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Date: 8/2/2007 3:13:56 PM

Subject: News from the KC Center for Urban Agriculture

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URBAN GROWN

The Newsletter of the Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture, August 2007

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Networking with KC's Immigrant Farmers

KCCUA works to share information on growing, marketing with farmers from around the world



That diversity is an asset and a source of strength is taken for granted by most organic farmers. We know that our fields are delicate ecological systems in which the long-term health of our crops depends on the presence of many other living organisms including beneficial insects and fungi, earth worms and other soil organisms, pollinators, spiders and many more. Communities of people are not much different. Here, too, diversity is an asset, enhancing our understanding of humankind and enriching the flow of ideas. This is why KCCUA is so pleased to be working with farmers from many different backgrounds, nationalities and ethnicities.

More and more of KC's small urban farmers are immigrants from around the world who bring with them their rich agricultural traditions and experiences. Upon arrival in the United States, they often enter other, more lucrative professions but the desire to farm frequently remains strong and leads them to build small, part-time farms producing fresh produce and flowers for Kansas Citians (pictured on left: Si Vang, local flower and vegetable grower from Laos). Because these farmers tend use simple, yet highly efficient, space-saving cultivation methods and tools, their farms are particularly suitable to the urban environment.

Now the Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture has begun work on a project to reach out to immigrant farmers throughout Kansas City and to conduct a one-day workshop on topics ranging from vegetable production and marketing to business management and networking. Our goal is to increase farm profitability and to start the process of cross-cultural information sharing and learning. In our experience, small farmers tend to be very innovative individuals with a strong knack for problem solving. But demanding work and family schedules often mean that farmers work in isolation and disconnected from the broader community of growers. This situation is made worse by the cultural and language barriers faced by many immigrant farmers. This is regrettable especially since we believe that the knowledge immigrant farmers bring from their native countries can be valuable to all growers in Kansas City. As we are developing a new kind of small-scale agriculture on small plots and under increasingly extreme weather conditions we can all benefit from the experiences growers have had under different conditions across the globe.

To foster cross-cultural learning among KC's urban farmers, KCCUA will spend the next few months reaching out to immigrant communities to meet new immigrant growers, visit their farms and invite them to the workshop scheduled for December 1. Following the workshop--which will feature several presenters from the immigrant farming communities--we will work with growers to develop specific strategies to overcome some of the challenges immigrant farmers face and to implement these strategies over the 2008 growing season. Funding for this project comes through a grant from the North Central Risk Management Education Center (<http://www.necrme.org>).

For more information about this project please visit our website www.kccua.org and click on "Cross Cultural Learning".

We have posted outreach flyers in several languages which we encourage anyone to download and distribute. Translation and interpretation will be available throughout this project. And of course, if you know any immigrant or refugee farmers, please refer them to KCCUA. We'd love to meet them!

To learn more about national trends in immigrant farming please visit Heifer International's [National Immigrant Farming Initiative](#) website.

Big Turnout For Small Farms

More than 600 Kansas Citizens visit small growers across the metro during KCCUA's 2nd Biennial Urban Farms Tour

On a Sunday afternoon on June 24, more than 600 people visited 11 farms in the KC metro area for a lively afternoon of farmer talks, children's activities, and good music and company. In Raytown, "Farmer John" led people in groups through his backyard fields, showing what 20 plus years of farming can produce. And, across town in Kansas City, KS, Joe Jennings dashed across his hilly rows, showing off watermelons, greens, and more, telling stories and daring the younger people (anyone younger than Joe's 70 plus years, that is...) to keep up with him. At Cross Lines Community Outreach, Carey Sterrett, the program coordinator for the Ready to Work Market Garden said that "the people were so nice who visited! We just had a great time showing off our garden." A steady flow of people kept Sherri Harvel at her Root Deep Urban Farm busy, and folks marveled at Lew Edmister's playfully abundant Herb'n Garden just up the street from the Blue Bird Bistro. All the farmers and the farm visitors reported great conversations, good learning, and a great afternoon all around.

