Field Notes

Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture E-Newsletter

E-Field Notes
October 2022

As this last week of October flutters past, don't forget to join in the **Bat Week** festivities.

David Redhage gets this issue rolling with a shout out to **SARE** for its **extensive library of useful publications**.

For those of you interested in **regenerative agriculture**, there's a new third-party label to help farmers and ranchers reap some recognition - and perhaps price premiums - for their products, as well as giving customers a hand in locating them.

If you thought that Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds" was as scary as bird-based horror stories got, the **latest numbers from the U.S. State of the Birds report** may change your mind.

Next time you pick up a package of out-of-season produce from across the country - or around the globe - you may want to keep in mind a new study showing just **how much of the food system's greenhouse gas emissions come just from hauling that food around**.

In this issue:

- **President's Note: SARE Publications - An Incredible Resource**
- **New Regenerative Certification Program**
- **U.S. Bird Populations in Steep Decline**
- **Transportation Responsible for 20% of Food System's Greenhouse Gas Emissions**
- **Fall Events: Bat Week, USDA Signup Deadlines, Fall/Winter Gardening, Conferences....**

Thankfully, no matter how far away you are, there's no carbon footprint from your **donations** - so **please keep them coming!** If you've already donated, **thank you!**

President's Note: SARE Publications - An Incredible Resource

The Kerr Center **works closely** with the National **Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (SARE)**. Over the years this program has funded research on sustainable agriculture and developed **numerous bulletins, books and handouts covering sustainable agriculture**.

These range from established classics that have been through multiple editions, like ***Building Soils for Better Crops*** and ***Managing Cover Crops Profitably***, to new hits, like ***Manage Weeds on Your Farm*** and ***What Is Soil Health?***

Final reports for funded research can be found and searched on the **online database**.

Publications can be found on **SARE's Outreach Publications page**. **Many** of these books and publications **can be downloaded for free** in PDF format. Others are available for purchase.

This is an incredible resource, so take advantage of it!

New Regenerative Certification Program

Amid perennial dissatisfaction in some quarters with what is and isn't allowed under the **USDA organic standards**, the term **"regenerative agriculture"** has been gaining traction as a way of indicating a production system that in some way surpasses or exceeds them.

Now, there's a **new third-party certification process, with an accompanying label**, for farmers and ranchers wishing to market their production process as "regenerative." "Certified Regenerative" is operated by A Greener World (AGW), which is the certifier behind other, established labeling programs, including Certified Animal Welfare Approved, Certified Grassfed, and Certified Non-GMO.

"Regenerative agriculture" can mean many different things to different people. AGW clearly spells out its own definition of the term, as reflected in its standards: *"A set of planned agricultural practices that ensure the holding is not depleted by agriculture practices, and over time the soil, water, air and biodiversity are improved or maintained to the greatest extent possible."*

Most definitions of regenerative agriculture are centered on building soil carbon. AGW's standards include that, but also go well beyond that basic requirement.

AGW's **Certified Regenerative webpage** includes links to the organization's regenerative standards, frequently asked questions about the standards, an application for certification, a directory of certified farms and products, and a chart comparing AGW's label to other regenerative standards.

U.S. Bird Populations in Steep Decline

Think Halloween and birds, and you might be reminded of the Hitchcock movie "The Birds," in which all the world's birds flock together to attack humankind.

Even more frightening, though, is the opposite, going on in the real world right now. **U.S. bird populations have dropped by a quarter in the past 50 years - and the decline continues.**

That's the word from the **2022 U.S. State of the Birds report**. Across nearly all habitats - from forests and grasslands to oceans and deserts - bird populations have declined rapidly since 1970. **Overall, the bird population has declined by 25% since 1970 - a loss of 3 billion birds. In the Great Plains, the drop is even sharper, at 33%.**

The report identified **70 "tipping point" species that lost half their numbers over that time span, and are likely to lose that much again in the next fifty years**. Many **widely-known Oklahoma birds** make the list, including the American golden-plover, Harris' sparrow, bobolink, and chimney swift.

The **silver lining** in all of this is that **birds in one habitat - wetlands - are bucking the trend**. That fact also **points the way toward recovery strategies for bird species in other habitats**, as waterfowl have benefited from decades of coordinated conservation efforts by a wide range of stakeholders.

Read more....

Transportation Responsible for 20% of Food System's Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Remember the term "**locavore**"? First coined back in 2005, it made the Oxford Word of the Year list just two years later. It captured the idea that **many negative impacts of the food system can be reduced or even eliminated just by eating food grown closer by**, instead of across the continent or around the world.

After the wave of local-food enthusiasm in the early 2000s, the food system has become much more localized, and we're all essentially locavores now - right? Well, not so fast. According to a study published over the summer, **transportation still accounts for a whopping one-fifth of the food system's greenhouse gas emissions**.

That's quite a bit higher - as in, **seven times higher - than previous estimates**. It's also head and shoulders above estimates for other sectors, like industry and utilities.

Most of these emissions - around 36% - come from shipments of fruits and vegetables. So, while growing fresh produce generates smaller quantities of greenhouse gases than raising livestock, the situation is reversed when it comes to transporting them.

"Since vegetables and fruit require temperature-controlled transportation, their food miles emissions are higher," said Dr. Mengyu Li, the lead author on the study.

Higher-income countries account for the bulk of food transport emissions. For example, the 12% of the global population living in the wealthiest countries is responsible for nearly half the total global food system emissions.

