

### Keynote Speakers Announced for 2018 KRC Farm & Food Conference

The Kansas Rural Center will host its annual Farm and Food Conference November 16 and 17, 2018, in Wichita, Kansas, featuring three distinguished keynote speakers this year as well as a panel of community leaders. Keynote talks and breakout sessions will exemplify the theme, "Framing Our Future: What is Right about Food, Farming and Communities in Kansas."

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Too often attention, both state and national, focuses on "what's the matter with Kansas?" The conference will highlight the good hard work going on across the state to keep or create jobs and opportunities, to rebuild communities, and to share information on diversifying farming and food enterprises, to develop food councils and related food businesses, and how to advocate for these positive changes.

KRC Executive Director Mary Fund says, "Yes, rural Kansas - and a large swath of rural America may appear be dying - but we are not dead yet. The infrastructure for a new food economy, or a new economy, is not here yet. But, we are building it one farm, one business, and one community at a time." This year's Farm & Food Conference will help tell the stories of how Kansas is alive and the innovative ways in which people are working to keep it that way.

Three nationally renowned keynotes will provide national context and experience to growing local economies through healthy food systems from the soil to the dinner plate.

Friday's keynote speaker, Dr. Mary Hendrickson, University of Missouri rural sociologist, will talk about community wealth and how local food systems can transform economies. Mary is an energetic, optimistic advocate for rural and community economics and culture. She has spent 15 years working to create local food systems in the state of Missouri through University of Missouri Extension where she gained valuable on-the-ground experience in transforming food systems. Dr. Hendrickson is one of the authors of "Harvesting Opportunity: The Power of Regional Food System Investments to Transform Communities," published by the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis last year.

Also on Friday, KRC will host a panel facilitated by Marci Penner with the Kansas Sampler Foundation focusing on, "what is right about Kansas food, farm and communities." The panel of community and farm leaders will share their stories about innovative ways they are working to keep Kansas alive.

On Saturday, David Montgomery, University of Washington professor, winner of a MacArthur Fellowship, and author of *Dirt: The Erosion of Civilizations* and *The Hidden Half of Nature: The Microbial Roots of Life and Health*, a collaboration with Anne Biklé, his wife, will explore the connections between soil health and human health and the farming practices needed for a transformation in agriculture and health. His most recent work is *Growing a Revolution: Bringing Our Soil Back to Life*. Anne Biklé is a biologist with

professional experience in watershed restoration, environmental planning, and public health. Anne's address will focus more on the soil and human health connections. Her work and research connecting the two has appeared in many magazines, radio and documentaries.

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Each day of the conference will also include 10 to 12 breakout sessions featuring presentations and panel discussions on building a new food economy, beginning farmers and the next generation, production and marketing, soil health and conservation practices and management, and state policy, community and civic organizing efforts in Kansas, and more. A full agenda will soon be available online at KRC's website.

Cost to attend the conference is \$70 per day or \$135 for both days which includes access to all presenters, lunch and snacks both days, and a Friday evening social hour. Both days will include a lunch from locally-sourced ingredients and will offer conference attendees time for networking and visiting exhibitor booths.

Register online at <https://kansasruralcenter.org/2018-farm-food-conference/>. Hotel rooms at Hotel at Old Town are available at a discounted rate for conference participants. To reserve a room call 316-267-4800.