Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture Vol. 25, #4 • Winter 1999

Future Farms 2000

What will American agriculture be like in the new century? Is there a future in farming?

It depends on which road we take. Explore the road that leads to independent, profitable family farms and ranches in the 21st century at the Kerr Center's Future Farms conference on February 8 and 9, 2000, at Metro-Tech in Oklahoma City. Successful producers from around the United States and here in Oklahoma will present a cornucopia of new and innovative ideas for making family farms and ranches both profitable and resource-conserving.

Be inspired by folks who are making agriculture work for them and enjoying a quality lifestyle on their farms. Meet farmers who have found success using innovative techniques to grow vegetables on small acreages. Leaders in direct-marketing approaches will share their insights. Ranchers will talk about their approaches to conservation and profitability.

Whether you milk cows or raise wheat, grow vegetables or farm cotton, there is something at this conference for you!

In addition to sixteen workshops, some of the country's top researchers and educators will share their thoughts on the future of agriculture and how to build healthy rural communities and schools. Kerr Center president Jim Horne, ARS Senior Scientist of the Year Joe Lewis, community organizer Marion Jay, maverick agricultural economist John Ikerd, family farm activist Chuck Hassebrook, and small-farmer extraordinaire Joel Salatin will speak.

Salatin will set the tone for the conference with his talk on agriculture that is emotionally, economically, and environmentally-enhancing-- the kind of agriculture that we want our children to inherit.

Cost is $50; $35 for additional family members. Cost includes Tuesday lunch and dinner, and a copy of the conference proceedings. Inside this newsletter is much more about the conference. We hope to see you in February!

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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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Winter Gardening in Oklahoma

The garden year begins in the fall, especially when the soil has lain fallow, last year's harvest having been field weeds...So I staked out a large garden, about a quarter of an acre in all...That first fall I planted winter wheat and the following spring forage soybeans, a cover crop to shade out traces of bermuda grass and a green manure when it had been mowed and turned under...With the hand-guided rotary plow I cut the garden area up into six uniform sections, long rectangles thirteen feet by sixty. Each is plowed separately, raising the bed itself and leaving a drainage ditch between. Over the years I've added so much organic matter- - composted manure and straw, green cover crops, the previous year's growth-- that the garden is six inches higher and the soil light and crumbly...

Much of this work was done on those bright, cool days of winter when I was glad for something to do out of doors. And those fertile, loamy raised beds have every advantage: warming and drying our earlier in the spring, retaining moisture better in a drought, aerating the soil, making it easier to sow the seed and weed the growing plant, and producing far, far more...

The garden year has settled into such a pleasurable routine that I would like nothing better than to have it go on forever: plowing in the fall or winter, rotating the beds so that the previous year's dead furrow becomes next year's headland, planning the garden on the most dismal of winter days when weather has driven me in-- and building up the soil on the dry sunny days when I can work out of doors-- cultivating the garden for a final time in the spring, staking out the crop locations, sowing, thinning, weeding, mulching, training the growing plant, watering with a soaker hose, harvesting...

-- William Paul Winchester,
from his book
A Very Small Farm,
Council Oak Publishing,
Tulsa, 1996.

Guest Speakers

John E. Ikerd, Ph.D is an Extension professor at the University of Missouri, Columbia, and co-coordinator of sustainable agriculture extension programs in Missouri. Raised on a small dairy farm in southwest Missouri, Ikerd is an agricultural economist who has published widely and extensively on topics such as sustainable/alternative agricultural systems, community development, and changes in agriculture including the effects of large-scale swine production.
Dr. Ikerd is currently project leader for a three-state four-year program funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation titled "Sustaining Rural Community Development Through Sustainable Agriculture."

Chuck Hassebrook is program director of the Center for Rural Affairs in Walthill, Nebraska. The Center works with rural people who are starting new farms and businesses, experimenting with sustainable farming systems, and/or initiating policy reform. Hassebrook is a native of Platte Center, Nebraska, where his family is engaged in farming. He serves on the board of the USDA National Commission on Small Farms and on the University of Nebraska Board of Regents. Previously he served as vice-chair of the USDA Agricultural Science and Technology Review Board and as a member of the Iowa State University external advisory committee on bioethics.

Joel Salatin is a full-time farmer on 550 acres in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. A third generation alternative farmer, he returned to the farm full time in 1982 and continued refining and adding to his parents' ideas.
The family's farm, Polyface, Inc. (The Farm of Many Faces) has been featured in National Geographic and other magazines. The farm services roughly 400 customers with salad bar beef, pastured poultry, eggmobile eggs, pigaerator pork, forage-based rabbits, pastured turkey and forestry products through "relationship marketing." He is the author of three books, including YOU CAN FARM: The Entrepreneur's Guide to Start and Succeed in a Farming Enterprise and Pastured Poultry Profit$.

W. Joe Lewis, Ph.D. grew up on a Mississippi farm and is currently a research entomologist with the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) in Tifton, Georgia.
He was recently awarded the 1999 Outstanding Senior Scientist of the Year award by the ARS. He is nationally and internationally recognized in research and planning activities to develop bio-friendly and economically sustainable pest management and agricultural production systems. He has also been active in historic preservation and downtown development in Tifton and currently serves as vice-mayor of the city of Tifton. He has worked with Marion Jay to apply ideas about how healthy ecosystems work to other areas, such as schools and communities.

