

Four-Season Farmer Eliot Coleman to Keynote 2008 Horticulture Industries Show

- Wylie Harris

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Happy Birthday, Oklahoma!



Organic farmer and author Eliot Coleman is the keynote speaker at the 27th Annual Oklahoma/Arkansas Horticulture Industries Show (HIS), January 4-5 at Tulsa Community College's Northeast Campus.

This year's theme, "Celebrating Horticulture: Four Seasons of Success," honors Coleman's specialty, growing fresh vegetables throughout the year.

Intended for existing, new, and potential producers, as well as horticulture-related businesses, in Oklahoma, Arkansas, and surrounding states, the HIS stretches over two days packed with educational programs and trade show activities.

The show consistently provides the latest information on vegetables, fruit, herbs, Christmas trees, farmers' market crops, sustainable agriculture, and public gardening issues.

Coleman will deliver keynote addresses on both days of the HIS, discussing "Labor Saving Tools to Make the Job Easier" on Friday, and "Organic Production Practices for Market Gardeners" on Saturday.

In addition, Coleman will present two sessions during the regular Farmers' Markets/Sustainable Agriculture track on Saturday: "Successful Market Gardening in the Northeast" and "Conversations on Market Gardening." He will also be available for a book signing after Friday afternoon's sessions.



Eliot Coleman

The Voice of Experience

Eliot Coleman has been farming organically for nearly 40 years, raising everything from field and greenhouse vegetables, to rotationally grazed cattle and sheep and range poultry.

An author as well as a farmer, Coleman has made his lifetime of experience in organic farming available in print. In *The New Organic Grower*, he wrote that "in terms of both efficiency and profitability, smaller can be better."

The book, which has sold over 45,000 copies since 1988, covers such topics as farm-generated fertility, movable greenhouses, "plant-positive" pest control strategies, and winter gardening.

continued on page three

The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture offers progressive leadership and educational programs to all those interested in making farming and ranching environmentally friendly, socially equitable, and economically viable over the long term.

The Kerr Center is a non-profit foundation located on 4,000 acres near the southeastern Oklahoma town of Poteau. It was established in 1985.

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Providing Risk Management Skills to Oklahoma Producers: Kerr Center Receives New Risk Management Agency Grant

The Kerr Center has received a new grant from the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA), to help educate Oklahoma farmers and ranchers about managing the risks inherent in agriculture.

Major commodity crops like corn and wheat benefit from widely available crop insurance. However, RMA "priority commodities," including specialty crops such as fruits and vegetables, usually lack such a safety net.

To fill that gap, the Kerr Center's new RMA Commodity Partnership grant, "Providing Risk Management Skills to Oklahoma Producers," will focus specifically on the needs of specialty crop producers such as vegetable growers, and underserved commodity producers such as livestock and forage producers.

"Underserved and small-scale, specialty crop producers need information about innovative methods of reducing risk," says Alan Ware, Oklahoma Producer Grant Program Director.

A Full Calendar

The educational programs funded by the Commodity Partnership Grant will run all year long and throughout the state, reaching as large an audience as possible.

The Kerr Center's biennial Future Farms conference will return again to Oklahoma City in August. This year's conference theme is "Reducing Risk through Effective Planning."

In addition, the Kerr Center will put on four of its popular Farmer Field Days at different locations around the state in 2008. This year's Field Days will focus on marketing fresh fruits and vegetables to local school districts.

This is a vital need for the state's new Farm to School Program, according to

Ware. "Currently, the demand for local produce by the schools exceeds the production levels," he says.

The Kerr Center will also conduct another organic field day as part of the RMA Commodity Partnership Grant program for 2008.

Finally, the new RMA grant will also fund a livestock basic health care workshop. Meant for cattle and goat ranchers, this workshop will address such issues as nutrition, parasites, vaccinations, and breeding.

For an overview of 2007 Kerr Center programs conducted in partnership with RMA, visit the Kerr Center website at www.kerrcenter.com/RMA-projects2007.htm.

Additional partners in the RMA Commodity Partnership with the Kerr Center for 2008 include Langston University, the Oklahoma Farmers' Market Alliance, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry, the OSU Extension and Ag Leadership Class, the Oklahoma Land Stewardship Alliance, the Oklahoma Farmers Union, and the Oklahoma Landowners and Tenants Association.

On the Web

USDA Risk Management Agency
www.rma.usda.gov

USDA Community Foods Projects
www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/cfp/cfp_synopsis.html

Buy Fresh, Buy Local Oklahoma
www.kerrcenter.com/buy-fresh.htm

Oklahoma Sustainability Network
oksustainability.org

Closer to Home: Healthier Food, Farms, and Families in Oklahoma
www.kerrcenter.com/publications/closer_to_home/index.htm

Another of Coleman's books, *Four Season Harvest*, delves further into the season extension techniques that have won him wide renown in the organic growing community. The book explains how to use cold frames and tunnel greenhouses, with no supplemental heat, to keep fresh vegetables going strong all winter long.

Putting those ideas into practice, Coleman and his wife Barbara Damrosch sell fresh salads and vegetables from October through May, grown in unheated and minimally heated greenhouses on their Four Season Farm, in Maine.

Over the years, Coleman has devised a complete system of tools and equipment best suited to his small-scale organic methods. These custom designed tools include things like the pinpoint seeder, Get-A-Grip handle, broadfork, three-tine cultivator, grading rake, and European style scythe.

Sustaining Local Farms and Food

In recent years, the HIS has focused increasingly on the sustainable aspects of local foods, both in the information and the meals available at the conference. This year's program continues that trend.

The vegetable and sustainable agriculture tracks run together on Friday. Farm to School Coordinator Chris Kirby will describe opportunities for producers to participate in that program.

