



** This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at <https://ksre-learn.com/greatn-plains-grower-conference>

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Great Plains Growers Conference set for Jan. 9-11

Four-state event helps to address food insecurity in rural communities, organizers say

By Pat Melgares, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Extension agents in four states have joined forces for the annual [Great Plains Grower Conference](#), an event that organizers say is an important part of bridging the gap between farmers growing local foods, and consumers seeking nutritious food for their families.

This year's event is slated Jan. 9-11 in St. Joseph, Missouri. [Registration is available online](#), and options range from \$12 for admission to the trade show, to \$70 for one-day and \$140 to attend both days. Discounts for students are also available.

Margit Kaltenecker, an agriculture agent with K-State Research and Extension's office in Douglas County, said the conference is geared toward fruit and vegetable producers, as well as cut flower growers and urban gardeners in Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota and other Midwestern states.

"As Kansans look to increase food security in rural communities, there is a need for more farmers to step up and embrace the opportunities offered by growing specialty crops," Kaltenecker said.

[According to Feeding America](#), a national network of food banks and pantries, there are approximately 384,000 people facing hunger in Kansas, including nearly 1 in 5 children.

Kaltenecker said fruit, vegetables and other specialty foods "are high value crops with high returns per acre." She adds that many crops offer unique opportunities to diversify a standard crop rotation.

"Plus," she said, "providing fresh fruits and produce to local markets is a rewarding experience, as more people recognize the nutritional benefits of sourcing local produce."

The Great Plains Grower Conference is open to beginning and experienced producers. Kaltenecker said sessions provide research-backed information from university specialists and local growers.

The conference tracks include:

- Business development and marketing.
- Tree fruits.
- Small fruits.
- Vegetable production.
- Integrated pest management.
- Organic/regenerative agriculture.
- Protected culture (tunnels).
- Greenhouse/hydroponics.
- Cut flower production.
- Forest farming.
- North-Central Regional Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) farmer forum.

Also, this year's event offers pre-conference workshops on marketing, hard cider and nut orchards.

The conference is organized by extension professionals at Kansas State University, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Missouri, Iowa State and Lincoln University (Missouri), in partnership with North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education.

More information is available online at www.greatplainsgrowersconference.org.

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FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story

Great Plains Growers Conference, <https://www.greatplainsgrowersconference.org>

Conference registration, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2025-great-plains-growers-conference-tickets-1000837982347>

Feeding America: Hunger in Kansas, <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/kansas>

K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county extension offices, experiment fields, area extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan. For more information, visit www.ksre.ksu.edu. K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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