Marion Jay is a field facilitator for Communities in Schools of Georgia, the oldest and largest dropout prevention network in the nation. The focus of her work is engaging citizens in resolving/ finding solutions to the issues that challenge communities, such as school drop-outs, teen pregnancy, teen crime, and getting people with disabilities into the work force. She and Dr. Lewis have worked together for eighteen years developing their ideas about communities as dynamic living systems. They have concluded that for rural communities to prosper, all elements in the community must be supported: social, economic, infrastructure, arts and culture.

Workshop Leaders

Max Carter has been called "the father of conservation tillage in south Georgia." He began farming in 1955 and farmed conventionally for the first twenty years, then switched to farming no-till (no-plow) for the last 23 years. He raises cotton, peanuts, corn and soybeans. Through his leadership, his county has converted some 40,000 acres to winter cover crops, strip-till and no-till summer crops.

Kent Donica and his family run a cow-calf/ stocker calf/goat operation on approximately 1000 acres near Ardmore, Oklahoma. He is a 1987 graduate of OSU in animal science. He received a producer grant from the Kerr Center in 1998. His three-year project demonstrates how controlled burning can be used with goats to convert land with heavy brush/timber to grass, and how adequate grass cover can prevent erosion and siltation.

Walt Davis grew up on a Texas ranch and now runs a cattle operation near Bennington, Oklahoma. In 1962 he began managing his ranch using the "best" practices of soil fertilization, weed control, animal health and animal nutrition supplementation. This approach resulted in tremendous production but very poor profitability. He shifted his operation towards a lower input, more sustainable program in 1974 and began reeducating himself in grassland ecology. He is now a grazing management consultant.

John R. Dunkin has farms and ranches near Wagoner and Hominy, Oklahoma. He received the region four "Steward" award from the National Cattlemen's Beef Association in 1997. His belief that cattlemen are environmentalists every day has led him to reclaim highly erodible land, improve the forage base, reduce erosion (from 15 tons per year to 2 tons), implement reduced-till farming and increase wildlife and fish habitat on his properties.

Steve Groff and his family farm 175 acres of vegetables and crops on hilly land in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. He has pioneered the "Permanent Cover Cropping System" which includes no tillage, cover crops, and effective crop rotations as a way to increase profits, save soil, and reduce pesticides. The farm won Pennsylvania's 1998 Clean Water Farm Award and is one of nine "harmony demonstration" farms nationwide promoting technologically advanced and environmentally friendly farming practices.

Alex Hitt and his wife Betsy have been farming since 1982 in North Carolina. They make their entire living on less than five acres of vegetables, cut flowers, and berries, growing almost 200 varieties. They market their produce

New Ideas

through farmers' markets, grocery stores and restaurants. Alex also serves on the board of the Chapel Hill- Carrboro Farmers' Markets (two markets, 100 members) and is active in the USDA's southern region SARE program.

Rodney Holcomb is an assistant professor and agribusiness economist with Oklahoma State University's Food and Agricultural Products Research and Technology Center. His primary focus area is the economics of processing and marketing value-added agricultural products. He also serves as a state resource on market trends for various food products, and is an expert on the legalities and liabilities of operating food businesses.

Rick Maloney has served as director of the Market Development Division of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture (ODA) since 1995. The division manages programs to develop domestic and international markets for Oklahoma agricultural products. He has been instrumental in developing the value-added processing sector for commodities produced within the state. He also directs ODA's Ag in the Classroom, Farmers' Market, Market News and Rural Economic Development programs.

Dan Nagengast grew up on a wheat farm in Nebraska. A former Peace Corps volunteer in Africa, he became director of the Kansas Rural Center in 1991. In 1994 he organized a cooperative of eight organic vegetable, herb, fruit, meat and poultry growers which direct markets to a C.S.A. of 350 families in Lawrence and Kansas City. He also works on projects which develop urban agriculture and markets, such as channeling farm production into a college and a meals-for-the-elderly program.

La Rhea Pepper with her husband Terry operates an organic cotton farm in West Texas. She has spent the last few years developing markets for, as well as developing specific value-added products made from, organically-grown cotton. She is a founding member of the Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative. She is the president of Cotton Plus which sells raw fiber to mills, and also spins and weaves the fiber into various fabrics. She is also is a shareholder in Organic Essentials which manufactures personal and feminine care products from organic cotton.

Jim Robinson is an agroforester with the National Agroforestry Center, a partnership between the USDA, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Forest Service. He was co-chairman of the National Conservation Buffer Conference in San Antonio in 1998. He is an expert on riparian ecosystem management and riparian forest buffers, and is active in training. He began his career with the Soil Conservation Service in 1971.

Richard and Peggy Sechrist follow holistic management practices in their ranching operation in Fredericksburg, Texas. They raise certified organic beef and soon-to-be certified organic pastured chickens. They consider themselves both ranchers and marketers. They have been marketing their products both wholesale and direct to consumers for four years and will share their ups and downs and what works.

Russell Stevens is a wildlife and range specialist with the Noble Foundation in Ardmore, Oklahoma. His primary role is to consult with area ranchers on wildlife and range management issues. He has helped several ranchers integrate wildlife management or recreational leasing into their operations. He also oversees the wildlife management program on the Noble Foundation's Coffey Ranch west of Marietta.