Other speakers in the joint session will include Claudia Crow, discussing her Shawnee farm's two decades in business (see p.11), and the Noble Foundation's Steve Upton, with a report on a recent survey of hoop house production in Oklahoma.

On Saturday, the farmers' markets and sustainable agriculture tracks will combine for an intensive look at certified organic marketing. Professor Phil Crandall of the University of Arkansas'

Food Sciences Department will lead off with, "Your Road to Riches: Marketing Organic Products."

Dr. Jim Shrefler will follow with a progress report the Lane Research Station's 4-year old organic research program (see *Field Notes*, Summer 2007), and the Kerr Center's George Kuepper will brief the audience on the nuts and bolts of becoming certified organic.

In keeping with Eliot Coleman's philosophy of "authentic" food, lunches on both days will feature locally produced, seasonal foods. The Upper Crust, a Tulsa catering service, will prepare and serve the meals. The Upper Crust's owner-operator, Chef Fuad Baitari, has over 20 years of catering experience drawn from his travels and culinary education in Europe.

Lunchtime seating is limited, so HIS organizers recommend early registration as a good way to avoid missing out on these mouthwatering meals.

Something for Everyone

Six separate programming tracks run concurrently throughout both days of the show, in the general topic areas of Christmas trees, fruit, herbs, public gardens and master gardeners, farmers' markets, vegetables, and sustainable agriculture.

The fruit track will spend Friday on discussions of establishment and maintenance of apples, peaches, blueberries, strawberries, and pecans. Saturday is set aside for topics related to grapes.

Two recent hosts of Kerr Center organic gardening workshops, Robert Stelle of Sunrise Acres in Blanchard, and John Leonard of Organic Gardens in El Reno, will make appearances in the herb track on Friday.

Several other herb growers will present on both days, along with a Saturday talk on alternative methods of preserving herbs, fruits, and vegetables by Kamala Gamble of Kam's Kookery and Guilford Gardens in Oklahoma City.

The public gardens and master gardeners track will treat attendees to a

diverse selection of topics: "Polite Fences: Privacy with Plants," drip irrigation, home pesticides, hydroponics, honeybees, vermiculture, and still more.

The vegetables track will cover an equally broad range: everything from labor-saving equipment and farm labor issues to plasticulture and specialty crops and breeding, along with information on the resources available to growers from the Kerr Center, the Noble Foundation, and ODAFF.

The Kerr Center's Doug Walton will appear in the farmers' markets track with an overview of resources available to both producers and market managers. Other presentations in the track will include a discussion of crop choices and rotations, and a farmers' market managers' panel.

Last but not least, the Christmas tree track will offer producers a range of presentations in such areas as pest and disease control and species selection.

The Kerr Center sponsors the Horticulture Industries Show, along with the University of Arkansas, Oklahoma State University, Tulsa Community College, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry, the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, and the Arkansas Horticultural Society.

REGISTRATION

Registration for the HIS is \$50 if received by December 14th, and \$60 thereafter. Single-day rates are \$35/\$38. Additional members of the same family or business register for \$20 each after the first registration, and students and children register for free.

The registration fee includes a CD version of the proceedings of this year's HIS. Additional copies of the proceedings will be available for \$6 each on CD and \$20 printed.

Programs and registration forms are available on the Horticulture Industries Show website at www.hortla.okstate.edu/his.htm. For more information, contact Donna Dollins at donna.dollins@okstate.edu or 405.744.6460.

A New Look Way to Look at Food and Agriculture: Community Food Systems

Looking at food and agriculture issue through the lens of community food security requires one to look at the whole food system and understand how each part affects the whole food security of a given community.

Community food security programs and policies address a broad range of issues, including, but not limited to:

- Participation in and access to federal food assistance programs
- Economic opportunity and job security
- Community development and social cohesion
- Ecologically sustainable agricultural production
- Farmland preservation
- Economic viability of rural communities
- Direct food marketing
- Diet-related health problems
- Access to emergency food

At first glance, some of these topics don't seem to be related. For instance, what does farmland preservation have to do with diet related health problems? Or direct marketing?

But digging a bit deeper, one can see the connections. In Oklahoma, high rates of obesity and diet-related health problems are due in part to diets with too many high fat, high sugar foods and not enough fresh fruits and vegetables.

Many argue that the best tasting, and therefore most likely to be eaten, fruits and vegetables are those grown nearby – picked ripe, handled properly and served as quickly as possible. When this is done, the nutritional value is high.

In order to have highly palatable, fresh fruits and vegetables close at hand, one must have a viable local agriculture and viable local markets such as farmers' markets where farmers make direct sales to consumers.

In order to have a viable local agriculture, local farm land must be preserved. Much of the best farmland in the nation surrounds cities, where it at most risk of being lost, converted into subdivisions or industrial parks (this is also true in Oklahoma). Hence, there is a need for farmland preservation programs.

Looking at food and agriculture through the lens of community food security allows one to see the connections between seemingly unrelated issues.

Sustainable Community Food Systems: The Main Idea

- ▶ Food is produced, processed and distributed as locally as possible
- ▶ Supports a food system that preserves farmland
- ▶ Fosters community economic vitality
- ▶ Requires less energy for transportation
- ▶ Offers consumers the freshest food



Excerpted from the Kerr Center Centennial Report: *Closer to Home: Healthier Food, Farms, and Families in Oklahoma*. The full report is available on the Kerr Center website, www.kerrcenter.com or by calling 918-647-9123.



