Residents encouraged to share ideas on building their local food system

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

MANHATTAN, Kan. – A Kansas State University program that aims to improve the health of Kansans by increasing access to locally grown foods is rolling out a welcome mat to residents wanting to become involved in the effort.

Rebecca McMahon, administrator of the Local Food System program, said the group will be hosting 11 roundtable, discussion sessions in November to gather feedback from Kansans on what they think is needed to overcome challenges in their local food system.

McMahon said a local food system includes everything that is part of ensuring that people have the food they need to survive, including production, processing, distribution, consumption and food waste management.

“We want to hear about real-life experiences of individuals across the state, both the successes they have experienced and the challenges they have faced,” McMahon said.

The schedule of community discussions includes:

- Nov. 2 – Dodge City, 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- Nov. 6 – Clay Center, 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 9 – Ottawa, 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 10 – Topeka, 1:45 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.
- Nov. 13 – Quinter, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Nov. 13 – Colby, 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 14 – Salina, 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Nov. 15 – Wichita, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- Nov. 16 – Hutchinson, 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 21 – Olathe, 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 29 – Pittsburg, 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
An additional roundtable is planned for Liberal in early 2024. Also, four online sessions are available to anyone in Kansas; those are scheduled for 12 p.m. and 7 p.m. on Dec. 5 and 7.

Interested persons must register in advance. Information and registration is available online through the Kansas Local Foods website.

“The topics that will be discussed could include a wide range of things related to food, including food insecurity, food waste, the needs of food businesses or the environmental challenges of producing local food,” McMahon said.

She said that Kansans’ experiences should key the discussion. “It may be challenges in finding healthy food, starting a business, developing a school or community garden, or navigating zoning codes. Whatever they are, these types of experiences can help us identify what might be helpful in helping local communities and, ultimately, the whole state of Kansas.”

McMahon said the roundtable format gives local residents an opportunity to learn from each other.

“We can build healthier people, more vibrant communities and stronger economies, if we can use our common ground to leverage resources and create new opportunities related to local food systems,” she said.

Learn more online at https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/kansaslocalfoods.

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FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
Kansas Local Foods, https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/kansaslocalfoods

Registration, Local Foods Community Roundtables, https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/kansaslocalfoods/get-involved/roundtables.html

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