

Presenters

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

John E. Ikerd, Ph.D is an Extension professor at the University of Missouri, Columbia, and co-coordinator of sustainable agriculture extension programs in Missouri. Raised on a small dairy farm in southwest Missouri, Ikerd is an agricultural economist who has published widely and extensively on topics such as sustainable/alternative agricultural systems, community development, and changes in agriculture including the effects of large-scale swine production. Dr. Ikerd is currently project leader for a three-state four-year program funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation titled “Sustaining Rural Community Development Through Sustainable Agriculture.”

Joel Salatin is a full time farmer on 550 acres in Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley. A third generation alternative farmer, he returned to the farm full time in 1982 and continued refining and adding to his parents’ ideas.

The family’s farm, Polyface, Inc. (The Farm of Many Faces) has been featured in National Geographic and other magazines. The farm services roughly 400 customers with salad bar beef, pastured poultry, eggmobile eggs, pig-aerator pork, forage-based rabbits, pastured turkey and forestry products through “relationship marketing.” He is the author of three books, including *YOU CAN FARM: The Entrepreneur’s Guide to Start and Succeed in a Farming Enterprise* and *Pastured Poultry Profit\$*.

W. Joe Lewis, Ph.D. grew up on a Mississippi farm and is currently a research entomologist with the USDA Agricultural

Research Service (ARS) in Tifton, Georgia. He was recently awarded the 1999 Outstanding Senior Scientist of the Year award by the ARS. He is nationally and internationally recognized in research and planning activities to develop bio-friendly and economically sustainable pest management and agricultural production systems. He has also been active in historic preservation and downtown development in Tifton and currently serves as vice-mayor of the city of Tifton. He has worked with Marion Jay to apply ideas about how healthy ecosystems work to other areas, such as schools and communities,

Marion Jay is a field facilitator for Communities in Schools of Georgia, the oldest and largest dropout prevention network in the nation. The focus of her work is engaging citizens in resolving/ finding solutions to the issues that challenge communities, such as school drop-outs, teen pregnancy, teen crime, and getting people with disabilities into the work force. She and Dr. Lewis have worked together for eighteen years developing their ideas about communities as dynamic living systems. They have concluded that for rural communities to prosper, all elements in the community must be supported: social, economic, infrastructure, arts and culture.

WORKSHOP LEADERS

Max Carter has been called “the father of conservation tillage in south Georgia.” He began farming in 1955 and farmed conventionally for the first twenty years, then switched to farming no-till (no-plow) for the

last 23 years. He raises cotton, peanuts, corn and soybeans. Through his leadership, his county has converted some 40,000 acres to winter cover crops, strip-till and no-till summer crops.

Walt Davis grew up on a Texas ranch and now runs a cattle operation near Bennington, Oklahoma. In 1962 he began managing his ranch using the “best” practices of soil fertilization, weed control, animal health and animal nutrition supplementation. This approach resulted in tremendous production but very poor profitability. He shifted his operation towards a lower input, more sustainable program in 1974 and began reeducating himself in grassland ecology. He is now a grazing management consultant.

John R. Dunkin has had farms and ranches near Wagoner and Hominy, Oklahoma. He received the region four “Steward” award from the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association in 1997. His belief that cattlemen are environmentalists every day has led him to reclaim highly erodible land, improve the forage base, reduce erosion (from 15 tons per year to 2 tons), implement reduced-till farming and increase wildlife and fish habitat on his properties.

Steve Groff and his family farm 175 acres of vegetables and crops on hilly land in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. He has pioneered the “Permanent Cover Cropping System” which includes no tillage, cover crops, and effective crop rotations as a way to increase profits, save soil, and reduce pesticides. The farm won Pennsylvania’s 1998 Clean Water Farm Award and is one of nine “harmony demonstration” farms nationwide promoting technologically advanced and environmentally friendly farming practices.

Alex Hitt and his wife Betsy have been farming since 1982 in North Carolina. They

make their entire living on less than five acres of vegetables, cut flowers, and berries, growing almost 200 varieties. They market their produce through farmers’ markets, grocery stores and restaurants. Alex also serves on the board of the Chapel Hill- Carrboro Farmers’ Markets (two markets, 100 members) and is active in the USDA’s southern region SARE program.

Rodney Holcomb is an assistant professor and agribusiness economist with Oklahoma State University’s Food and Agricultural Products Research and Technology Center. His primary focus area is the economics of processing and marketing value-added agricultural products. He also serves as a state resource on market trends for various food products, and is an expert on the legalities and liabilities of operating food businesses.