This project is supported by the Community Food Projects Program of the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, grant # 2004-33800-15141

Good Food for Good Health: Combating Poor Nutrition and Obesity with Fresh Locally Grown Foods

– Doug Walton

Serious problems don't always require complicated solutions. In a state ranked second in deaths due to cardiovascular disease and last in the percentage of adults eating five or more fruits or vegetables a day, it's not very difficult to conclude that if Oklahomans ate better, they would be healthier.

The Girth of a State

As seen in recent headlines and newsreels, obesity has become a national epidemic. In Oklahoma, over one third of adults are overweight, and the percentage of those who are obese has more than doubled since 1990, up from 11 to 24% of all adults, according to the Centers for Disease Control. (See sidebar, p.6 for definitions.) The percentage of children and adolescents who are overweight has also significantly increased over the past few decades.

With obesity comes a long list of associated physical and emotional side effects, on top of increased risks for life threatening and disabling diseases. Researchers at the National Institutes of Health report that overweight and obesity are responsible for a two to three fold increase in the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Likewise, obesity has been shown to raise the risk of diabetes by as much as five times, as was evident between 1994 and 2003, when rates of diabetes doubled in Oklahoma. Other serious chronic diseases besides heart disease and diabetes have also been linked to obesity and poor diets (Table 1). According to the American Cancer Society, "about one third of the cancer deaths that occur in the U.S. each year are due to nutrition and physical activity factors, including excess weight."

While Oklahomans of all ages, income levels, races and genders are facing the health consequences

of poor diets and sedentary lifestyles, an even higher prevalence of chronic illness is found within some ethnic minorities.

Rates of diabetes and obesity are nearly twice as high in Native Americans, and deaths from heart disease are 20% higher in African-Americans, compared to all Oklahomans. Also, the death rate from colorectal cancer among African-American Oklahomans is nearly twice that of their white counterparts.

High Costs of Poor Diets

Obesity and diet-related illnesses place a huge burden on the state's health care system. They also significantly impact the productivity and quality of life for many Oklahoma families. Studies cited in the journal *Obesity Research* found that obese adults have 36% higher average medical expenditures compared with those of normal weight adults.

In 2003, the total annual medical costs of obesity in Oklahoma were estimated to be \$854 million, with approximately 45% of these costs borne by Medicare and Medicaid. The annual costs of cardiovascular disease and lost productivity from death and disability are estimated at nearly five billion dollars in Oklahoma.

These heavy financial tolls are passed on to families through ever increasing health care prices and insurance premiums, as well as through higher taxes to offset government health programs. Furthermore, as family members become consumed with caring for their loved ones, their own personal productivity at work and in their communities is diminished.

From the *2005 State of the State's Health Report*, the Oklahoma State Board of Health concludes, "Unless we can reverse the obesity epidemic, especially among our youth, our healthcare system will be strained to the breaking point as the population ages."

Defining and Measuring Overweight and Obesity

Being overweight simply means having a body weight that is disproportionate to one's height.

Obesity occurs when this height to weight relationship becomes extreme.

Both overweight and obesity are universally measured using the Body Mass Index (BMI), which is a simple calculation showing an individual's body weight adjusted for height.

This and the following articles are excerpted from *Closer to Home: Healthier Food, Farms and Families in Oklahoma*, the Kerr Center's contribution to the Oklahoma centennial. Editor: Maura McDermott Lead Writer and Researcher: Wylie Harris Researchers and Writers: Doug Walton and Mary Penick.

The book is available by emailing or calling the Kerr Center (see p. 2). Or go online at www.kerrcenter.com.

Made possible by a grant from the USDA Community Foods Program.

Garbage In / Garbage Out

"Calorie addiction" is cited by the State Department of Health as one of the top causes of death and disease in Oklahoma.

Over the past 30 years, U.S. diets have undergone dramatic changes, marked by increased consumption of fast foods, soft drinks and high calorie processed foods. USDA food consumption data shows that between 1970 and 2003, America's average consumption of high-fructose corn syrup grew from a half pound to 43 pounds per person each year, mostly coming from soft drinks, but also from processed and refined foods.

These food and drink products displace higher nutrient, lower calorie foods such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains from people's diets. In fact, only 15% of adults in Oklahoma eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day, ranking the state dead last in the nation.

Besides not eating fruits and vegetables, most Americans are barely eating one of the three recommended daily servings of whole grains, while nearly 40% eat no whole grains at all.

This soaring consumption of unhealthy foodstuffs relative to nourishing foods leaves many people high and dry, in terms of body weight and nutrition, respectively. According to the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, "Many Americans consume more calories than they need without meeting recommended intakes for a number of nutrients." This holds true for Oklahoma as well, where a high percentage of people are not getting a sufficient intake of many nutrients considered essential for good health (See Table 2, p. 8).

Bad nutrition cuts across all age levels, including the state's senior citizens. Less than a quarter of Oklahomans age 65 and older eat five servings a day of fruits and vegetables, leaving only one state, Louisiana, with a worse record. A

Even though Oklahomans eat significantly less fruit and vegetables than are recommended, the state still imports most of the produce items that could be grown locally.

state-by-state Report Card on Healthy Aging published by the Merck Institute on Aging and Health also found that Oklahoma's seniors ranked poorly in the number of "physically unhealthy days" reported during a thirty-day period, with only five other states logging more unhealthy days.

Oklahoma's overall population includes a slightly greater percentage of seniors (13.2%) than the national average (12.4%). But in rural Oklahoma counties, the percentage of the population that is over age 65 jumps to nearly 18% (see sidebar, p.9). The nutrition of Oklahoma's seniors should therefore be of even greater concern.

