



# Eating Well and Doing Good in Missouri

## MU First In Midwest To Offer 4-year Degree With Emphasis In Sustainable Agriculture

The University of Missouri has become the first educational institution in the Midwest to offer a four-year undergraduate degree that emphasizes sustainable agriculture. The degree is offered as an emphasis area and minor within a General Agriculture degree from the MU College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (CAFNR). MU Vice Chancellor and CAFNR Dean Tom Payne said the sustainable agriculture degree program “is structured more toward a holistic approach to agriculture that includes the farm, environment and community, and incorporates the social, environmental and economic components of food production and consumption.”

Even as the production of major agricultural commodities moves more toward the factory-farming model, there also has been “increased demand, reflected in consistently rising levels of sales, for local and regional food products, organic foods and ‘natural foods,’” according to the report of a committee that recommended the program. That committee, headed by MU rural sociologist Sandy Rikoon, was made up of CAFNR students and faculty from a wide array of disciplines within the College. The panel cited high levels of student and consumer interest in sustainable agriculture.

“Consumer demands for locally produced and marketed products are particularly important in Missouri, where the state’s ecological base and cultural heritage suggest that sustainable agriculture systems are especially environmentally, economically and socially viable,” the report said. Payne agreed. “It’s clear that many producers in Missouri and the United States are seeking new market niches for traditional and new products, and the kinds of direct marketing links to consumers that sustainable agriculture emphasizes,” he said. “This new curriculum also responds to the increasing numbers of citizens, chefs, and public and private institutions seeking to purchase local and regional foods directly from producers. Being on a Research I campus allows our students to take new discoveries and understandings to further improve agricultural methods and achieve a more sustainable agriculture of benefit to all.”

Students trained in sustainable agriculture are in demand for global and international development projects, the committee found. “The current emphasis on sustainable development and the environment by U.S. agencies and non-governmental organizations as well as the adoption of sustainable development by the United Nations and most international development agencies have created a need for students with relevant educational and technical knowledge,” the report said. “What’s it all mean?” asked Payne. “Well, it’s about choices and exposing students to different philosophies about how food should be produced and marketed. It will allow students the option to investigate and learn about various alternative approaches to agriculture.” Forrest Rose, June 4, 2004, University of Missouri, Information Specialist; (573) 882-6843; RoseF@missouri.edu Source: Tom Payne; Sandy Rikoon

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# Kellogg Grant Will Help MU Extension Build “Community-Based” Food Systems

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Family farmers in Missouri will soon have help getting their products from the fields to the restaurants, supermarkets and ultimately to consumers, thanks to a four-year \$650,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

“It’s largely about mainstreaming good food so that it’s available to the people who want to buy it,” said Mary Hendrickson, University of Missouri rural sociologist and co-director of the MU Extension Food Circles Networking Project. “The goal is to nurture and expand community food systems in Kansas City, St. Louis and Mid-Missouri.” Specialists in Kansas City and St. Louis will offer farmers technical assistance in “marketing, processing, distribution and production,” Hendrickson said. “It’s not just about how the food is produced or how it gets bought. It’s about the connection between the two.”

Extension’s partner in the project is the Missouri Rural Crisis Center. Rhonda Perry, Center project director, pointed out that “Missouri has the second largest number of farms in the country, mostly diversified farms” that are suited to moving from large commodity production into local food production. “We have a lot of local food being produced in Missouri, but we’ve tended to be uncoordinated about it,” Perry said. “We have a lot of independent entrepreneurs, but what’s been missing is a coordinated infrastructure. We hope to build a cooperative storage and distribution effort while at the same time creating a stable demand.”

“Kellogg is really interested in market-based change,” Hendrickson said. “They want these products to do well in the marketplace. “The quality is there,” she said. “The difficulty is in distribution-getting a relationship with the guy in the meat department of a supermarket. You need the right storage, the right kind of truck and a reliable service component. Farmers need to make sure they can service the accounts.” Perry agreed. “We need to work with existing producers, retailers, consumers to figure out creative ways to streamline these local food systems,” she said. “A lot of restaurants are dependent on one delivery a day from a food system. Maybe they’ll take 10 deliveries a day from 10 distributors—but maybe they won’t.”