Most folks managed to visit 3-4 farms, a hardy handful visited as many as 8 plus in the five hours available! There were visitors from all over: Lawrence, Topeka, Wichita, Leavenworth, and just about every municipality in the metro area. There was a delegation from local Wal-mart stores, interested in the environmental and health aspects of urban farming; several church groups put together mini-tours to help them develop their thinking about church-based market gardens; a group came all the way from Lincoln, NE, visiting from the Community CROPS organization; there was at least one group of neighborhood association volunteers interested in how urban farms could fit into their own communities; Slow Food sent members out to visit these producers of amazingly good "slow food"; and there were reporters from local television, radio, the Kansas City Star, and even a few national magazines!

"What the numbers and varieties of people tell me is that this interest in local farming is becoming a movement in Kansas City," says Katherine Kelly, co-founder of KCCUA, "People are thinking more deeply about their food and how it shapes their lives. Industrially produced food has made food more reliably and cheaply available, but it has also reduced the connection that people have had over thousands of years between food and farmer, between food and love, between food and their own health. People coming out to visit these urban farms says that they want a new connection to food and to the farmer. They like the ways that urban farms make this connection more possible and more immediate."

"Growing food in the city is an example of the kind of integrative urban development we are going to see more of in the future," adds Daniel Dermitzel, KCCUA's other co-founder. "People are beginning to realize how the segmentation of their lives and neighborhoods sometimes results in a loss of vitality and quality of life. An urban farm invites city folks to step out of their normal routine, to observe the age-old activity of tending the soil, to participate as a volunteer picking beans for an hour or two, or to simply reflect on the natural environment and the web of life," Dermitzel says.

KCCUA was especially grateful to the sponsors who stepped forward and generously donated to the Farms Tour, especially Boulevard Brewery and its founder and president, John McDonald, who quickly understood the entrepreneurial spirit of these urban growers and committed his company's marketing director to help promote the farmers' good work. Slow Food of Kansas City, Les Dames D'escoffier, Planter's Lawn and Garden Store, Green Acres, Windswept Worm Farm, Joe Jennings, the KCK Greenmarket and the 29th Street Market all gave generously and helped make the tour a success for the community and as a fundraiser for KCCUA. And we also want to thank Janet Moss and Joel Wakham, who used their terrific organizing and community building skills to help make the farm tour a success. Their consulting company, BridgeWorks, donated many, many hours and miles and we're incredibly grateful for your big hearts and big visions for Kansas City!

We are, of course, already laying plans for the 2009 farm tour; so send in your thoughts and comments; we'd love to hear from you. Email us at info@kccua.org.

International Urban Agriculture Spotlight: *Nairobi, Kenya*

Urban agriculture is happening all around the world. For some urban residents, especially in the world's poorer countries, it is the only available means to generate income and put food on the table. Following is a short report on urban agriculture in Nairobi, Kenya, suggesting that urban agriculture is a significant economic activity for which a comprehensive policy framework is still lacking. The report was sent to us by two urban agriculture experts with CGIAR

(Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research www.cgiar.org) stationed in Nairobi. KCCUA thanks the authors for sharing their insights with us. We also thank Dr. Ted Carey of Kansas State Extension for introducing us to his former colleagues in East Africa. We are excited about building relationships with professionals and urban farmers around the world and hope to occasionally share their stories with you.



By Nancy Karanja and Mary Njenga

NAIROBI, Kenya. Over the last few decades, the expansion of urban centers in Kenya has been accompanied by significant new trends in urban land use. Low-income urban and peri-urban families who constitute 50 to 60 percent of Nairobi's population face unemployment, exorbitant food prices and suffer health and nutrition problems exacerbated by poor infrastructure, especially water and sanitation facilities. Women and children are particularly affected by these conditions; they have nowhere to go most of the time and are forced to live under very deplorable slum conditions.