Key Recommendation: More Fruits, Vegetables and Whole Grains

Since Americans' average daily consumption of nutritious foods falls well below recommended guidelines, nutritionists on all fronts of the battle against the bulge agree that Americans need to eat fewer sugars and fats, and more fruits,

Table 1: Major Diet-Related Illnesses in Oklahoma

Chronic Illness	% of State Deaths ¹	State Rank ²	Major Dietary Risk Factors	Diets High in These Increase Risk of Chronic Illness	Diets High in These Decrease Risk of Chronic Illness
Heart Disease	31	49	High blood cholesterol High blood pressure Obesity and overweight Diabetes	Saturated fats Trans fatty acids Dietary cholesterol Refined carbohydrates	Fruits and vegetables Whole grain products Legumes
Stroke	7	43	High blood pressure Diabetes Arterial plaque buildup Heart disease	High-sugar foods Saturated and trans fats Dietary cholesterol Added salt	Fruits and vegetables Whole grain products Legumes Fish, reduced fat milk
Cancer ³	6	N/A	Obesity and overweight	Saturated fats High fat red meats Refined carbohydrates	Fruits and vegetables Beans and whole grains
Diabetes	3	39	Obesity and overweight Elevated blood glucose High blood pressure High blood cholesterol	Refined carbohydrates Saturated fats	Fruits and vegetables Whole grain products

¹ Oklahoma State Department of Health. 2005. 2003 Oklahoma Vital Record Statistics.

² Oklahoma State Board of Health. 2006. A Strong and Healthy Oklahoma: 2006 State of the State's Health.

³ Primarily cancers of the breast, colon, rectum, esophagus, gallbladder, pancreas, liver and kidney"

SOURCES:

American Heart Association - <http://www.americanheart.org>

National Cancer Institute - <http://cis.nci.nih.gov>

American Cancer Society - <http://www.cancer.org>

American Diabetes Association - <http://www.diabetes.org>

vegetables, and whole grains.

These vital foods come straight from nature with a powerful package of health benefits. Their consumption is associated with reducing the risks of numerous chronic diseases and illnesses such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and kidney stones.

Fruits, vegetables and whole grains are also leading sources of several nutrients essential for good health, such as vitamins A, B, C and E, as well as calcium, iron, magnesium, potassium and dietary fiber. Furthermore, fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fats and calories, and none have cholesterol.

Eat Fresh for Flavor

People who work in public health are rightly concerned about the increasing incidence of obesity and related illnesses in Oklahomans. A number of better-health and weight loss initiatives from state agencies, the state legislature, and grassroots groups, have been launched in recent years. They generally urge

As Oklahomans have increased the energy input into their bodies, energy output has lagged. According to the CDC, Oklahoma is the 3rd most sedentary state in the nation, with over 30% of adults reporting no regular physical activity.

Nearly 40% of Oklahoma's seniors don't engage in any leisure-time physical activity. Just eight other states had fewer seniors who exercised.

Table 2: Nutrients of Concern ¹			
Nutrient	% of Oklahomans not meeting recommended intake ²	% of U.S. Population not meeting recommended intake	High Nutrient Food Sources Grown in Oklahoma ³
Vitamin A*	60	54	sweet potato, carrots, spinach, collard and turnip greens, pumpkin, winter squash, sweet red peppers, cantaloupe
Vitamin C*	53	48	sweet and hot peppers, strawberries, broccoli, cantaloupe, cauliflower, red cabbage, turnip and mustard greens, peas
Vitamin E	88	86	sunflower seed, spinach, turnip greens, red sweet pepper, broccoli, peanuts, asparagus, tomato, blackberries
Calcium	77	73	yogurt, milk, collard greens, spinach, black-eyed peas, cheddar cheese, turnip greens, okra, mustard greens
Magnesium	72	68	whole wheat flour, spinach, cornmeal, pumpkin and squash seeds, soybeans, lima beans, black-eyed peas, okra, peanuts
Potassium ⁴	93	91	potato, lima beans, winter squash, soybeans, spinach, sweet potato, black-eyed peas, yogurt, beets, whole wheat flour
Fiber	91	90	whole wheat flour, lima beans, black-eyed peas, blackberries, winter squash, collards, broccoli, pears, sweet potato

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
² USDA-ARS Community Nutrition Map - <http://www.ba.ars.usda.gov/cnrg/services/state40.html>
³ Food sources listed in descending order of nutrient content. Method of preparation can affect nutrient levels. USDA - ARS Nutrient Database - http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/Data/SR17/wtrank/wt_rank.html
⁴ Nowverl, A. 2005, 2006. Personal Communication. USDA-CNRG.
* Low intake of Vitamins A and C are of particular concern in adults

Oklahomans to both increase their physical activity and improve their diets.

At the same time, researchers around the U.S. have been studying why it is that people eat what they do. Armed with this information, public health officials can be more effective in their efforts to get people to eat a more healthful diet.

A frequently cited 1998 national study found that overall, taste was the most important influence on people’s food choices. The next most important consideration was cost, followed by nutrition, convenience and weight control. Gender, age, ethnicity,

income level and orientation towards a healthy lifestyle predicted the relative importance of the various factors. As might be expected, cost was of greater importance to low income people, as was convenience.

The report’s authors concluded that emphasizing the good taste of healthful foods would be a promising approach to encourage those not currently eating a healthy diet to make more health-promoting food choices. They also recommended that nutrition campaigns stress the convenience of eating healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables and promote convenient ways to include them in the diet.

Community food activists suggest that a general lack of familiarity and connection with healthy foods contributes to their low consumption. The solution: give people the chance to experience farm-fresh food. Farm-fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables (as well as whole grains) taste great, to which anyone who has ever had the pleasure of eating a just-picked tomato or ear of sweet corn can attest. In addition, many of the nutrients Oklahomans lack are found at high levels in many crops currently or historically grown in Oklahoma (Table 2).