Tom Trantham was a conventional dairy farmer in South Carolina for many years, working 12-16 hours a day, until he found a better way. With the help of the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE) he developed his "Twelve Aprils" rotational grazing dairy system and discovered that farming can be fun! He recently served on the National Commission on Small Farms, and has been chair of the southern region SARE program.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

2000 TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8TH

MORNING SESSION

8:30-9:15	Registration	Lobby
9:15-9:30	Going Down the Right Road	*Jim Horne, Kerr Center*
9:30-10:30	Emotionally-, Economically-, and Environmentally-Enhancing Agriculture	*Joel Salatin*
10:30-10:45	Break	
10:45-11:45	Building Sustainable Communities and Schools	*W. Joe Lewis & Marion Jay*
11:45-12:15	Questions and Answers Moderator - Jim Horne	*Salatin, Lewis & Jay*
12:15-1:15	Lunch – Agriculture at the Crossroads	*Chuck Hassebrook*

AFTERNOON BREAKOUT SESSIONS

	LIVESTOCK & CROPPING SYSTEMS	NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT	MARKETING SYSTEMS
1:30-2:10	A Profitable, Sustainable Ranch *Walt Davis*	Incorporating Wildlife into Your Operation *Russell Stevens*	Cooperative Marketing Ideas *Dan Nagengast*
2:15-3:00	"Twelve Aprils" Dairy: Success with Rotational Grazing *Tom Trantham*	Stewardship is Profitable *John Dunkin*	Adding Value Can Improve Your Bottom Line *Rodney Holcomb* Oklahoma's Cooperative Marketing Legislation *Rick Maloney*
3:00-3:15	Break	Break	Break
3:15-3:55	Permanent Cover: A New Generation Cropping System *Steve Groff*	Managing Riparian Areas for Wildlife and Water Quality *Jim Robinson*	Exploring Value-Added Agriculture *La Rhea Pepper*
4:00-4:45	Less Tillage is Best *Max Carter*	Is there a Place for Biotechnology? *Chuck Hassebrook*	More Than Just Wheat: Adding Value to Your Crop *Rodney Holcomb*
5:30-7:00	Dinner– Sustainable Development for Rural Communities *John Ikerd*		
7:00-9:00	Open for organization meetings *(Contact the Kerr Center to reserve space)*		

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9TH

8:30-9:10	Let the Goats Do the Work: Biological Brush Control *Kent Donica*	Successful Approaches to Marketing Vegetables *Alex Hitt*
9:15-10:00	Alternatives to Industrial Vertical Integration in Agriculture *John Ikerd*	Marketing Beef Directly to the Consumer *Richard and Peggy Sechrist*
10:00-10:15	Break	
10:15-11:30	Relationship Marketing *Joel Salatin*	
11:30-12:00	Closing Remarks *Jim Horne, Kerr Center*	

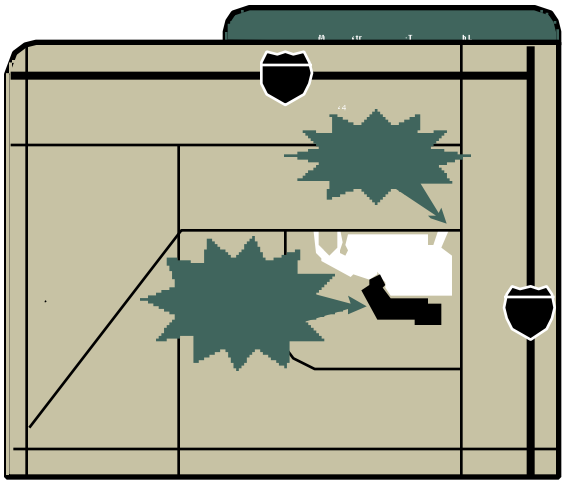
Oklahoma City

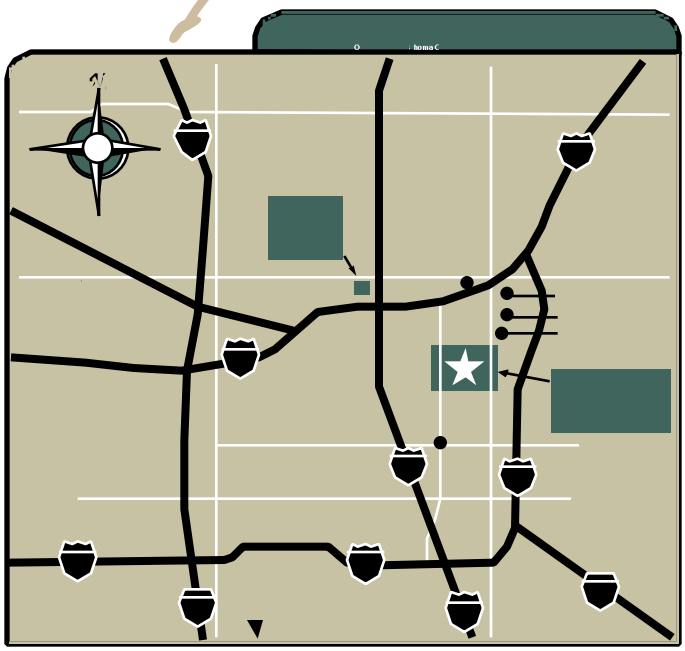
FUTURE FARMS 2000

LODGING:

The Fifth Season Travelodge Hotel
Northwest 63rd and Broadway Extension
6200 N. Robinson Ave. in Oklahoma City is offering special conference rates. Call before January 9, 2000.