Because of this, the poor--the majority of whom have migrated from the rural areas in search of a better life in urban areas--have resorted to urban agriculture as a source of their livelihood. The presence of crops growing along the road, private plots and in public land coupled by livestock roaming in towns is a common site in African towns (pictured on left: urban plots next to the Ng'eno Estate, near Nairobi's Kibera slums). For Nairobi, there is a lot of urban agriculture taking place and Ministry of Agriculture data indicates that up to a quarter million of chicken are reared within Nairobi and also about 45,000 goats and sheep; that 50,000 bags of maize and 15,000 bags of beans are being produced annually. The majority of the farmers, 60 to 80 percent of whom are women, concentrate on the cultivation of vegetables like kale (sukumi wiki), spinach and African leafy vegetables (spider plant, amaranthus, black nightshade), because they grow quickly, are in high demand and fetch high prices. These urban farmers also use part of the produce for household consumption. Interestingly, these farmers control over 75 percent of the vegetable value-chain in urban Kenya (the sequence of business activities by which, from the perspective of the end user, value is added to a product or service) which is very high and has to do with the women's traditional responsibility for ensuring that their families have something to eat daily. Apart from the urban farmers, the majority of whom squat on small pieces of land (about 300 to 450 square feet) are the peri-urban farmers. These are traditionally rural farmers whose farming enterprises have been influenced by their closeness to the urban markets. For example, they supply 60 percent of the leafy vegetables, 70 percent of milk and poultry products in Nairobi. These farmers have security of tenure of their pieces of land and they do invest to ensure production of high quality products that meet requirements of the affluent urban society.

Marketing of vegetables takes place at the backstreets of Nairobi for most of the urban produce and the city sprouts into a mega green-grocer after sunset when the city law enforcers go home. This is the market organized and dominated by the poor women from the informal settlements of Nairobi. As for the peri-urban farmers, the marketing system is a bit more complex because it involves several segments of the value-chain but most of the produce gets to formal, informal and supermarkets. Mary, a farmer in Nairobi's Kibera slums, the largest in Africa, is luckier than the others as she is able to sell all her produce at the farm gate to some of the 750,000 slum dwellers living around her. Through that she has been able to contribute to the livelihoods of 11 people who work on her farm. She has also been able to feed, clothe and educate her family of seven in addition to buying a piece of land in her rural home in western Kenya. Growing crops and keeping livestock in urban centres in Kenya would be a major source of livelihood for many, however this hasn't been realized due to the lack of a favourable legal and institutional framework. It's therefore a common practice to find roaming animals confiscated and street fights between street vegetable hawkers and city authorities. There is, however, something for farmers to hope for as the policy makers have become tolerant to the informal livelihood activities such as farming and markets as a way of achieving the millennium development goals. For instance the Ministry of Agriculture and the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute among other stakeholders have set the ball rolling by starting an initiative to develop an urban agriculture policy in Kenya.

Nancy Karanja and Mary Njenga work in Nairobi for Urban Harvest, a global initiative on urban and peri-urban agriculture convened by the International Potato Centre www.cipotato.org/urbanharvest; they can be reached by email at nancy.karanja@cgiar.org and m.njenga@cgiar.org.

Field Notes from the Kansas City Community Farm

We are now entering the hottest part of the growing season and this time of year dry conditions tend to combine with increased weed, pest and disease pressures to reduce plant growth and crop yields. Still we are pulling enormous amounts of food out of the field each week and productivity has remained high. We have new plantings of beans, cucumbers, zucchini, and even baby salad greens coming along. This year for the first time we are also trying to raise a fall crop of fava beans. A cool season crop, favas do best in the spring but if we got our timing right and the weather

cooperates, we may have another round of this delicious legume before the season ends. And while we are not able to harvest any salable bunching greens (kale, collards and Swiss chard) at the moment, we did put a fall planting of these crops in the ground just last week. Cross your fingers there'll actually be a fall-like temperatures prior to our farmers' market ending in mid-October.