Increasing consumer access to fresh farm and garden foods,

A frequently cited 1998 national study found that overall, taste was the most important influence on people's food choices. The next most important consideration was cost, followed by nutrition, convenience, and weight control.

through home and community gardening, farmers' markets, farm stands, community supported agriculture, and farm-to-school programs, will empower more Oklahomans with the joy of eating well and help build a strong and healthy Oklahoma.

We Can Grow It

While recognized nationally for their production of beef and wheat, Oklahoma farmers have historically raised a wide variety of fruit and vegetable crops, from apples and asparagus to watermelons and zucchini. As recently as 1959, thousands of Oklahoma farms were commercially growing apples, peaches, pears and sweet potatoes, among many other crops.

Like other states in the southern Plains, the Sooner State has the fortune of having many acres of good soil and a lengthy growing season. In fact, some growers are demonstrating that they can raise many cool season crops, including leafy nutritious crops such as spinach, throughout the winter using a minimum of inputs.

Even though Oklahomans eat significantly less fruit and vegetables than are recommended, the state still imports most of the produce items that could be grown locally. Very few fruit and vegetable crops are currently produced in the state on a scale capable of meeting present demand, much less meeting an increased demand for fresh produce.

If the production and promotion of locally grown fruits and vegetables were increased, Oklahoma families would have more home-grown nutritious options from which to choose, while the state's communities would become more food secure. By keeping food dollars closer to home, Oklahoma farmers would, in turn, be given some much-needed economic opportunities, as they strive to provide all Oklahomans with good food for good health.

Selected Age Group: Oklahoma Census 2000

	65 years and over	
	Number	Percent
Rural Counties		
ADAIR	2535	12
ALFALFA	1243	20.4
ATOKA	2050	14.8
BEAVER	992	16.9
BECKHAM	3059	15.5
BLAINE	2015	16.8
CADDO	4499	14.9
CHOCTAW	2664	17.4
CIMARRON	585	18.6
COAL	1078	17.9
COTTON	1174	17.8
CRAIG	2418	16.2
CUSTER	3593	13.7
DELAWARE	6501	17.5
ELLIS	895	22
GARVIN	4883	17.9
GRANT	1103	21.4
GREER	1215	20
HARMON	691	21
HARPER	773	21.7
HASKELL	2024	17.2
HUGHES	2626	18.6
JEFFERSON	1372	20.1
JOHNSTON	1621	15.4
KINGFISHER	2139	15.4
KIOWA	2079	20.3
LATIMER	1718	16.1
McCURTAIN	4611	14
McINTOSH	4238	21.8
MAJOR	1465	19.4
MARSHALL	2576	19.5
MAYES	5703	14.9
MURRAY	2331	18.5
NOBLE	1737	15.2
NOWATA	1829	17.3
OKFUSKEE	1925	16.3
PUSHMATAHA	2131	18.3
ROGER MILLS	644	18.7
SEMINOLE	4169	16.7
TILLMAN	1795	19.3
WASHITA	2160	18.8
WOODS	1808	19.9
Average Percent		17.8



Nutrition and Health

GOAL: Link Oklahoma-grown foods with good taste and health. The health of Oklahomans can be improved if Oklahomans increase their consumption of farm-fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Public Policy Priorities:

- Establish a state goal of 75% of Oklahoma adults eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day by 2012 – the “Five (a Day) in Five (Years)” campaign.
- Incorporate rewards for increased consumption of farm-fresh fruits and vegetables into the state employees’ Strong and Healthy Oklahoma initiative.
- Encourage the private sector to make farm-fresh fruits and vegetables available to employees through programs like the Certified Healthy Business Program.
- Develop government procurement policies that favor fresh, local, healthy food.
- Develop a joint public relations campaign between the state agriculture and health departments, private hospitals, and the extension service to promote the healthful aspects of eating Oklahoma-grown fresh fruits and vegetables, emphasizing good taste, affordability, and convenience, as well as nutrition.
- Mobilize the health care community by making fresh fruits and vegetables available to health care institutions’ staff, patients and nearby community residents through cafeteria use of farm-fresh foods, mini farmers markets, and subscription-farm food deliveries.
- Help health care and social service workers educate clients about sources of fresh, locally grown foods such as farmers’ markets.
- Promote meetings between health professionals and farmers – for example, conduct farm tours, farmers’ market tours, neighborhood tours, and healthy eating events in which everyone can participate.
- Provide incentives for groups that do not currently shop at farmers’ markets (such as families with children and low-income individuals) to do so. One incentive would be repealing the sales tax on sales at farmers’ markets and other direct sales outlets.

Direct from the Source: Direct Market Produce from the Crows' Farm

-Wylie Harris

Ricky and Claudia Crow had had about all the years of thin profits growing wheat that they could stand. Then they hit upon the idea of selling fresh vegetables at the local farmers' market in Shawnee.

That was nearly two decades ago, and they're still going strong.

"This has been how we make our living, how we pay our bills. We had to find a way to make enough to stay on the land," says Claudia Crow.

"We don't have enough land to make it on wheat," she explains. "And they were starting a farmers' market in Shawnee."

In that new market, the Crows sensed opportunity.

The first year, they grew five acres of watermelons, and another acre of assorted other vegetables. The following season, they doubled that area. Within three years, they were growing vegetables on all 40 acres.

Pott County Cornucopia

"We grow everything that can be grown. We're nuts," Claudia laughs.

"We start everything from seed," Ricky elaborates. "That's the only way we can grow all the varieties we want. Our early crops are English peas, beets, turnips, cabbage and broccoli, strawberries. We grow four different varieties of sweet corn, to stretch the corn picking out as long as possible."