In Oklahoma 1-800-522-9458
Outside Oklahoma 1-800-682-0049.





GETTING THERE:

The conference will be held at Metro Tech, Springlake campus, at the Business Conference Center, 1900 Springlake Dr. in Oklahoma City, 405-424-TECH.

REGISTRATION FORM

MUST RECEIVE REGISTRATION BY FEBRUARY 1, 2000

FUTURE FARMS

February 8 & 9, 2000

at **METRO TECH** 1900 Springlake Dr.

Oklahoma City

For more information contact Liz Speake at the Kerr Center 918/647-9123.

Scholarships may be available to cover registration for limited resource farmers and students. Please contact Liz Speake before Jan. 15, 2000 at 918/647-9123 or by e-mail easpeake@kerrcenter.com for more information.

(Please print clearly)

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Mailing Address: _____

_____

City _____ State_____ Zip _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Make check payable to Kerr Center. Mail check and registration to:

The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture
P.O. Box 588,
Poteau, Ok 74953

☐ **REGISTRATION** $50
(includes lunch, dinner and proceedings)

☐ **Registration additional family member** $35
Name _____

☐ **Proceedings only** $10

Vegetarian Meals? ☐ Yes

Biotechnology: Boon or Curse?

– Maura McDermott

Biotechnology's effect on agriculture was the subject of a recent public hearing of the Oklahoma legislature's Special Committee on the Economic Status of Agriculture in Poteau. A new publication on biotechnology from the Kerr Center was also unveiled at the meeting.

Dr. Jim Horne, president of the Kerr Center, and Dr. Charles Benbrook, nationally-respected agricultural consultant and member of the National Academy of Sciences, addressed the committee. Horne outlined the pros and cons of this powerful technology, which involves the movement of genetic material between organisms. Sometimes genes are moved from one species to another, a genetic mixing that would never occur naturally.

L-R: Special Committee members Rep. Keneth Corn, Jack Givens of Farm Bureau, Sen. Gilmer Capps, Jim Horne (speaker), Charles Benbrook (speaker), Sen. Robert Kerr, Sen Paul Muegge, Mason Mungle of Farmers Union, Dennis Howard, Commissioner of Agriculture.

Charles Benbrook and Jim Horne

In his presentation, Horne acknowledged the positives of biotechnology in medicine and its possible benefits to agriculture, such as the creation of pest-resistant and drought-resistant crops. But he raised a number of questions about the safety of Genetically Modified Organisms and the consequences to Oklahoma farmers of the rapid patenting of seed stocks by transnational corporations. He speculated that there may come a day when farmers will not have much choice when purchasing seed. Seeds of the future, he warned, may be genetically engineered to germinate, grow and fruit only in response to certain chemicals manufactured by the same company that sells the seed. This same corporation may also require that the farmer sell his crop to them, thus assuming control of the crop from seed to harvest in a way that is unprecedented. He also warned that biotechnology is speeding up the loss of genetic diversity in crops, making them more vulnerable, in particular, to disease.

Horne has authored, with Kerr Center policy analyst Manjula Guru, a new report which addresses many of the issues discussed at the hearing. Mourning the Increasing Loss of Biodiversity examines the advantages and disadvantages of the biotechnological age to society and farmers in the U.S. and around the world. Why biodiversity, meaning genetic diversity, is crucial to the security of the world's food supply is the theme of the paper. The situation is critical because in this century about seventy-five percent of the genetic diversity of agricultural crops has been lost. The breeding of new strains of pest-resistant crops and livestock depends on maintaining the genetic diversity that remains.

Benbrook echoed Horne's

concerns. In the near future, he said, the world's seed supply will be in the hands of only six major seed companies, now called "life science" companies, only two of which will be American. Biotechnology is a highly controversial international issue, he said, currently the number one environmental issue in the world. "What is unsettling about biotechnology is that while scientists may have the ability to move genetic material around at will, they do not have the knowledge to understand the consequences," he said. An example is Bt corn, which is corn that has had a bacterial insecticide genetically engineered into it. Bt corn was approved for sale after only a couple of years of study,

Key Questions About Biotech

- *Who is profiting from bioengineered crops?*
- *Do these crops have unintended ecological impacts?*

though it is unclear what its impact will be on microorganisms in the soil that make nutrients available to growing plants. He suggested that money would be better spent on agricultural research into preventing insect and weed problems and working with farmers to better understand what is happening in their fields and pastures.

Both speakers made a number of suggestions as to what the state government might do to assure maximum choice for farmers and a safe food supply. Horne urged the creation of a Risk Advisory and Monitoring Council as an early-warning system for potential problems from the use of GMOs. Benbrook suggested that the state establish a database of critical inputs for Oklahoma crops, such as pesticides used in wheat, soybeans, etc. The database would track which corporations control which inputs. The Justice Department needs such information when deciding whether to allow corporate mergers that may be detrimental to the consumers of these inputs.

For a copy of the Kerr Center report, call 918-647-9123 or visit our web site, www.kerrcenter.com. For an electronically-enhanced version of Benbrook's presentation visit www.biotech-info.net/okla.pdf.

