threat to human, animal, and environmental health. Many requested reading materials on biotechnology, including the recent Kerr Center publication *Mourning the Increasing Loss of Biodiversity*, which explores biotechnology, crop diversity, and other related issues including intellectual property rights.

Some of those surveyed suggested ways to encourage changes in production methods and in our food system through changing consumer purchasing habits. And most expressed the view that biotechnology may not be at all profitable or good for the globe in the long run. A few of the many suggestions offered by those surveyed were:

- *Too often we jump at new innovations. Only time will tell what widespread repercussions will result from genetic modifications.*
- *Biotechnology increases the profits and is good for the seed companies, but not for farmers.*
- *Biotechnology holds promise. But we are plunging ahead much too fast.*
- *The speed at which genetic technology is being implemented in agriculture is too fast to be comfortable with.*
- *I believe that there should be labeling/disclosure when genetically modified organisms are used. But I think the problem is the unequal power of the agribusiness companies vs. farmers– maybe not the technology itself.*

Voting for Labels

– Maura McDermott

The Sunday magazine *USA Weekend* recently asked readers to vote on this question: Should it be legal to sell genetically-modified fruits and vegetables without special labels? The results, reported in the March 17-19 edition: No: 79%; Yes: 21%. In 1999, 35% of corn and 55% of soybeans were genetically-modified, grown on an estimated 25% of American farmland.

Country-of-origin labels are another hot topic. "Country of origin labeling of food products is an agriculture issue and a consumer issue," says Oklahoma Farmers Union president Phillip Klutts. "Labeling helps consumers have more assurance that they are choosing top quality foods." The Farmers Union supports legislation requiring country-of-origin labeling.

Klutts said that with country of origin labeling, consumers would have the right to choose between foods they know are produced under strict humanitarian, environmental and food safety laws, and foreign products produced without such protective measures.

A recent study found that 78% of consumers polled endorse country-of-origin labeling.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has opened American borders to food produced and processed in other countries. According to the USDA, only 2% of the food crossing American borders is inspected. Reportedly, inspections are often done by opening the back door of a semi and looking at the front few boxes. The entire truckload is then stamped "USDA Approved."

Currently, 22% of the beef Americans consume is imported, according to Idaho congresswoman Helen Chenoweth who is sponsoring national legislation to require country-of-origin labeling of meat products.

While critics of labeling fear increased costs, in Florida where country-of-origin labeling of fruit and vegetables has been required since 1979, grocery stores spend an average of $10 per month to comply.

Publications from the Kerr Center on biotechnology:

- Attitudes Concerning Biotechnology. Report, 19 pages.
- *Mourning the Increasing Loss of Biodiversity* by Kerr Center agricultural policy specialist Manjula V. Guru and Kerr Center president James E. Horne. Report, 37 pages.
- *Biotechnology: A Boon or a Curse?* By Guru and Horne. Report, six pages.

For copies of the above reports contact Manjula Guru at (918) 647-9123; E-mail: manjula@kerrcenter.com or read them online at www.kerrcenter.com

Pioneer Fun at Historical Farm

Along the cattle trails that criss-crossed Oklahoma in the 1870s, two folks much in demand were the blacksmith and the trail-cook. This spring the Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm will hold workshops for those who want to try their hand at working iron or cooking in a Dutch oven.

On Saturday, April 29, from 9-12, Don Helsley of Log Cabin Iron Works will display and demonstrate the use of a blacksmith's tools and forge. He will also show how to make an inexpensive, makeshift forge. Participants will learn the proper techniques in heating, bending, and shaping metal into decorative items. (This is not a horse-shoeing workshop). Class is limited to 15; fee is $20.

On Saturday, May 13, from 9-1, students will learn how to cook a variety of dishes in a Dutch oven with outdoorswoman Luann Sewell Waters. Waters has been featured on OETA's Outdoor Oklahoma and has taught Dutch oven cookery around the country.

Participants will get hands-on experience cooking lunch in traditional Dutch ovens in fire. Waters will explain the varieties and uses of cast-iron cookware and hand out recipes and source lists. To add to the fun, she will be dressed in authentic 1870s garb. Fee is $25.

The Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The 1890 Victorian-style home has been fully-restored and will be open during the workshops. The home is air-conditioned and lovingly furnished with antiques.

Other attractions at the Farm include the herb gardens, the unusual Pineywoods cattle and American Mammoth donkeys, and Buddy, the buffalo. There is also a nature trail and an orchard of old-fashioned fruit trees.

The farm is located ten miles south of Sallisaw on highway 59, then 1/4 mile west on Overstreet-Kerr Road. Space in workshops is limited and must be reserved a week in advance. For more information call Jim Combs at 918-966-3396 or email at okhfarm@brightok.net. The home is open to the public on Fridays and Saturdays from 10-4. Admission is $3 for adults, children under 6 free.

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