"The main things are tomatoes, yellow squash - we put a planting in the ground every so often, and have it all through the year," he adds. "Cucumbers are real important."

"We raise a lot of southern peas, which a lot of people don't - blackeyes, purple hulls, crowders," Claudia adds. "We raise fresh pinto beans too, and those sell pretty good."

The Crows' farm belonged to Ricky's grandparents. He was raised there, with cash crops of wheat



and alfalfa. As time went by, though, the profits seemed to leak out of wheat farming.

"We weren't getting anywhere. We started getting farther behind," he recalls.

"At least with vegetables, if you get a hailstorm, you can go back in and replant. You can't do that with wheat."

A New Row to Hoe

Just recognizing the problems with growing wheat, though, didn't automatically make the switch to vegetable production smooth, quick, or trouble-free.

"We started with a push tiller and two hoes," Claudia remembers.

"We didn't go to the bank and borrow a lot of money," says Ricky. "We borrowed some money along, but never a huge amount."

"We kept expanding, learning," Claudia continues. "We went to any kind of symposium they had. We worked with OSU Extension. We always tried to stay on top of the changes, because it's a changing industry."

Among the changes: a hoop house to extend the season, and adding strawberries, blackberries, and asparagus to their mix of crops.

Marketing vegetables also had a steep learning

“People don't realize how much money you could make off just one acre of vegetables.”

– Ricky Crow

curve. But the Crows started up that one with one lesson already well learned from wheat - the one about low returns from wholesale bulk commodities.

Claudia says they have always tried to sell their crops retail. “If you get into wholesale, there's no money,” Claudia says.

“If you get into wholesaling, you might as well go into wheat or something,” Ricky agrees. “We still do very little wholesaling. Wholesaling to a grocery store is not the same as wholesaling to a wholesaler. We've sold to Sterling's Produce up there in the City over the years.”

Changing Times, Changing Tactics

Another marketing lesson learned is that markets are as ceaselessly changing as production.

“What we've done to stand out,” Claudia explains, “is to put a huge emphasis on quality. If it's not USDA grade number one, it just won't get sold.”

“The marketing is changing. Twenty years ago, the people we marketed to had more of a farm background. Families ate a lot more at home. They canned more,

so they'd buy large batches of things like beets. Bushels.”

Nowadays, she says, “They've gotten a little more educated. They don't mind paying for quality, but the quantities have gotten less. You have to give them recipes, tell them a little about how to eat what they're getting.”

“We're not organic, but unless we absolutely have to, we don't spray,” Claudia says. “As a rule, we don't spray our corn. In Shawnee, people are used to worms [and know it is an indication that the corn was not sprayed with pesticides]. In the City, they want worm-free and pesticide-free.”

“We're marketing to a different group of people at the farmers' market,” says Claudia. Catering to Generation X, she says, requires a more event-driven approach. “They want to be entertained, go out, visit with their friends, sip a little bit of coffee.”

At the Pottawatomie County Farmers' Market in Shawnee, where the Crows do most of their selling, she says, “We have a lot of events. We're even adding music this year. We have some square dancers coming out.”

Growing Growers

The market needs a draw for vendors as well as customers. “The downtown Shawnee farmers' market has had some struggles over the years,” says Ricky.

The Crows are brimming with suggestions for how to make direct marketing fruits and vegetables a more attractive career option.

“They need to let the farmers' markets do what they're supposed to do, not have the health depart-

ment breathing down their necks. You need variety - baked goods, and so on,” says Claudia.

“There are too many restrictions. It's too hard for a small person to come in and meet the requirements for their kitchens.”

Regulations are so restrictive, she says, that man's best friend is no longer even welcome where man buys homegrown tomatoes. “There are no dogs allowed at our farmers' market. It's against health department rules.”

Following the Money

In addition to more reasonable regulations, the Crows can see ways in which direct marketing efforts could benefit from a fairer share of the nation's plentiful food and farm subsidies.

“One thing that would help the farmers' market is not to have to charge tax,” says Ricky.

“If you can sell on the farm, why can't you take your stuff to the farmers' market and sell it without taxing it?”

“Also, the senior nutrition program,” says Claudia. “The Chickasaw Nation has that, but it's mostly in Ada. That would help tremendously.”

“Tax, phone, garbage - it's all billed at the business rate, whether you're Wal-Mart or a small mom-and-pop store,” Claudia says.

“We need a bigger push from the Department of Ag to have grants to help us do the advertising we need to do,” she adds. “An ad has to generate a minimum of an extra \$200 a week just to justify the cost of putting it in the paper.”

“Another thing is fuel costs,” she adds. “There's nothing we can do here that doesn't cost money.”

“People in this country are used to having cheap food. If they don't make some changes and get real about keeping the farm going, they're going to have to import their food supply.

Branching Out

Unable to do much about such obstacles besides cope, the Crows stay busy making sure their farming situation is as well adapted to them as possible.

“We're lucky because we have water,” Claudia says. Ricky agrees: “If you're going to do vegetables, you'd better be set up to irrigate.”

“One thing that would help the farmers' market is not to have to charge tax.”

– Ricky Crow

“We have a wash line; we chlorinate and all that. We have a refrigerated truck, and cold water tanks that stuff goes straight into, then through the wash line, and then into the truck. We need to build an air conditioned room for tomatoes.”

Being able to compensate for drought still doesn't cover other potential shortages. “We pray every year that we'll get enough labor,” says Claudia.

“We've been down that road too many times,” Ricky elaborates. “Even paying above minimum wage, you're still not going to get enough.”