Rattlesnake Snap Bean, Anyone?

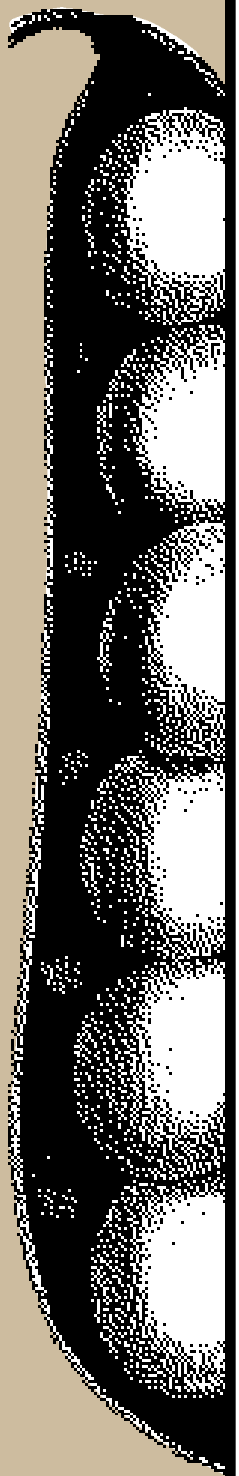
Black Sea Man, Russian Persimmon, and Silvery Fir Tree don't sound like tomato varieties. But they are-- saved from oblivion in Russia and brought to the United States by the Seed Savers Exchange. They join a myriad of heirloom American and unusual foreign varieties of vegetables, fruits, grains, herbs, and flowers preserved and offered for sale by the organization, located on the Whealy family farm in Decorah, Idaho. The 18,000 varieties that are preserved in cold storage at "Heritage Farm" often have charming names and histories, and most importantly, diverse genetics, that need to be preserved.

A free color catalog featuring hundreds of varieties, all trialed at Heritage Farm, is available to gardeners. In addition, one can become a member of Seed Savers Exchange, a non-profit organization. Members receive three publications a year including the annual yearbook in January which offers access to 11,000 rare varieties offered by SSE's members. Many are true heirlooms brought to North America by farmers from their home countries.

Kent and Diane Whealy, founders of SSE, say that gardeners can combat "genetic erosion" by planting heirloom varieties. It is an important effort, as many unusual varieties are dying because of consolidation in the seed industry.

To help preserve our genetic heritage, (and grow delicious produce with names like "Crisp Mint" lettuce and "Moon and Stars" watermelon and yes, "Rattlesnake" snap bean) contact the Seed Savers Exchange at 319-382-5990 or write 3076 North Winn Road, Decorah, IA 52101.

Rare seeds stored at the Seed Savers Exchange in Decorah, Iowa.



OTA to Honor Pratts Foods as Its "Big O" Winner

The Organic Trade Association (OTA) presented its 1999 "Big O" Merchandising Competition Award to Pratts Food & Health Store of Oklahoma City during Organic Day festivities at Natural Products ExpoEast in Baltimore, MD, Oct. 21. Pratts president, J. B. Pratt, is a Kerr Center trustee.

Pratts Food & Health Store is a 32,000 square foot upscale grocery store at 39th and Portland in the northwest section of Oklahoma City. It is part of Pratt Foods Supermarkets, a family-owned conventional grocery chain which has offered certified organic food and nutritional supplements at four of its nine locations since 1989. Organic products are integrated throughout these four "Wellmarket" stores. The Oklahoma City store is the retailer's success story, with organic and natural food products representing over 16 percent of total store sales.

In its award-winning promotion conducted throughout 1998, Pratts Food featured the theme "Bring Home Organic" to build up its sales of organic and natural foods. During its Organic Harvest month promotion in September 1998 alone, the store's produce department experienced a 30% increase in sales versus the previous month."We have taken the natural food store concept and have integrated it into our grocery store. By doing this, we have given our customers a choice that makes it convenient for them to do their shopping," according to the company's award-winning entry.

Among its promotions were signs pointing out that "organically grown" recycles water, builds living soils, preserves farmland, purifies air and water, provides wildlife habitat, reverses global warming, honors rural life and work, grows healthy food, and encourages biological diversity. The company used monthly flyers, sponsorship of a radio talk show "Your Health Matters," ads in a weekly flyer, and special ads during Organic Harvest month as part of its promotional efforts. In addition, all employees in the store's produce and health food sections wear aprons proclaiming "Certified Organic."

"OTA's "Big O" Merchandising Competition is designed to reward excellence in organic produce and grocery merchandising. It is OTA's way of giving industry recognition to outstanding retailing events which feature organic products.

WRITE FOR ORGANIC

SARE Project Funded for Native Pecans

–Dean McCraw, Extension Horticulturist, Oklahoma State University

The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program has funded a three-year project on native pecans which includes two in-depth demonstrations of a legume-based cow/calf grazing system on native pecans and assessment of the system's economics as well as its ecological impact on flood prone sites.

The demonstration project has five objectives:

1. Demonstrate the effects of a legume-based, grazed native pecan orchard management system on soil N fixation, soil characteristics and beneficial insect attraction.

2. Demonstrate trapping and weather monitoring to schedule pecan weevil and scab spray programs compatible with livestock.