The study's authors indicated several policy directions that governments and investors could pursue to reduce the food system's greenhouse gas emissions. However, they also acknowledged that consumer preferences are the largest factor. (Think of Chilean cherries and Californian lettuce in Oklahoma supermarkets in January.)

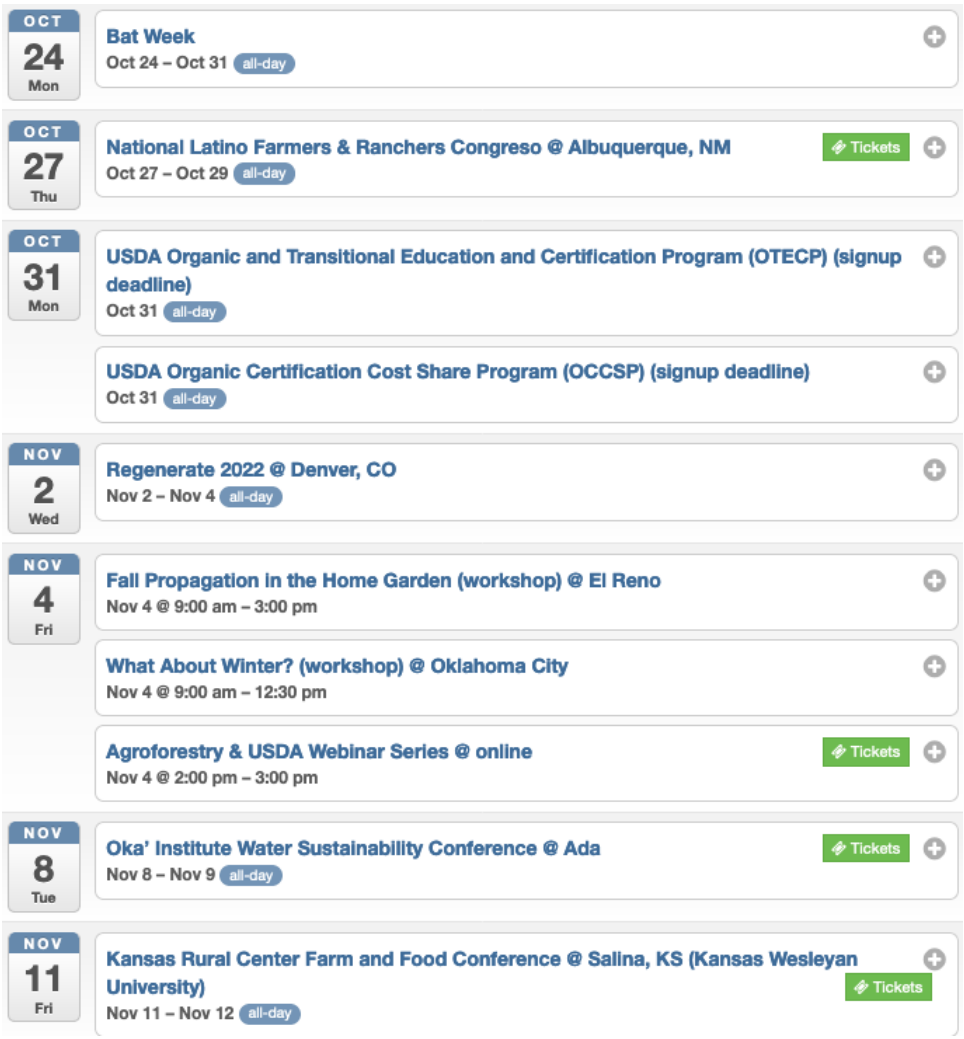
The **study**, which included data from 74 countries and 37 economic sectors, was published in the June 2022 issue of the journal *Nature Food*.

Fall Events: Bat Week, USDA Signup Deadlines, Fall/Winter Gardening, Conferences....

Bat Week isn't over yet! Celebrate, and learn more about, these underappreciated pollinators and pest control specialists.

The **signup deadline** for two USDA **organic cost-share** programs, OTECP and OCCSP, is October 31.

On November 4, OSU Extension has workshops on **fall propagation** (El Reno), and **winter garden preparations** (Oklahoma City). The same day, you can go online for the latest in the **Agroforestry & USDA webinar series**, profiling USDA programs that can help with agroforestry enterprises.



Conference season is cranking up:

- **National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Congreso** (Oct. 27-29 - Albuquerque, NM)
- **Regenerate 2022** (Nov. 2-4 - Denver, CO)
- **Oka' Institute Water Sustainability Conference** (Nov. 8-9 - Ada)
- **Kansas Rural Center Farm & Food Conference** (Nov. 11-12 - Salina, KS)

Full details on these and other sustainable agriculture learning opportunities, as always, can be found on the Kerr Center's online **events calendar**.

Don't forget that you can also use our online calendar to **keep yourself and your friends up to date** on these and other upcoming events, including our tours:
- **Subscribe to our feed** and receive **updates to your personal calendar** as they are made.
- **Share events on the calendar** via a number of **different social media sites**, including Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest.

Support the Kerr Center

Since 1965 the Kerr Center has been reaching out to folks in Oklahoma and beyond. Today, the Friends of the Kerr Center help us continue this vital work! If you enjoy reading this newsletter or visiting our website, please consider making a gift to the Kerr Center today!

Quick Links...

Kerr Center website

Find us on Facebook

Contact Information

The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture
24456 Kerr Road
Poteau, OK 74953
Phone: 918.647.9123
Fax: 918.647.8712
mailbox@kerrcenter.com