“Agriculture depends on

Don't miss Claudia Crow at the 2008 HIS show (see p. 1)

She will speak from 11:15-12:00 on Friday, Jan. 4 on “20 Years of Growing in Oklahoma.”

immigrants,” Claudia concludes.

“We'll probably have to cut back as labor gets more expensive. We really want to get some goats and add that to our cattle.”

Already, she says, “We've taken 10 acres out of vegetables and put it into hay.”

“We just leased 200 acres for alfalfa,” Ricky adds. “We sell it for horses, and to a lot of goat people.”

The Crows' efforts at labor management and diversification took an unusual turn six years ago, when they bought a fruit market in town, calling it Crows' Main Fruit Market.

“It's been the 'Main Fruit Market' since back in the forties,” Ricky explains. “It's got a lot of family history in it. People who came in there as kids bring their grandkids in now.”

“We sell the stuff we raise; also jams and relishes - stuff you can't get in the grocery store - things from Amish groups, specialty items. Chocolates, spices, apples, oranges, roast peanuts.”

“The store is self sufficient right now. It pays its own bills. But we give it a lot of stuff - for example, we grow extra vegetable plants and sell them there.”

What It Takes

To make an approach like the Crows' work, says Claudia, “You have to be a disciplined person.”

“Variety and consistency,” Ricky concurs. “Be there every day all day, from the start to the end of the season.”

“Truck farming used to be a big thing back in the forties and fifties, and even further back,” he observes. “Vegetables used to be a lot bigger thing around here than now. It's kind of interesting how things have changed over the years.”

“People don't realize how much money you could make off just one acre of vegetables - more than from showing a calf. But the school ag programs, all they push is showing animals.”

At Earlsboro, where Ricky went to high school, the prospects are even worse than that for rearing a new generation of vegetable growers. The school isn't even training kids to show livestock now; its ag program was cut in the sixties.

Restoring it - and hundreds of others all over Oklahoma - could help the state grow a fresh crop of young farmers. Easing the regulatory and financial obstacles for small farms and direct marketers could help them take root.

Until those things happen, people curious about how to make a living farming vegetables on a small acreage will still have examples like Ricky and Claudia Crow, changing with the times, and finding a way.

Local-plicity: The Large Economic Multiplier Effects of Small Farms

-Wylie Harris

Part of community food security's power is that it alleviates rural economic dol-drums even as it forges the links of a more secure food supply.

That argument runs like this: if Oklahomans started spending an extra ten percent of their \$8 billion annual food budget on Oklahoma-grown foods, that would be an \$800 million boost to the state's agricultural income.

But the economic power of local food goes far beyond simple addition and subtraction. Every

Three thousand hogs can be raised as well on twenty-odd small farms as on one large one – and the small farms together will provide jobs for 32 people, against the large farm's 21 employees.

additional dollar spent on Oklahoma food multiplies its own value many times over.

Both media coverage and scholarly analysis tend to see such economic benefits in large farms only. For instance, some studies of confined hog feeding operations – which have grown explosively in Oklahoma in recent decades – portray them as a source of sorely needed jobs and earnings in rural communities.

However, 3,000 hogs can be

raised as well on twenty-odd small farms as on one large one – and the small farms together will provide jobs for 32 people, against the large farm's 21 employees.

In addition to their greater employment capacity, small farms have deeper economic roots in their own communities.

Small farms make more of their purchases from local businesses, thus increasing the level of local economic activity more, per dollar of output, than larger ones.

Small livestock operations in the U.S. have been reported to make 80% of their purchases

within 20 miles of the farm, as opposed to 50% for large farms.

Sharing the Wealth

Economists call these effects economic multipliers – the amount by which each additional dollar of output increases employment, income, or economic activity in the local community.

Any enterprise has a multiplier effect, but because small farms are more tightly linked with other local businesses, the money they earn

stays longer and circulates more in the local economy.

In other words, smaller farms have larger multipliers.

As one example of economic multipliers in action, consider farm direct marketing. This option appeals to many farmers because of its higher profits.

In addition, direct-sales outlets such as farmers' markets create similar windfalls for the local communities where they sink their economic and physical roots.

How large a windfall?

One study found that every dollar spent at an Iowa farmers' market generated \$1.58 in additional sales, and every dollar earned by vendors translated into \$1.47 in income to others.

For every 100 farmers' market jobs, 145 additional jobs popped up elsewhere in the state's economy.

In Georgia, the estimated farmers market income multiplier is 1.66.

Because every community develops its own unique patterns of linkage between local businesses, these numbers cannot be applied directly to Oklahoma. [8] Still, they clearly illustrate the economic returns that might reasonably be expected from relocalizing food systems.

Relocalizing Rural Economies

Those returns extend beyond

strict dollar terms to the very social and cultural fabric of rural communities.

In a classic comparison of two California farm towns, sociologist Walter Goldschmidt observed that the one situated in a landscape of small family farms not only had higher retail trade and family income, but also more churches, schools, parks, and playgrounds, than a similarly-sized community surrounded – and isolated – by large corporate farms. The majority of subsequent studies have backed up this “Goldschmidt hypothesis.”

Farms are by no means the only small enterprises with a hand on the lever of economic multipliers. In fact, the current structure of Oklahoma’s food system lends a double-barreled potential to rural revitalization strategies based on economic multiplier principles.

Since Oklahoma imports so much of its food, one of those barrels involves replacing imported food with the produce of small Oklahoma farms.

The second barrel’s charge would channel some of the state’s immense production of grains and livestock out of raw commodity exports and into small, locally owned, value-added food processing enterprises.