3. Demonstrate a fully integrated and sustainable legume-based cow/calf and native pecan production system.

4. Quantify treatment effects on changes to the plant community and estimate the ecological stability and resilience of the plant community.

5. Quantify the economic benefits of legumes, insect scouting, scab monitoring and grazing in a native pecan management system.

This project will consist of large scale research/demonstration plots in producer orchards.

Demonstration areas approximately 48 acres each will be established on each of two demonstration farms, Haydon Farms, Okfuskee County, OK, and Santifer Farms, in Miller County, AR.

Four different treatments will be established as follows: 1) non-grazed with N fertilization of pecan and existing grass sward; 2) non-grazed with legume intercrop without N fertilization; 3) grazed with N fertilization of pecan and existing grass sward; 4) grazed with legume intercrop without N fertilization. Grazed plots will be 10 acres each. Nongrazed plots will be 2 acres each in size. Treatment 3 is the standard in most native pecan operations. Each treatment will be replicated twice in each orchard. Plots will be located to increase the chance of natural flooding of one replication.

Demonstration plots will be maintained undisturbed for 3 years except for legume reseeding and grazing. The Oklahoma Pecan Grower's Association field day will be held at the Haydon Farms demonstration site near Okemah, OK in June, 2000. Additional field days will be scheduled at the Texarkana site to better enable growers to observe project progress and gain increasing familiarity with the concepts.

In addition to the cooperating growers the team responsible for conduct of the project, demonstration of the system and extension of results consists of horticulture, agronomy, entomology, plant pathology, ecology, agriculture economics and soils extension specialists as well as county extension educators from Oklahoma State University, Langston University and University of Arkansas.

The appropriateness of funding an in-depth result demonstration on native pecans is unquestionable. Native pecans contribute significantly to the economy of the areas in which they grow.

The technology needed to implement a best management practices (BMP) program for native pecan and cattle producers is available. However, the interaction of the various system components: legume, livestock, pecan and pest management, has not been appropriately tested for economics nor has an effective extension educational program been developed to deliver it to native pecan growers.

This project will use existing technology to develop and deliver a sustainable BMP system for native pecan and cattle producers while taking into account the critical issues resulting from production in environmentally-sensitive areas.

Building a More Sustainable Beef Operation

Tom Gunn's chemical-free beef operation was a natural fit for a producer grant from the Kerr Center. Gunn applied for a grant in 1998 to help him convert old wheat farmland on a quarter-section east of Lawton to a minimum-tillage forage system growing both crabgrass and rye. In addition, he wanted to cross-fence the property for rotation grazing, and limit cattle access to the two ponds to narrow, graveled pads leading into the water.

Gunn and his wife Linda operate a cow-calf enterprise on about 600 acres east of Lawton. They currently are learning to grass-finish their cattle and market their beef directly to customers. They purchased the property on which they applied for the Kerr Center grant in 1997.

The changes Tom proposed in his grant application do several things to help them do a better job of producing chemical-free beef. The rotation grazing provides better herd health and higher quality forage. The dual-season crop of crabgrass in the summer and rye in the winter extends the grazing season for quality, growing forage (and every cattle grower knows there's no better medicine than green grass).

The limited pond access with a gravel base encourages the cattle to get a drink and leave, since cattle don't like to loaf on gravel. This decreases the chances they will urinate and defecate in the water, spreading disease and parasites. When Gunn applied for his grant the Kerr Center was specifically focusing on one area of sustainability water quality. In 1999, the center broadened its scope to include any and all the eight areas it deems important to a more sustainable agriculture.

Goals for a Sustainable Farm

1. Conserve and create healthy soil.
2. Conserve water and protect its quality.
3. Manage organic wastes and farm chemicals so they don't pollute.
4. Select plants and animals adapted to the natural environment.
5. Encourage biodiversity (of domesticated animals, crops, wild plants and animals, microbial and aquatic life).
6. Manage pests (weeds, disease, insects) with minimal environmental impact.
7. Conserve non-renewable energy resources.
8. Increase profitability and reduce risk.

Obviously, cutting tillage on the old wheat land, some of which is highly erodible, will improve water quality and decrease siltation in Tom Gunn's ponds. His actions also should meet several other of the Kerr Center's criteria for sustainability.

Gunn's low-till crabgrass and no-till rye should conserve soil and improve soil organic matter. Rotation grazing manages organic wastes by distributing them more evenly so they don't pollute. His grass-finished beef are never shut in a feedlot, which further reduces such problems. Furthermore, rotation grazing should decrease his needs for insecticides and herbicides. The rye-crabgrass rotation increases bio-diversity above wheat alone. Protecting the ponds will improve conditions for aquatic life. Reduced tillage will help conserve energy, specifically fossil fuels. Reducing purchased inputs and taking control of one's own marketing should increase profitability. Eliminating the grain crop should reduce risk.

Not everything has gone right for Tom Gunn since he earned the three-year Kerr Center grant. The just-past dry summer hurt his crabgrass yield in its first year and thinned his stand from what he thought it might be. Heavy rains last spring broke the dam of one of the two ponds. That's nature.

On the other hand, the Gunns sold 10 finished calves in 1999 directly to customers, expect to at least double that next year, and believe they are on track to higher profitability and a more sustainable form of production.

