

Consolidated Notes from Specialty Crops Sector Workshop

August 30, 2016

Identify Kansas' advantages.

- Climate and natural resources make Kansas suitable to grow certain specialty crops.
- High interest from potential growers and existing growers.
- Central location for distribution and transportation/infrastructure.
- It (normally) rains during the growing season.
- Local Food and Farm Task Force efforts to identify local food and specialty crop initiatives.
- Relatively low cost of land compared to traditionally highly concentrated specialty crop areas (California).
- Think marketing opportunities.

What does growth look like to you? What should our industry goals be?

- Identify small- and large-scale specialty crop producers who many want to expand in Kansas.
- Beginning Farmer Program Funding – recruitment of young people into farming through specialty crop production (University of Wisconsin).
- Increase Tier 2 production/marketing while ensuring robust Tier 1 marketing channels.
- Double Kansas output – 4% to 8% growth in production.
- More acreage of all specialty crops.
- Expand view of specialty crops to include high-value, large scale production (compete with California).
- Increase gluten-free grain production and hops for craft beer market.
- Training and education
- Increased jobs
- Consider a Kansas Vegetable Initiative to assist with producer recruitment.

Identify barriers to growth.

- Lack of land grant funding (i.e. too few extension specialists)
- Lack of involvement with any organized specialty crop association limits education and marketing.
 - Limits resources
 - Limits organization on a large scale
- From field to market – grower has to make money
- Distribution logistics, including cold storage.
 - Aggregation
 - In-state processors
- Difficulty in recovering from drift damage
- “We’ve never done that before” attitude
- Access to an adequate workforce required to harvest most specialty crops.

- Fear of change
- Lack of research (e.g. varietal trials, Research and Extension specialists)
- Urban vs rural – urban growth, planning/zoning restrictions
- Underutilization of federal resources.
- Greater leveraging of educational research and extension resources.
- No part-time labor and access to small equipment.
- Aerial sprayers don't even know about Drift Watch!
- Need to support small growers that want to grow.

Identify untapped opportunities and ideas for growth.

- Increase small food processing plants to process excess local production
- Local food hub coops
- Coops for specialty equipment or agency rentals
- Industrial hemp
- Veterans
- Increase consumer awareness of direct-sales outlets
- Investigate specialty crop checkoff programs as potential funding source.
- Tax to fund **research**, growth, etc.
- B&B license for wineries
- Agroforestry
- Continue to engage with Western Growers Association.

What do we do next? What's our action plan?

- More support for KSU (post-secondary)/KSRE to educate Kansans.
- Production, processing, marketing
- Tier 2 expansion – marketing
- Educate consumers on availability
 - Support CSA
 - Focus on promoting Kansas grown and seasonality
- Marketing = brokerage system/open new markets/coops
- Labor force – lack of to harvest
 - Row crop vs specialty crop differences
- Full service cooperatives for specialty crops
- We are not thinking big enough (expand thought process)