As we look into the future we hope to see more high tunnels on the farm (pictured on left is one of our tunnels planted with early tomatoes). They have been a tremendous asset for us, especially by protecting our early crops from the extreme weather this spring. We're presently researching different high tunnel designs including a very popular multi-bay design from England. So far, few growers in our region have invested in high tunnel technology on a large scale but the interest in these structures is definitely growing. Crops do generally much better inside high tunnels, even during the summer months when the structures can be quite warm. The tunnels provide some protection from frost and other extreme weather as well as from disease organisms and even pests. Rarely have we come across a farming

technology that has been so universally praised by anyone who's tried it. Urban farmers, community gardens, school gardens and anyone with limited growing space will likely find high tunnels to be one of the easiest ways to increase yield per square foot and farm profitability. Anyone with questions about choosing or building a tunnel is welcome to contact KCCUA for more information. We already operate six high tunnels at the KC Community Farm and are familiar with many different designs and suppliers. More information is also available at www.hightunnels.org.

Finally, on August 4th it's good-bye to our employee and friend Dan Heryer. He is departing from Kansas City for graduate studies at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. Dan has worked for the KC Community Farm as a volunteer in 2006 and as a paid field worker in 2007. He has been a huge asset around here and will be greatly missed. His commitment to small-scale agriculture is inspiring and we look forward to welcoming him back to Kansas City in two short years, at which time he plans to start his own agricultural business. Thanks for all your help, Mister Dan! Enjoy grad school!

Incubating Urban Farms in City Park

KCCUA, UG Parks & Rec discuss new model for productive urban green space and farmer training



KCCUA is in the process of developing a partnership with the Department of Parks and Recreation of the Unified Government of Wyandotte County/KCK to turn portions of Coronado Park in Kansas City, KS, into an incubator farm and community garden. The park has been closed to the public for several years but this developing partnership may help bring it into use once again.

An incubator farm, like other business incubators, supports farming entrepreneurs during the start-up phase of their businesses by offering them a variety of support services and resources. These would include access to quarter-acre growing plots under non-traditional lease arrangements, shared farm equipment, cold storage, greenhouse space and other infrastructure needed to run a small farm business. But not only future farmers (and eaters) would benefit! Space would be made available for community gardeners and all members of the community would be welcome to tour the incubator farm, volunteer and learn about food production. Longer-term ideas for the site include an educational center with workshop and meeting space for classes in gardening, food and nutrition, small business development, green design and related topics. Eventually, Coronado Park would once again become a tremendous asset to the greater Kansas City community as well as being an innovative example of productive urban green space development through public-private partnership. Look for more on this exciting project in the near future!

Thanks to Our Supporters!

The Biennial Urban Farm Tour held Sunday June 24, 2007 was a big success. We want to thank all the individuals and businesses for supporting our efforts; with them we are able to continue our work of promoting community-based, small-scale, entrepreneurial farming in urban Kansas City.

Raffle Sponsors

Eden Alley, Ajay Sood, Succotash, Blue Bird Bistro, ParExsalonce Day Spa, Whole Foods, Tina Hoover, Roasterie, Local Burger

Urban Farm Tour Sponsors

39th Street Community Market - Jessica Ratcliff, Boulevard Brewery - John McDonald, Green Acres of Northland - Shannon, J-14 Enterprises - Joe Jennings, KCK Greenmarket - Julie Xiong & Lao Thao, Les Dames d'Escoffier, Heart of America Chapter Kansas City - Rebecca Miller, Planters Lawn & Spice Co. - Jeff Myers & Lynn Slaughter, Slow Food Kansas City - Mariann Vandenberg, Windswept Worm Farm - Becky Halphin, KC Food Circle - Lisa Markley

