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Organic Farming Forum To Focus on Challenges and Opportunities on November 13 in Salina

Resources, information and networking opportunities for existing and beginning organic farmers, and conservation professionals, as well as anyone interested in learning more about organic farming, will be the focus of a day-long forum on organic agriculture on Tuesday, November 13, 2012. The “Organic Farming Forum: Resources, Research and Marketing Opportunities for Organic Agriculture in Kansas”, which is hosted by the Kansas Rural Center, will be held at the Quality Inn, Conference Room, 2110 West Crawford, Salina, Kansas from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

“Demand for organic grains surpasses the available supply nationwide,” states Mary Fund, workshop coordinator for the Kansas Rural Center, “which means there is opportunity for growers. Organic farming offers producers a way to reduce production costs, adopt a cropping system that offers multiple conservation benefits, and provides a premium in the market place. Like all agriculture, it is not without challenges, and the forum provides a chance to discuss those. The day will also provide an opportunity for conservation district personnel and others who work with organic farmers to learn more about organic agriculture.”

Keynote speaker will be Dr. Michel Cavigelli, lead scientist for USDA’s Farming Systems Research Project at Beltsville, MD. The major focus of the long-term field cropping systems study is to evaluate the sustainability of no-till, conventional till, and organic cropping systems by evaluating the agronomic performance, nutrient dynamics, and soil biological activity, and predicting long-term sustainability of cropping systems. Dr. Cavigelli has Kansas ties as in the 1980’s he was an intern at the Land Institute and also worked as an intern at the Kansas Rural Center where he completed case studies of five Kansas organic farms before going on to complete his graduate and PhD work.

Workshops sessions will focus on the challenges and opportunities for organic farming including organic cropping system plans and crop rotation basics, organic certification,

USDA NRCS, and other resources available for organic farmers, and marketing options. The day will conclude with a roundtable of organic farmers, researchers and others on the challenges and needs facing organic farmers including drought adaptation or management, production issues, and research needs.

“The forum also provides organic farmers and beginning or want-to-be organic farmers an important networking opportunity to learn from each other,” stated Fund. “The final roundtable of the day will provide

time to discuss production problems or issues, certification questions, and list research needs – all helpful in planning future workshops, farm tours, or research projects, or answering a particular question for your farm.”

Forum registration cost is \$15 per person, which covers lunch, snacks and handout materials. The deadline for RSVP for the meal and registration is Wednesday November 7. To register (and for more on the agenda), go to KRC’s website at www.kansasruralcenter.org, or contact KRC at 785-873-3431, or ksrc@rainbowtel.net.

The Kansas Organic Producers Association is also holding its annual meeting the following day at the same facility, so the Quality Inn is providing a conference rate for those interested in lodging. See the registration information at KRC’s website for more.

Forum co-sponsors are the Kansas Rural Center, Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops (KCSAAC), and Kansas Organic Producers Association