

### Kansas Rural Center to Host Annual Farm & Food Conference

The Kansas Rural Center will host its annual Farm and Food Conference November 18 and 19, 2016, in Manhattan, Kansas, at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel. This year's speakers and workshops will embody the theme, "Transforming Our Farms, Our Food and Our Future: Building the Road as We Go."

The two-day program will highlight conservation and diversified farming systems with an emphasis on pollinators and soil health on day one, and on local food systems and how collaboration and networking is critical to developing a successful local and regional food system on day two.

The conference promises to have something for a broad spectrum of attendees—from conventional and organic farmers, to beginning and established farmers, conservationists and environmentalists, and local food advocates and community leaders.

Explaining this year's conference theme and content, KRC's Executive Director Mary Fund states, "No one has all the answers to building a better food and farming future, but we can't wait until we do. We must do what we can with what we've got, where we are, and "build our road as we go." This year we hope to share with folks the many ways to do that with farming practices, local food systems and communities."

Each day will include 12 to 15 workshop sessions ranging from the very practical how-to's for farmers and ranchers to policy analysis and issue presentations. New this year, North Central Region – Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (NCR SARE) is co-sponsoring an entire track of SARE funded farmer research project sessions titled "The Farmer Forum."

Keynote speakers include Dr. Jonathon Lundgren, on day one. Lundgren is an award winning entomologist and agroecologist, who worked for USDA ARS for 11 years before starting his current project - Blue Dasher Farm, a research and demonstration farm. He will speak on the importance of pollinators and diversified farming to the health of farming overall and to the food system.

The second day will welcome Dr. Liz Carlisle, currently a fellow at the Berkeley Food Institute's Diversified Farming Systems Project and teaching at University of California at Stanford this fall. Carlisle is the author of *Lentil Underground*, a non-fiction book recounting her research and experience working with Montana's sustainable, organic and local food movement and the social networks that organized to make it all work.

Breakout sessions will focus on local food systems, community food solutions and economic opportunities, farm transitions and beginning farmer opportunities, farming practices and marketing strategies for diversification, conservation on the farm, food and environmental policy, and organizing/communicating for social change. A more detailed agenda will be available later.

Each day will include a lunch from locally-sourced ingredients and will offer conference attendees time for networking and visiting exhibitor booths in order to connect with and learn more about the great people and exciting things happening in farming, food production, and the environment, in Kansas and beyond.

KRC welcomes sponsorships at several different levels and benefits to sponsorship. Cost to attend the conference is \$65 per day which includes access to all presenters, lunch and snacks both days, and a Friday evening social hour. Scholarships may be available.

To learn more about becoming a sponsor, registering, or scholarships at this year's conference visit

<http://kansasruralcenter.org/conference-2016/> or call Natalie Fullerton at 866-579-5469, Extension 701, or email [info@kansasruralcenter.org](mailto:info@kansasruralcenter.org).

The mission of KRC, a non-profit research, education and advocacy organization founded in 1979, is to promote the long-term health of the land and its people through research, education and advocacy that advance an economically viable, ecologically sound, and socially just food and farming system. For more information, visit [www.kansasruralcenter.org](http://www.kansasruralcenter.org).