The Kerr Center is soliciting grant proposals from producers across Oklahoma that demonstrate or research one or more of the eight goals above. There is also a special grant program for organic producers. For an information packet contact the Kerr Center, 918- 647-9123.

Deadline for proposals is Feb. 15, 2000; grantees will be notified on March 20.

Kerr Center Welcomes New Team Members

Last summer the Kerr Center opened an Oklahoma City office. In addition, over the past six months, several new people have joined the Kerr Center staff. They are Eric Allenbach as public policy analyst, Janie Hipp as vice-president for public policy/education, Manjula Guru as agriculture policy analyst, Nik Mehta as research scientist at the Vero Beach Research Station, and Carol Vise as office coordinator for the Poteau office. Following are short bios of three of these valuable new members of the Kerr Center team.

Eric Allenbach is the policy analyst in the new Oklahoma City office. Eric, a fourth generation farmer, received a B.S. in Public Affairs from Oklahoma State University in 1992. He also holds a Masters in Political Science with an emphasis in Public Administration from Oklahoma State University.

After earning his master's degree, Eric worked as a loan officer/management trainee with the First National Bank of Liberal, Kansas. In July of 1996, Eric and his father formed a partnership in the family wheat and alfalfa farm near Burlington, Oklahoma. Eric says he learned a great deal about the general farm business and marketing in the three years he was a partner and manager at Allenbach Farms. His hobbies include music and quarter horses.

Manjula Guru is the new agricultural policy analyst at the Poteau office. A native of New Delhi, India, she has lived much of her life in the U.S. and the Caribbean. She received a M.S. in agricultural economics in 1999 and Master of Laws degree in 1997 from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. She has studied agricultural production and marketing economics, agriculture and rural development policies, and environmental and agricultural law. She has also researched the impact of pesticide regulatory policies on U.S. rice production.

By working in the areas of agriculture and law, Manjula is carrying on a family tradition: her father is a lawyer and her grandfather was an agricultural landowner in India.

Janie Simms Hipp is the new vice-president for public policy and education at Poteau. Until recently, she was interim director of the National Center for Agricultural Law Research and Education and a research assistant professor in the law school at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. While at the Ag Law Center, she co-authored Environmental Laws Impacting Livestock Producers and Environmental Laws Affecting Agricultural Operations, both 50-state publication series. Before going to the University of Arkansas, she was an assistant attorney general in Oklahoma with a special interest in agricultural issues and farm credit. She is a frequent presenter on agricultural law topics for lawyers and non-lawyers.

Janie is a native of Idabel, Oklahoma, and a member of the Chickasaw Nation. She has traveled widely and participated in programs in Eastern Europe, Russia, and South America.

Contact our Oklahoma City office at 405-478-7618; fax 405-478-4848; e-mail kcfsa@flash.net.

Merry Christmas from the Farm

'Tis the season to be jolly at the Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm. The Farm will hold its annual Christmas Open House on Saturday, December 11, from 10-4. Come see the elegant fourteen-room Victorian home decked in its Christmas finery and sample home-baked candies, cookies, and cakes. Three Christmas trees, antique dolls and toys, and unusual decorations will bring Christmas cheer to the candle-lit rooms.

While touring the one-hundred-year-old historical home, visitors may stop in at the gift shop. Oklahoma-grown herbs, spices, homemade scented soap, potpourris, and a variety of other unique crafts are available.

Sales go to support educational activities for schoolchildren throughout the year.

Admission is $3 per person, under 6, free. Volunteers from the Spiro Historical Society and Chamber of Commerce help decorate the house and proceeds go to the Spiro Angel Tree.

The Farm will also be open to Christmas visitors December 10, 17 and 18; but closed December 24, 25, 31 and January 1 for the holidays. The Farm is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Located ten miles south of Sallisaw on highway 59, then west one-quarter mile on Overstreet-Kerr Road. For further information e-mail at okhfarm@brightok.net or call 918-966-3396.

The Overstreet-Kerr House is decorated for the holiday season.

Grow Something Different: Ethnic and Heirloom Vegetables

Spend a couple of those cold winter days planning next year's crops at the 19th annual Oklahoma and Arkansas Horticulture Industries Show (HIS) on January 7th and 8th, 2000. The show is the premier event for horticulturists in the region. This year it will be held at the Tulsa Community College Northeast campus near the Tulsa airport. A trade show and cutting edge educational programs in seven areas-- vegetables, fruits, herbs, Christmas trees, public gardens, pecans, and sustainable agriculture/ farmers markets-- are on tap.

The Kerr Center is co-sponsoring the sustainable agriculture/farmers markets sessions on Friday, January 7th. In the morning, Steve Salt of Green Valley Farms in Kirkville, Missouri, will present "Growing and Marketing Ethnic Vegetables." Dr. Lee Barnes of Waynesville, North Carolina, will present "The Benefits of Producing Locally-Adapted Heirloom Vegetables" on Friday afternoon. Following Barnes there will be a meeting to discuss forming a statewide farmers' market organization in Oklahoma.

For more information on attending HIS or exhibiting at the trade show, contact Jim Motes at 405-744-5408.

Building Better Partnerships in Your Hometown

How do you put faith into action? Get involved in your community: build better communication, better partnerships, better employees, and better health. Learn how to do these things and more at the Building Better Partnerships in Your Hometown conference, Saturday, February 12, at Canadian Valley Vo-Tech in El Reno. The conference will feature a choice of workshops. Keynote speaker will be Kathleen Kelley, former Colorado legislator and co-vice-chair of the National Commission on Small Farms.