Hendrickson said a “key player” in the local food arena is Ball’s Foods, a major food retailer and distributor in the Kansas City area. “They’re featuring Missouri and Kansas products to differentiate themselves from the big guys—retailers like Wal-Mart, she said. “They understand people are looking for something different, something special.” Perry said another aim of the project is “to make local food accessible and affordable to people of all income levels. So we’re not just catering to a little niche market. We need to go direct to consumers not just in high-income areas but in low-income areas, because niche markets aren’t necessarily sustainable.”

One advantage of community food systems, Hendrickson added, is the opportunity for retailers to talk directly with producers. “They can make suggestions and ask questions like, ‘Can you pick this just a day later, or can we get this in a slightly different size?’

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## 2004 Farmer’s Forum

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**The Farmer’s Forum** has become a tradition as an integral part of the National Small Farm Trade Show & Conference and this year is no different. The three days of presentations, at the Boone County Fair Grounds in Columbia, Missouri will be November 4-6, and will feature a diversity of topics and presenters, with panels on Agroforestry and Direct Meat Marketing strategies to individual presentations on Intensive Grazing, Improved Pasture, Solar Power, Farm Business Planning, Elderberries, Fresh Water Shrimp Production, Grant Opportunities for Farmers and many other topics.

Presenters have a variety of backgrounds, from agriculture producers who have received sustainable agriculture grants, to extension educators, to community leaders, and to sustainable agriculture programs staff.

The schedule of presentations can be seen at the Community Food System and Sustainable Agriculture website (<http://agebb.missouri.edu/sustain>).

If you’d like to volunteer as moderator for one or more presentations please contact Jose Garcia at 573-884-3794 or [GarciaJL@missouri.edu](mailto:GarciaJL@missouri.edu)

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## \$ Grants for Farmers \$

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### 2005 Missouri Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Award Program

Wanted: Innovative Missouri farmers to apply for sustainable agriculture grants of up to \$3,000 each.

Use them to

- Increase profits!
- Conserve natural resources!
- Create local food systems!

Applications must be received by 5 pm on November 30, 2004.

For more information or an application, contact your local extension office or the Missouri Dept. of Agriculture, Sustainable Agriculture Program

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## Build Your Market With Chefs by Mary Hendrickson

Are you a farmer seeking to diversify your marketing opportunities? Selling to local restaurants may be just the ticket for exposing your best product while gaining new markets.

At first glance, the glamorous world of chefs—think cooking shows—and the grounded life of farmers may seem leagues apart. In the world of food, however, chefs and farmers really have the same goal—producing the tastiest food imaginable! Growing the best product and making it into mouth-watering food is really a labor of love—one to which farmers and chefs are equally committed.

While common interests bring farmers and chefs together, work rhythms and time push them apart. Developing a relationship with a chef takes a lot of hard work on the part of a farmer and vice versa. For instance, chefs used to ordering most of their ingredients from one handy source—the service-oriented food distributor—might wilt at the prospect of juggling deliveries from 30 different farmers. Imagine how hard it is for a chef to source local food products when they are already supervising a busy kitchen, planning menus, and solving customer crises. But as a farmer, you can make life much easier for a chef if you follow some simple strategies.

First, produce the freshest, best-tasting, best-looking food you can, and get it to the chef quickly. Handling produce properly post-harvest heightens the taste and retains valuable nutrients. According to Liz Huffman, chef at the Bluebird Bistro in Kansas City, the most important thing farmers have to sell is freshness—a quality that chefs can taste.

Second, make it easy for a chef to buy food from you. Call at a regular time, preferably early in the week. Never call at lunchtime or dinner—customers are streaming into restaurants and chefs have to focus on the

Early mornings or mid-afternoons are wonderful times to catch chefs. Deliver food during the non-rush hours, making sure that you provide a packing slip and a numbered, legible invoice. After all, money can be yours that much faster if the accountants can read the invoice and track it.

Third, listen to chefs who can provide you some constructive criticism about your product. If they tell you the cheese needs salt, listen. You're never going to get such expert advice so cheap anywhere else. Chefs know exactly what they want when it comes to taste and appearance, and successful farmers heed their advice. Cody Hogan, chef de cuisine at Lidia's Kansas City, insists on the highest quality products and isn't afraid to tell farmers what their products may be lacking.

