UK’s Food Connection is helping build food future for Kentucky

By Brett Wolff, Extension Associate

In summer 2014, the University of Kentucky signed a contract with Aramark, privatizing dining services campus-wide. Several of the terms in this contract — terms that emerged from considerable campus conversation and feedback — focus specifically on local foods. Aramark agreed to increase Kentucky Proud and local food purchasing, including an 11 percent increase in the first year of the contract with $2 million in guaranteed purchases. Local food is projected to represent approximately 25 percent of total food purchases by the end of the contract.

The other major local food component of the agreement includes the establishment of a public-private partnership aimed at growing a vibrant food economy in Kentucky. In 2015, that nebulous partnership took form in the Food Connection — a UK center serving farmers, food producers, students, and consumers. Their overarching goal is to enhance the production, distribution and consumption of healthful Kentucky grown and produced food by members of on- and off-campus communities. They will accomplish this through interdisciplinary and innovative instruction, high-impact service and outreach, and cutting edge research on foods and food systems. I recently sat down with Executive Director Lilian Brislen, and she emphasized the potential impact for specialty crop producers.

“Aramark has committed to purchasing Kentucky foods, and we are collaborating with other UK and community partners to
support Kentuckians in producing, packing, and delivering that food. We hope that building capacity to supply Aramark will serve as a case study and stepping stone for any Kentucky producer interested in bigger markets.” Kentucky producers often face challenges in fulfilling wholesale contracts: food safety regulations, post-harvest handling practices, and the production challenges of scaling up top the list. But Lilian is not disheartened: “We know that there are so many talented and dedicated people working at UK, in Kentucky, and in this region. If we prioritize producer needs and work together to respond, the Aramark contract is only the beginning.”

Visit the Food Connection at: http://foodconnection.ca.uky.edu/

Farewell to Kentucky, CCD

It is with mixed emotions that I write to let you know that I will be relinquishing the role of Extension Associate with the Center for Crop Diversification at the University of Kentucky on June 15th, 2015. I am leaving this position to return to my family farm in Apollo, Pennsylvania to take over vegetable operations and manage marketing strategies. I will be the fourth generation on Kistaco Farm (www.kistacofarm.com), which was started in 1922 by my great-grandfather. Kistaco Farm’s main crop has always been apples alongside freshly squeezed apple cider. Currently my parents own and operate the business, which includes a roadside farm market, participation in a year-round farmers market in Pittsburgh, contribution to a cooperative CSA program, and direct marketing to restaurants in Pittsburgh. My husband and I are thrilled to have this opportunity set before us, and know that we have many ideas about what else to do on the farm. In the future, I can be reached at hilemannm@gmail.com. Please continue to let me know what’s happening in your county or on your farms, and if you ever travel to southwestern Pennsylvania, please look us up!

It has been a pleasure and privilege to work with so many of you throughout the 5 years I have worked with UK Extension. I’ve been constantly inspired by the passion, creativity, and commitment of everyone here. Again, it’s been a pleasure working with you all and I sincerely hope our paths cross again very soon.

All the best,
Miranda

Extension Associate Brett Wolff
newest member of CCD team

Hello, my name is Brett Wolff and I am the new Extension Associate working with the Center for Crop Diversification. My appointment also includes assisting in the administration of the Kentucky SARE Program.

I am originally from Louisville, KY and I have earned several degrees from UK in the last 8 years. I come most recently from producing vegetables and supporting research on the UK Horticulture Research Farm. I worked with different crops and systems in the field and under the cover of high tunnels. I am excited to move into this role in Extension and to provide support and information to producers and other Extension professionals in Kentucky.

I would love to hear from you. Feel free to email me at brett.wolff@uky.edu to let me know where you want to see the CCD go.
Kentucky Ethnic Food Co-op would bring many benefits

By Jeong Hyun An

The Kentucky Ethnic Food Co-op is one of the visions I’ve developed in hopes of promoting the local production of ethnic crops and foods and helping create viable and sustainable business opportunities for those who participate. It is a unique form of a food co-op creating partnerships between the local farming community and local ethnic communities. The goal is to combine the farming experience from the local farmers and the ethnic crops and food knowledge from diverse local communities. The partnership will create exciting new business opportunities for growers and buyers, benefiting everyone in Kentucky by making more healthy and fresh local food alternatives available.

Through these partnerships, the Co-op will be able to offer Kentucky and other states fresh ethnic produce (e.g., Napa cabbage), ethnic foods made with locally grown ethnic crops as main ingredients (e.g., Napa cabbage kimchi), and ethnic foods using regular local produce and agricultural products (e.g., cucumber kimchi). An ethnic food co-op could be a new agri-food business model for many U.S. farming communities, especially in the states known to be ethnic food deserts.

The KY Ethnic Food Co-op may initially be part of the existing local food market systems like the Good Foods Co-op. Another idea will be establishing its home at the West Louisville Food Port, the new food hub that will open later next year. Our local food economy and system will grow only stronger and better with the ethnic food component.

For further information, contact Ann Montgomery at 7thindustry@gmail.com, or visit her website at www.7thindustry.org.

KDA offers useful resources for consumers and farmers

The demand for affordable, fresh, local and healthy foods is growing. With more than 159 successful farmers markets across the Commonwealth, spanning over 106 counties and 2,500 vendors, farmers markets and direct-to-consumer marketing are great ways to meet that demand. Did you know that the Kentucky Department of Agriculture has a farmers market directory of Kentucky Farmers Markets? Visit http://www.kyproud.com/kentucky-proud-producers.aspx?type=Farmers%27%20Market to search for the farmers market nearest your home or office.

The Kentucky Department of Agriculture also keeps an updated list of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms located within the Commonwealth. Visit http://www.kyagr.com/marketing/CSA.html to access their directory of CSA farms and find one that’s close to you!
UKREC June 25th event to feature ornamentals, fruit programs

The University of Kentucky Research and Education Center at Princeton will host a horticulture open house and educational program on Thursday, June 25th. The event will feature an ornamentals/nursery open house from 9 a.m. until noon CDT, and a fruit/orchard educational program from 9 to 11 a.m. The ornamentals/nursery open house will take place at the ornamental plot area on University Drive, and will feature the plant evaluation display beds and evaluation plots, a boxwood trial under shade, and using a drone for nursery pest scouting. Presenters will include Dr. Dewayne Ingram, Dr. Winston Dunwell, and Extension Associates Carey Grable and Josh Knight.

The fruit/orchard educational program will be held at the UKREC Rottgering Kuegel Agricultural Research and Extension Building/George A. Everette Conference Center. It will feature apple, peach and blackberry cultivar selection; managing common diseases of apple and peach; using IPM to control orchard pests; and integrated pest management for beekeepers. Presenters will include Dr. John Strang, Dr. Nicole Ward, Dr. Ric Bessin, and Kentucky state apiarist Tammy Horn. A tour of the orchard will be offered from 11 a.m. to noon if time permits after the presentations.

The UKREC is located at 1205 Hopkinsville Street, Princeton, KY. For more information, contact Christi Forsythe at cforsyth@uky.edu, or 270-365-7541 x 221.

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