Urban Farm Tour Volunteers

Kim & Don Barron, Joan Benjamin, Laura Christensen, Julie Coon, Nancy Gordon, Randy Gregg, Jessica Farmer, Terri

Nemer, Becki Weber, Steve Shmigelsky, Elizabeth Salazar, Tina Hoover, Cheryl & Don Landes, Carol Hart, Dan Heryer, Lala Kumar, Sonya Baughman, Phil Pisciotta, Jenn Basuel, Jerry Jost, Peggy Lowry, Cheryl & Don Landes, Howard Lotven, Lisa Markley, PJ Quells & Larry Davis, Jessica & Ernest Ratcliff, Chris & Rhianna Thomas, Sarah Shmigelsky, Kelly Harris Zehr, Jenna Wilkins, Roland Aufschnaiter, Jane Gotsch, Karin McAdams, Laura OBrien, Dan Heryer, Nancy Gordon, Linda Smith, Kelly Harris-Zehr, Chris & Rhianna Thomas, Warren Kittler, Linda Smith

Urban Farm Tour Coordinators

Janet Moss - BridgeWorks, Joel Wakham - BridgeWorks

Urban Farm Tour Hosts

Pov Huns (Huns' Family Garden), Bev Pender (Soul & Soil Rainbow Gardens), Joe Jennings (J-14 Farm & Ranch), Cross-Lines Community Outreach ("Ready to Work" Garden), Catholic Charities (Refugee Women's Market and Community Garden), Lew Edminster (Herb'n Gardener), Sherri Harvel (Root Deep Urban Farm), Ericka Wright (Troostwood Youth Garden), John & Judy Kaiahua (JJ Farms), Bruce & Maureen Branstetter and Tim Walters (East Wind Gardens at Drumm Farm)

Cultivators Circle Update

The Cultivators Circle is a group of community members who are dedicated to the long-term goals of KCCUA and the future of urban agriculture in the KC Metro area. Circle members make a 3-year annual pledge to KCCUA. If you would like to become a Cultivators Circle member, please contact Toni Gates-Grantham at 913.831.2444 or email her at toni@kccua.org.

Special thanks to the following Cultivators Circle members:

Judy Ancel, Cathy Anderson, Anonymous, Theresa & Alan Bavley, Lee Bowers, Phoebe Bunting, Judith Christy, Robert Cunningham, Pam Davidson, Heidi Dulay, Bethany & David Klug, Fay Laughridge, Jerry & Rory Magliano, Robin & John Maiale, Greg & Beth Patterson, Larry & PJ, Derek Porter Studio, House of Rocks, Sharon Scrogam, Sarah Shmigelsky, Skolnick Family, Sarah Hoffman & John Spertus, Sarah & William Stapp, Jay & Andrea Zwibelman

Calendar of Events

Film Screening: Crude Impact, Thursday, August 16, 6:30 p.m. Please join ReEnergizeKC, the Thomas Hart Benton Group of the Sierra Club, the Greens of KC, the Community of Reason, and the Kansas City Food Circle for a free screening of *Crude Impact* (www.CrudeImpact.com). The film will be shown at the Missouri Department of Conservation's Discovery Center, 4750 Troost in Kansas City, Missouri. Following the screening will be a panel discussion and Q&A with representatives from the co-sponsoring organizations. KCCUA's Katherine Kelly will join the panel as well.

Back to School Festival, Brookside Farmers Community Market, Saturday, August 18, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., 63rd Street and Wornall, Kansas City, Missouri. Come for some of the freshest organic produce around and stay for fun activities including a cooking demo by the Executive Chef from *Lidia's Italian Restaurant*, Strolling Strings from *Shawnee Mission North High School* and coloring books & crayons, sidewalk chalk and hoola hoops for kids.

To subscribe or unsubscribe please send an email to info@kccua.org
For editorial comments please contact *Urban Grown* editor Daniel Dermitzel at daniel@kccua.org
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