Johanns highlights first-ever Gardiner Global Food Systems conference Oct. 7

Registration now open for event that encourages thought around food access

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

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and U.S. Senator Mike Johanns highlights a packed agenda for the first-ever Henry C. Gardiner Global Food Systems conference, slated for Oct. 7 in Manhattan.

The half-day event is open to the public, and will celebrate the 10th year of one of Kansas State University’s most popular lecture series, also named after the late Kansas rancher Henry C. Gardiner of Ashland.

Registration for the conference opened on Aug. 1. There is no cost to attend, but those interested must register in advance.

Mark Gardiner, son of Henry who helps to run the family-owned ranch now, said the lecture series was established to facilitate in-depth discussions on the world’s food challenges.

“Each year, as we’ve met to select a presenter (for the evening lecture), the discussion is much more comprehensive than simply inviting an academic to present research,” Mark Gardiner said. “The Global Food Systems initiative is an invitation to embrace the global challenges beyond agricultural production to ensure that all of civilization has access to food.”

Scientist Peer Ederer, founder of an international company named GOALSciences, will be the featured speaker for the evening lecture Oct. 7 at Kansas State University.

His talk – titled ‘Scientific Evidence Behind the Role of Livestock and Meat Production in a Global Society’ – begins at 7 p.m. in K-State’s McCain Auditorium. Admission is free.
But unlike past years, the lecture will be preceded by a half-day conference that features Johanns and Craig Gundersen, the Snee Family Endowed Chair at the Baylor University Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty, whose research concentrates on the causes and consequences of food insecurity in the world.

The Nebraska-born Johanns, who served as U.S. Secretary of Agriculture from 2004 to 2007 and U.S. Senator from 2009 to 2015, kicks off the afternoon program with the talk, ‘Fair Trade – A pathway to ensure access to affordable food.’

During his tenure as Secretary of Agriculture, Johanns opened or expanded access to 40 international markets and is credited with establishing agricultural breakthroughs as a member of the U.S. negotiating team for the Doha Development Round, aimed at improving trading prospects of developing countries.

Johanns conducted 32 international trips to advance trade, aid and food safety as a representative of the United States.

Gundersen’s background includes a current project in which he is the lead researcher on Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap project. He is also a roundtable fellow of the Farm Foundation, and faculty affiliate of the Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities at the University of Notre Dame.

Gundersen’s research includes evaluating U.S. food assistance programs, with an emphasis on the Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program, commonly known as SNAP.

Noted agricultural economist and industry consultant Nevil Speer will moderate the afternoon sessions with Johanns and Gunderson, as well as the evening lecture with Ederer. Audience questions will be encouraged.

“Attendees to these events will be encouraged to think outside of their comfort zone,” Gardiner said. “We are fortunate in the United States to be able to choose any supermarket or neighborhood store, and know that we have choices and that the shelves will be stocked with safe, nutritious and relatively affordable food.”

“But it’s important to understand the social pressures related to food access. It’s also critical that we understand the barriers to food production and global access.”

The full agenda for the afternoon conference and the evening lecture is available online.

Kansas State University established the Henry C. Gardiner Global Food Systems lecture series to provide science-based education about world food issues. The series allows students, faculty, staff and Kansas citizens to interact with U.S. and international food industry leaders on topics of current interest.

The lecture series is funded by the Gardiner family of Ashland, Kan. Henry C. Gardiner, who passed away just days before the first lecture in 2015, was known as a visionary leader who dedicated his career to improving the beef industry through science and technology.
FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
Henry C. Gardiner Global Food Systems lecture series, https://www.k-state.edu/research/global-food/events/lecture-series
GOALSciences, https://goalsciences.org

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