

## Local Food News

Kansas State University's Center for Engagement and Community Development has partnered with several organizations, including the Kansas Rural Center, to inaugurate the Rural Grocery Initiative. This initiative has been established to identify and develop models to sustain retail sources of food for rural Kansas citizens.

The goals of the initiative include:

- \*Identifying challenges facing rural grocery stores (in towns with 2,500 residents or less);
- \*Developing responses to those challenges;
- \*Identifying and detailing sustainable business models of grocer operations;
- \*Building virtual and face-to-face information network for rural grocers.

KRC seeks to ensure that our farmers' voices are represented in proposed solutions and rebirth of our local and regional food system.

## Community FEAST Events Planned for Spring

As part of the Rural Grocery Initiative, several rural groceries and their communities across Kansas are participating in case studies to help meet the above objectives. These communities have been invited to participate in a community food assessment called FEAST (Food, Education, Agriculture, Solutions, Together), a model for community organizing that involves community members in addressing their own regional food system challenges.

FEAST was developed by the Oregon Food Bank. OFB's director, Sharon Thornberry, provided training to KRC staff and other partners in the initiative in 2012. As a result, KRC helped lead the first-ever Kansas FEAST last fall, facilitated by Cole Cottin.

The FEAST is typically a 4- to 6-hour gathering, where participants engage in an informed and facilitated discussion about the current state of the community's food system and begin to collectively develop solutions and action that will help build a healthier, more equitable and resilient local food system.

KRC will help facilitate five FEAST events for participating communities in the Rural Grocery Initiative: Cuba, Sedan, and Smith Center, Kansas, led by Cole Cottin, and Minneola, Kansas, led by Natalie Fullerton. These communities' groceries are serving as case studies for the Initiative (Cuba Cash Store, Floyd's Market at Sedan, Gene's Heartland at Smith Center, and Hometown Market at Minneola).

In addition, the Center for Rural Affairs, Lyons, Nebraska, will facilitate a case study in Hebron, Nebraska (Central Market, grocer).

Incoming Kansas Rural Center board member Maria Stewart of Promised Land Farm, Lebanon, is serving as an adviser to the program and supplies Gene's Heartland at Smith Center, which is one of the project case studies.