

Kansas Rural Center Announces 2012 Savor the Season program

Kansas farms and farmers markets looking to attract more customers with fresh fruits and vegetables this summer will have a new tool thanks to the Kansas Rural Center's "Savor the Season" Program, featuring a variety of materials, recipes, and grower training information about 10 feature crops for this year.

Through Savor the Season, both farmers markets and producers can receive funding and other assistance for promoting these specialty crops. Markets interested in joining the Savor the Season program can find applications online at www.ksfarmersmarkets.org/extras/. Kansas farmers markets have until March 15, 2012 to sign up for the program.

For markets, Savor the Season provides a unified voice in the promotion of diversity and sales of local produce, and funding opportunities through mini-grants up to \$250 targeted at new or smaller markets interested in testing a special events program. For markets with existing special events programs, cost-shares will match up to \$400 for specialty crop promotions. The application deadline for both programs is March 15, 2012.

For producers of fruits and vegetables, Savor the Season partners with K-State Research and Extension, the Kansas Vegetable Growers Association, Kansas Master Food Volunteers and other local agencies to provide resources and specific guidance on production, post-harvest handling and marketing. Savor the Season also provides promotional materials--cards, banners and tip sheets on nutrition and preservation--for display at market booths, along with online resources and webinars.

For consumers, seasonal cards available at farmers markets provide details on selection and storage of fresh produce along with preparation tips and recipes. Cards will be shipped to area markets by April 18, 2012. Consumers, chefs, master food volunteers and others interested in the program are encouraged to submit favorite recipes using these 10 crops to twinrivers.olf@gmail.com by March 1, 2012. Volunteers and food businesses interested in distributing materials and partnering for events should contact their local farmers market.

The mission of the Savor the Season program is to improve the diversity of fruits and vegetables grown in Kansas, and to increase the sales of those crops. The Savor the Season specialty crops for 2012 are: Spinach, Arugula, Snow Peas, Rhubarb, Basil, Bell Peppers, Garlic, Spaghetti Squash, Turnips, and Pumpkins.

The Kansas Rural Center is a non-profit organization working to strengthen rural communities and cultivate grass roots support for public policies that encourage family farming and stewardship of soil and water. Savor the Season is part of Our Local Food, a program of the Kansas Rural Center made possible by a USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant from the Kansas Department of Agriculture. Our Local Food is a network of local farms, farmers markets, food businesses and consumers committed to helping Kansans eat better, and to re-building a sustainable local food economy.

For further information, visit the Our Local Food website at ourlocalfoodks.org/, or these other websites:

KS Farmers Markets

<http://www.ksfarmersmarkets.org/>

Kansas Rural Center

<http://www.kansasruralcenter.org/index.html>