This is the third year for this conference organized by the Rural Community Care Task Force of the Oklahoma Conference of Churches. It is specifically designed for people of faith living in rural areas and small towns who want to make a contribution to their communities.

Why should people of faith get involved in community development? Conference organizers believe that people of faith have a unique contribution to make. Rural and small town churches are places where the experience of community is strong. In this age of splintered families and communities, a sense of community is needed more than ever.

Churches can foster a greater sense of community by partnering with other groups and individuals to help those in need. People of faith can also join with other groups to promote the economic and cultural development in their communities. How to build stronger partnerships between individuals, churches, and other community groups is the focus of this year's conference.

Sponsored by: Oklahoma Conference of Churches, Kerr Center, United Methodist Rural Fellowship, Rural Health Projects/Northwest AHEC, The Presbyterian Church, OSU Cooperative Extension Service, The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma, U.S. Representatives Frank Lucas (6th District) and J.C. Watts (4th District), Farmers Union.

Cost: $20, including lunch; $15 for each additional person from the same community. For more information contact: Rural Health Projects, 580-234-6075

Keynote speaker

Kathleen Kelley is a fourth generation Colorado cattle and grain producer whose life has been profoundly shaped by her agricultural heritage. At age 26 she was elected to the Colorado House of Representatives and served on several agriculture and natural resources committees. She has been a fellow at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government where she taught a semester-long study group on "The American Farm Crisis."

Kelley's most recent work has been as co-vice-chair of the National Commission on Small Farms, which has released A Time to Act, a report calling for comprehensive changes in government policy affecting family agriculture.

WORKSHOPS

Mediation

Participants will witness a dispute and assist with the resolution of the dispute, first through litigation, and then through mediation. Led by Sue Darst Tate, Director, Oklahoma Alternative Dispute Resolution System

Building Better Partnerships

This interactive presentation will discuss the basics of research, group selection, organization, goal setting, and communication of religious leadership in rural communities. Led by Debbie Riddle, Executive Director, Anadarko Chamber of Commerce

Effective Communication and Conflict Management Skills

This workshop offers practical tools for effective communication and conflict resolution presented through interactive learning and group participation. Led by Annita Bridges, Chairperson, Oklahoma Bar Association Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee

Oklahoma PRIDE: Producing Resourceful Informed Devoted Employees

This session will give an overview of the quality customer service program, OK PRIDE, and how to use a PRIDE program in your community. Led by Mary P. Selk, Co-author, OK PRIDE program, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

Parish Nurse Program

This presentation will review the role and responsibilities of a parish nurse, how a church can develop a parish nurse program, and possible funding options. Led by Lanette Terry, Harper County parish nurse.

How Do You Put Faith into Action?

Some topics covered will be how to organize meetings, increasing global corporate power, and market concentration. Led by Kathleen Kelley.

DECEMBER 11

Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm Christmas Open House, highway 59, ten miles south of Sallisaw, 918-966-3396

JANUARY 7 & 8

19th Annual Horticultural Industries Show, Tulsa Community College, 405-744-5408

JANUARY 21-23

Sustaining Farm Families and Communities: The Future Depends on Us! Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SSAWG) conference and trade show, Jekyll Island, Georgia

FEBRUARY 8 & 9

Future Farms: New Ideas for Family Farms and Rural Communities conference, Metro-Tech, Oklahoma City, 918/647-9123

FEBRUARY 12

Building Better Partnerships in Your Hometown conference Canadian Valley Vo-Tech, El Reno, 580-234-6075

SSAWG CONFERENCE SET

The 2000 Southern SAWG conference and trade show on lovely Jekyll Island, Georgia, January 21-23, will feature workshops and intensive sessions, marketing and farming discussion sessions, youth program, trade show with 50-70 vendors, food showcase buffet, live auction, organic cotton fashion show and much more! For more information contact Chris Campany at 225-336-9532 or visit the conference website at ww.attra.org/ssawg/

Have a great Millennium!

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture
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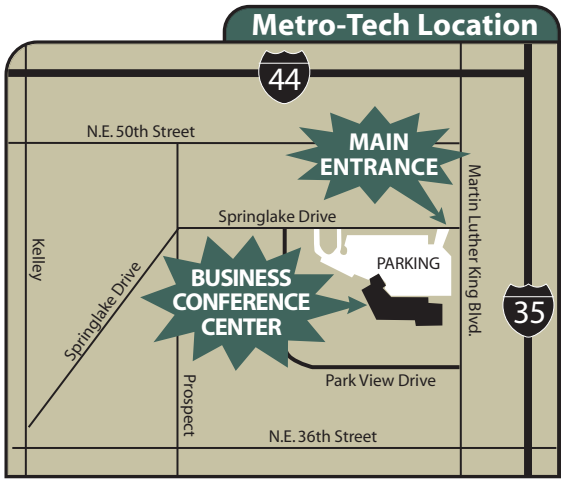
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Martin Luther King Blvd.
Kelley
Springlake Drive
BUSINESS CONFERENCE CENTER
PARKING
35
Park View Drive
Prospect
N.E. 36th Street

BACK

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N
244
35
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39TH EXPRESSWAY
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Will Rogers Airport
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