Fourth, understand that only a few chefs know the ends and outs of producing in a particular place—especially the challenging Midwest. Communication and education are critical. What delayed the strawberry harvest? Why can't we get sweet little carrots right here in Kansas City? What happened to the peach crop? And my personal favorite—"Nobody told me that the local processor closed for deer season. Now I'm stuck without my favorite bacon, and I have to feed people tonight!" Chefs need to know what's going on out in the field and you are the best person to help them out.

Marketing to chefs can be hard going, but rewarding. Restaurants often tell customers on the menu where the food came from, exposing your product to potential customers, especially the retailers. Better yet, chefs are loyal when they find something they love. Providing consistent, high-quality product in a professional manner is the key to success.

And the benefits—new markets, but even better, new friends!



### Kellogg Grant cont.

That doesn't happen in the standardized systems where most people get their foods."

A community-based food system, she said, "ensures that your food is grown, processed, sold and eaten in a particular place. Your food dollar stays in the community, and there are also social and environmental benefits because the production tends to be on a smaller scale."

The project will also work to change public policy to benefit farmers and consumers, Hendrickson said.

For example, school cafeterias should be encouraged to buy locally grown, fresh foods, and local producers could be given preference by state and local government entities. "We'd also like to see insurance become affordable for smaller farmers," she said. "It's amazing how many of them can't afford insurance at all."

Forrest Rose, July 7, 2004, University of Missouri, Information Specialist; (573)882-6843; [RoseF@missouri.edu](mailto:RoseF@missouri.edu)

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**We're on the Web!**

<http://agebb.missouri.edu/sustain>

## What's New In Sustainable Food and Farming Series:

*Each month during the 2004-2005 school year the Community Food Systems & Sustainable Agriculture Program will feature speakers on important topics at our "Lunch and Learn" series. These informal seminars are held in the Memorial Union on the UMC campus from 11:45 a.m.-1:00 p.m. and refreshments are provided.*

**09/07/04, Room S203**-Mr. Dusty Walker a Research Specialist for the Center for Agroforestry at MU presented on "Agroforestry for the family farm: Current Research and Future Application."

**09/20/04, Room S203**- Mr. Barry Cudmore, Farmer and Chairman of the Food Trust of Prince Edward Island, Canada presenting on "The Value of Branding to Sustainability."

**10/11/2004, Room S203**- Dr. Woosung Jang, an Associate Professor of Industrial Engineering at MU and he will present on "Supply Chain Models for Small Agricultural Enterprises."

**Copies of most presentations may be viewed at**  
<http://agebb.missouri.edu/sustain>

## Fall Workshops In Oklahoma

In-depth workshops on popular alternative farm and ranch enterprises will be offered at the Future Farms 2004 conference November 6 at the Clarion Hotel in Oklahoma City.

Seven workshops will be offered. Instructors will be farmers, ranchers and ag educators with first-hand knowledge and experience. Most have written guidebooks, software or fact sheets on their topics.

Registration is just \$50 before Oct 22; \$75 after that. The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture is the sponsor of the conference. For complete information or to register call the Kerr Center at 918.647.9123 or go online to [www.kerrcenter.com](http://www.kerrcenter.com).

Maura McDermott, Communications Director Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture PO Box 588, Poteau, OK 74953918.647.9123, [www.kerrcenter.com](http://www.kerrcenter.com)

### Featured Websites

[www.foodroutes.org](http://www.foodroutes.org)

[www.foodcircles.missouri.edu](http://www.foodcircles.missouri.edu)

[www.foodsecurity.org](http://www.foodsecurity.org)

### Check It Out

#### The New Guide to Eating Well & Doing Good

available for Springfield and Columbia at:  
[www.foodcircles.missouri/sources.htm](http://www.foodcircles.missouri/sources.htm)

### Mark Your Calendar

#### 8th Annual Community Food Security Coalition Conference

October 16-19, 2004  
Milwaukee, WI

#### National Small Farm Trade Show

November 4-6, 2004  
Boone County Fairgrounds  
Columbia, MO

#### Rural Life Day

December 4, 2004  
Jefferson City, MO

## Have Questions or Need Information ???

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