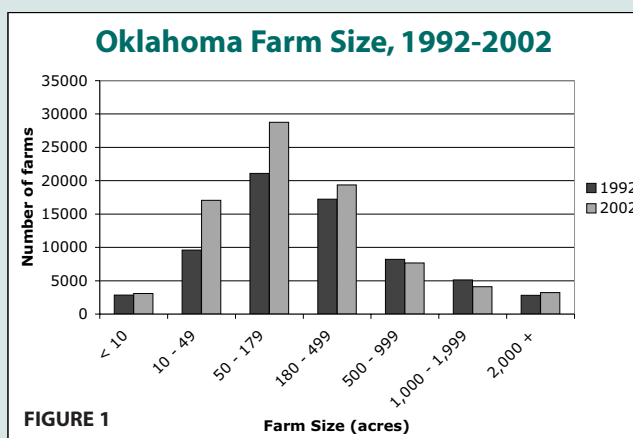
Community food security is both about making sure that food is affordable, and making sure that enough small local farms stay in business to grow it – two goals that can seem contradictory.

As small farms and other local enterprises increase economic multipliers, that contradiction vanishes. Economic multipliers increase communities’ material prosperity, and thus their food-purchasing power.

Multiplied together, these facts make economic multipliers a powerful concept for completing the circle of community food security.

How many farms are there in Oklahoma, and how big are they?

- The amount of farm land in Oklahoma has been fairly steady for most of the time since statehood. However, the number of farms peaked at over 200,000 in the 1930s, before falling steadily, through most of the rest of the 20th century, by about two-thirds. Over the same period, the average size of Oklahoma farms, in acres, more than doubled.
- Between 1992 and 2002, the trend reversed, with the number of farms in Oklahoma growing by nearly 25%, from 66,937 to 83,300.
- Most of these new farms were less than 180 acres in size, though the number of the largest farms – those with 2,000 or more acres – also increased slightly (Figure 1).
- With roughly the same amount of farmland in the state, the addition of all these new, smaller farms reduced the average farm size, from a historic high of 480 acres to 404 acres.



Are Oklahoma farms making money?

- In 2002, the average net farm income for Oklahoma was \$8,220, compared to \$19,032 for the U.S. overall.
- In that year, 44% of Oklahoma farms made money or broke even, with an average net income of \$31,559.
- The 56% of farms that lost money had net losses of \$9,878, on average.

What kind of support are Oklahoma farms receiving?

- Seventy-one percent of Oklahoma farms receive no federal farm subsidy payments.
- Ten percent of Oklahoma’s federal subsidy dollars go to less than one percent of the farms in the state.
- In 2002, Oklahoma’s top five most heavily subsidized commodities were, in order, wheat, livestock, peanuts, cotton, and dairy.
- While receiving only one percent of Oklahoma’s government agriculture program payments, farms specializing in non-traditional crops (including vegetables and melons, nursery and tree crops, and fruits, nuts, and berries) contributed about 10% of the total growth in Oklahoma farms’ sales and numbers during 1992 - 2002.

CALENDAR: WINTER/SPRING EVENTS

CONFERENCE: 27th Annual Horticulture Industries Show

January 4-5 - Tulsa

This year's Horticulture Industries Show will feature keynote speaker Eliot Coleman, author of *The New Organic Grower* and *Four Season Harvest*, who has nearly 40 years of experience in all aspects of organic farming. For more information or to register, visit www.hortla.okstate.edu/his.htm or contact Donna Dollins at donna.dollins@okstate.edu or 405.744.6460. (See p. 1.)

CONFERENCE: The New American Farm: Advancing the frontier of sustainable agriculture

March 25-27 - Kansas City, Missouri

SARE's 20th Anniversary New American Farm conference is open to farmers, ranchers, teachers, researchers, students, advocates – anyone who wants to learn more about groundbreaking work in the exciting and rapidly expanding field of sustainable agriculture in America.

Expert practitioners from around the country will discuss current practices, such as cutting costs with energy efficiency and renewables, tapping new markets and adding value, innovative cropping and grazing methods, and cutting edge pest management.

Registration opens in January. Sign up for electronic updates at outreach@sare.org, or for more information visit sare.org/2008Conference/index.htm.

CONFERENCE: Oklahoma Sustainability Network Annual Conference

March 28-29 - Norman

"Red Dirt, Green Culture: Growing Healthy Communities," is the theme of this year's Oklahoma Sustainability Network conference. Virginia farmer and local food advocate Joel Salatin will be the keynote speaker. Robert Waldrop, Oklahoma Food Co-op president, is also on the slate of speakers.

For more information, visit oksustainability.org.

CONFERENCE: Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group 17th Annual Practical Tools and Solutions for Sustaining Family Farms Conference

January 16-19 - Louisville, Kentucky

Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (Southern SAWG) features Joel Salatin as this year's keynote speaker, on the topic "Healing the Planet, One Plate at a Time." Wendell Berry, Kentucky farmer and renowned author, will also be present for a conversation on the necessary work of sustainable agriculture.

The conference sessions will cover sustainable production for horticulture and livestock producers, direct marketing strategies, business management, farm policy issues, and community food systems.

The Southern SAWG Conference's focus on practical information sets it apart from others. Sessions are led by presenters with real experience, and with 1,200 of the South's most innovative practitioners in sustainable agriculture, tremendous networking is possible.

Pre-conference offerings begin on Wednesday at noon and include eight intensive short courses, five field trips and five new hands-on activities. The conference begins on Friday morning and includes 62 practical sessions to choose from, as well as twenty networking meetings and an exhibit hall.

Registration is \$135 per person before December 20th, \$145 before January 7th, and \$155 thereafter. The conference rate at the Galt House is \$85 per night. There are additional fees for optional pre-conference courses and field trips.

For more information or to register, visit ssawg.org/conference.html or call 678.494.0696.



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