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Development of Online Food Co-ops Workshop to Focus on Development of Online Food Co-ops

The first in a series of workshops focused on “Food Hubs and Co-ops: How local family farms can feed our communities” will be offered April 6, 2013, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. in the Highland Community College’s Klinefelter Barn, 1774 230th St., Hiawatha, KS. The workshop will provide people who grow and enjoy locally produced food with information on how to form partnerships and food cooperatives. “This workshop was instantly popular, and we realized we needed to develop separate workshops for the food hub and food co-op topics,” stated Mary Howell, Membership Specialist with the Kansas Farmers Union.

Part One of the series, “How to Start an Online Food Cooperative” will be held on Saturday, April 6th. A second workshop exploring “Organization of Food Hubs” will be announced shortly.

In 2003, the Oklahoma Food Co-op modeled a unique approach to connect local consumers and producers. Its approach was to bring consumers and producers together as owners of a cooperative. Through the cooperative, they created an online, virtual marketplace where local products could be ordered and distributed. Together, the consumers and producers shared the costs and risks, as well as the benefits, of establishing a new community food system. Since its launch, at least 16 others have started similar operations using the Oklahoma Food Co-op as a model to organize their operations.

“Joining us for the day will be the founders of several very successful food co-ops, including the Oklahoma Food Co-op, who will provide insight and recommendations based on their experiences.

This workshop is for anyone involved in local food production, marketing, or consumption. Plan to attend the workshop...The room will be full of experts!” said Howell. Nationally known speakers will participate, sharing the success stories from their regions.

Confirmed presenters include: Kim Barker producer and founding board member, Oklahoma Food Cooperative; Darryl L. Birkenfeld, director, Ogallala Commons; Chris Schmidt & Chris Sramek founding board members, High Plains Food Coop; and Bob Mailander former director, Rocky Mountain Cooperative Development Center. Also on the schedule are Vincent Amanor-Boadu, associate professor of agribusiness economics and management at

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University and Dan Nagengast, Lawrence, KS farmer and former tomato processing co-op board member.

A break out session will allow individual discussion and Q & A with presenters. The Glacial Hills Food Center, operated by Glacial Hills RC&D, will be highlighted. Producers can rent the food center's commercial kitchen for food processing. Jeff Downing, general manager of the Midwest Regional Agency, will cover general and product liability insurance for direct market farms. The Brown County Healthy Foods Coalition will provide an update on its Postage Stamp Production Project.

A chuck wagon lunch and refreshments will be served and a registration fee of \$25.00 will be charged to cover expenses, food, and handouts.

Complete event information and registration can be found at <http://foodhubsandcoops.blogspot.com/> For questions, contact: Mary Howell – kfu.mary@gmail.com or Gary Satter – gary.satter@glacialhillsrccd.com.

Sponsoring organizations are Kansas Farmers Union, Kansas Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (KS-SARE), Glacial Hills RC&D, Kansas Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Alternative Crops (KSCAAC), Kansas Rural Center, Brown County Healthy Foods Coalition, Glacial Hills Food Center, and Highland Community College.