Dan Nagengast grew up on a wheat farm in Nebraska. A former Peace Corps volunteer in Africa, he became director of the Kansas Rural Center in 1991. In 1994 he organized a cooperative of eight organic vegetable, herb, fruit, meat and poultry growers which direct markets to a C.S.A. of 350 families in Lawrence and Kansas City. He also works on projects which develop urban agriculture and markets, such as channeling farm production into a college and a meals-for-the-elderly program.

La Rhea Pepper with her husband Terry operates an organic cotton farm in West Texas. She has spent the last few years developing markets for, as well as developing specific value-added products made from, organically-grown cotton. She is a founding member of the Texas Organic Cotton Marketing Cooperative. She is the president of Cotton Plus which sells raw fiber to mills, and also spins and weaves the fiber into various fabrics. She is also a shareholder in Organic Essentials which manufactures personal and feminine care products from organic cotton.

Jim Robinson is an agroforester with the National Agroforestry Center, a partnership between the USDA, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Forest Service. He was co-chairman of the National Conservation Buffer Conference in San Antonio in 1998. He is an expert on riparian ecosystem management and riparian forest buffers, and is active in training. He began his career with the Soil Conservation Service in 1971.

Richard and Peggy Sechrist follow holistic management practices in their ranching operation in Fredericksburg, Texas. They raise certified organic beef and soon-to-be certified organic pastured chickens. They consider themselves both ranchers and marketers. They have been marketing their products both wholesale and direct to consumers for four years and will share their ups and downs and what works.

Russell Stevens is a wildlife and range specialist with the Noble Foundation in Ardmore, Oklahoma. His primary role is to consult with area ranchers on wildlife and range management issues. He has helped several ranchers integrate wildlife management or recreational leasing into their operations. He also oversees the wildlife management program on the Noble Foundation's Coffey Ranch west of Marietta.

OTHER CONFERENCE PRESENTERS *(papers not included in Proceedings)*

Chuck Hassebrook is program director of the Center for Rural Affairs in Walthill, Nebraska. The Center works with rural people who are starting new farms and businesses, experimenting with sustainable farming systems, and/or initiating policy reform. Hassebrook is a native of Platte Center, Nebraska, where his family is engaged in

farming. He serves on the board of the USDA National Commission on Small Farms and on the University of Nebraska Board of Regents. Previously he served as vice-chair of the USDA Agricultural Science and Technology Review Board and as a member of the Iowa State University external advisory committee on bioethics.

Kent Donica and his family run a cow-calf/stocker calf/goat operation on approximately 1000 acres near Ardmore, Oklahoma. He is a 1987 graduate of OSU in animal science. He received a producer grant from the Kerr Center in 1998. His three-year project demonstrates how controlled burning can be used with goats to convert land with heavy brush/timber to grass, and how adequate grass cover can prevent erosion and siltation.

Rick Maloney has served as director of the Market Development Division of the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture (ODA) since 1995. The division manages programs to develop domestic and international markets for Oklahoma agricultural products. He has been instrumental in developing the value-added processing sector for commodities produced within the state. He also directs ODA's Ag in the Classroom, Farmers' Market, Market News and Rural Economic Development programs.

Tom Trantham was a conventional dairy farmer in South Carolina for many years, working 12-16 hours a day, until he found a better way. With the help of the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE) he developed his "Twelve Aprils" rotational grazing dairy system and discovered that farming can be fun! He recently served on the National Commission on Small Farms, and has been chair of the southern region SARE program.

The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture

For over forty years, the name Kerr has been associated with progressive ideas in agriculture. The late Senator Robert S. Kerr for whom the Center is named, was a rancher and conservationist. After his death, an endowment from his estate made possible the establishment of a non-profit foundation. From 1965-1985, the agricultural division of the Kerr Foundation provided farmers and ranchers in southeastern Oklahoma with free technical assistance and information, while always emphasizing wise stewardship.

In the mid-80's, foundation trustees recognized that Oklahoma agriculture was in crisis. Financial and environmental problems on the farm needed to be addressed with fresh ideas that emphasized long-term solutions. So in the best Oklahoma pioneering tradition, the organization made a fresh start, reorganizing as the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

By adding the word "sustainable" to the organization name, the Center

joined the search that is going on worldwide for farming practices and marketing structures that will preserve our natural resources and environment, improve the quality of life for farmers, and support the social and economic health of rural communities.

The Kerr Center is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization located on 4,000 acres on highway 271 south of Poteau, Oklahoma. Its mission statement reads: *The Kerr Center 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.*

Its programs include: Oklahoma Producer Grants, The Stewardship Farm, Rural Development and Public Policy, Communications/ Education, Vero Beach Research Station, and the Overstreet-Kerr Historical Farm. For more information contact the Center at P.O. Box 588, Poteau, OK 74953; 918-647-9123; www.kerrcenter.com.