

Summer Fun Farm Tour Series Kicks-off

Kansas Farmers Union and the Farmer Veteran Coalition of Kansas are offering new and aspiring farmers an opportunity to visit nine Kansas and Missouri farms and learn from educators, producers and other experts about topics ranging from farm food safety to business planning.

The Summer Fun Farm Tour Series runs every other Monday in August and includes stops across the northeastern region of the state, a local foods lunch, networking, and an educational session. There is no cost to participate.

"Farm tours combined with a workshop topic provide useful information for producers at any level of experience. These three days are geared for beginning and aspiring individuals who want to farm," said Mary Howell, membership specialist for Kansas Farmers Union.

"Experienced farmers and ranchers will share their own story and what works for them to provide ideas the attendees can take home and apply. No farmer has enough time or money to try everything on their own. The networking among producers provides shared farming experiences and valuable intelligence that makes the learning curve less severe and the farm more successful," Howell explained.

The nine featured farms - many operated by beginning farmers and military veterans - raise everything from fruits and vegetables, to beef, sheep and poultry. A diversity of production types are represented. The farms sell their products across numerous marketing channels including U-Pick, direct sales at markets, wholesale to stores and restaurants, and online.

August 1 farm tour stops are **Gibbs Road Farm**, Kansas City, KS; **JET Produce and Meats**, Leavenworth, KS; and **Green Thumbs Up**, Leavenworth, KS. The day's educational session focuses on the Food Safety Modernization Act and what it might mean for your farm with K-State Research and Extension-Douglas County Horticulture Agent Marlin A. Bates. Registration deadline for the first session is July 28.

August 15 farm tour stops are **April Valley Farm**, Leavenworth, KS; **Schwinn Produce Farm**, Leavenworth, KS; and **Prairie Garden Farm**, Basehor, KS. The day's educational session focuses on developing effective grant writing strategies with Don Craig, recipient of a Farmer Veteran Coalition Fellowship; Mercedes Taylor-Puckett, Kansas Farmers Union grant specialist; and Kerri Ebert, KS-SARE and Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops.

August 29 farm tour stops are **Green Dirt Farm**, Weston, MO; **Oregon Trail Farm**, Leavenworth, KS; and **Hillside Honey Apiary**, Easton, KS. The day's educational session focuses on solid record keeping practices for your farm and developing a business plan.

Additional details for each day, including farm and workshop descriptions, are available at kansasfarmersunion.com/events/.

Each day begins at 8:00 a.m. at the National Agricultural Center and Hall of Fame in Bonner Springs, KS. After visiting the three farms, participants return to the Hall of Fame by 12:30 p.m. for a local foods lunch sponsored by Frontier Farm Credit.

Following the meal, Dawn Gabel shares the story behind the National Agricultural Center and Hall of Fame and a representative of Farm Fresh HQ, a food hub recently launched in NE Kansas, outlines wholesale market opportunities. The featured afternoon ag education session concludes by 4:00 p.m. each day.

Kerri Ebert, coordinator for the Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops at Kansas State University, believes the farm tour series is an excellent opportunity for beginning and experienced farmers to learn tips and tricks from other farmers while visiting a mix of farm types. "The wonderful part of farm tours is that everyone learns - the host and the attendees alike," said Ebert.

The tours are free, but registration is required. Registration is now open for all three tours at kansasfarmersunion.com. For more information about the Summer Fun Farm Tour Series or to RSVP by phone, contact Mary Howell at 785.562.8726.

To join a mailing list to receive updates on the farm tours and other events planned by the beginning farmer team, send an email message to kfu.mercedes@gmail.com.

The Summer Fun Farm Tour Series is made possible through funding from Farm Aid and a Frontier Farm Credit sponsorship. Tour partners include Kansas Farmers Union, Farmer Veteran Coalition of Kansas, Kansas Beginning Farmers Coalition, Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops, and Kansas AgrAbility.