

The Kansas City Food Circle

UPDATE

Winter, 1998-99

Opportunities Abound for Food System Activists, Educators

The Food Circle is involved in three great opportunities in February and March for members and friends to learn the latest on securing good food and fighting factory farms.

Saturday, March 6: Reclaiming Our Food System from the Corporate Giants, Symposium and Farmers Exhibition. This one-day event at the Holiday Inn in Overland Park is cosponsored by the Food Circle and the Southern Plains Regional Conservation Committee of the Sierra Club. Sierra Club activists from Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri and Kansas will combine with local activists and educators to hear both nationally known speakers and our experienced Food Circle farmers. A Farmers Exhibition featuring local farmers and vendors of food preservation appliances and sustainable ag technique will be held at the same time and place and will be advertised to the general public. Those of you who don't want to sit through lectures can just drop by and order your food for the year. This first of a kind event is described in detail in the enclosed brochure. Cost: \$22 incl. lunch.

Feb.9 - Mar. 16: The Art of Environmentally Sound Eating. This is a 6 part class on the current state of our industrialized, petrochemical dependent food system and the Kansas City Food circle's local, organic alternative. It includes a special cooking class by Chef Zoe LaGrece. This series is sponsored by the Gaia Community and will be held Tuesday evenings at All Souls Unitarian Church, 4500 Warwick Blvd, KCMO (except the cooking class which is at Wild Oats). Pre-registration required. cost \$10. See page 2 for details.

Feb 27: Food, Justice, Community: A Forum Building Rural-Urban Connections. The Food Circle has assisted in the planning and is providing speakers for this one day program organized by Catholics for Peace and Justice, St. Joseph Diocese and will primarily focus on the impact of industrialized agriculture on rural communities. It will be held at St. Teresa's North Parish church in Parkville, Mo. For more information, call JoCelle McEnany at 931-9744.

All of the events are just in time for the coming growing season, so pass this info on to your friends.

Antibiotic Resistance a Growing Concern

Europe Bans Antibiotics in Animal Feed. (in part from Reuters News Service, Dec. 14, 1998). Coming on the heels of warnings issued by U. S. scientists, agriculture ministers of the European Union have banned the use of four antibiotics in animal feed. The ban was imposed because of concerns that their use could increase the risk of bacterial resistance to certain drugs in humans.

Antibiotics are used to prevent and treat certain diseases in animals, necessary in part, because of the growing size and concentration of animal feeding facilities. However, huge amounts (in total) of antibiotics are used each year to promote growth in young animals, mainly chickens and pigs. No ban exists in the United States and even in Europe the ban will not affect the biological workhorse of the industry, tetracycline. As we reported in previous editions of the Update, increasing resistance of salmonella bacteria to tetracycline and other common antibiotics has been noted in recent years. This has been attributed by scientists, in part, to the extensive use of antibiotics in animal husbandry.

Taxpayer Bailout of the Hog Industry

The 40 largest hog producers in the U.S. increased their breeding capacity over 15% last year, over the strenuous objections of rural citizens, and caused the collapse of pork prices. With crocodile tears flowing, the USDA is now using taxpayers' money to bailout the industry in the name of the few remaining independent producers. The USDA's purchase of huge quantities of pork has the effect of further pumping up the fat margins of the corporations who control the packing industry, some of whom raise their own hogs, or contract with other large corporations for supply, who, together are responsible for the glut to begin with.

Meanwhile news reports quote one farmer who shot one of his ailing sows rather than spend \$25.00 on treatment. Others are talking about releasing their pigs into the woods and selling tickets to fearless hunters who can then go out and shoot them. This author found two young pigs dumped by the side of the road near his home with their bellies slit open.

U.S. Trade Policy. This outrage is a direct result of international trade policies put in place 40 years ago and supported by successive administrations. That policy is to export as much meat as possible, even if the taxpayer has to pay all the social and environmental damage. The Farm Bureau and others, who always rail against government interference, are now sticking their hand out almost before the ink is dry on the Freedom to Farm Act.

These trade policies hurt other countries, too. Mexican pig farmers recently set up a blockade along the border in an attempt to stop the dumping of live hogs into their market by U. S. producers. Actually this is merely the tip of the iceberg. It works like this. Big Ag corporations, while throwing off costs onto neighbors and the environment, and receiving government subsidies, lower prices and driving Mexican farmers and their families off their land and out of rural villages. These unfortunate people migrate to the "maquilla" border areas. The young women take low-

paying jobs in factories or, for survival, enter the sex industry where some are murdered and dumped in the desert. The men illegally enter the U.S. to find work in, you guessed it, the slaughterhouses and hog factories .. which allows Big Ag to lower prices even more and the cycle goes on. Slick, huh!

The irony to all this is that studies are now showing that it's just as cheap to raise hogs in low tech ways such as in pasture and in low cost: "hoop" structures that can be used for other purposes when prices are low. The problem is the corporate control of the market. If you object to our government's idiotic policies, please write to President Clinton at the White House and to Secretary Glickman, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 20250.

Canadian Researcher Links Frog Deformities to Pesticides

(KC Star). A McGill University researcher noted an increase in frog deformities, 20% of the population, in ponds and wetlands in St Lawrence River valley that are subject to pesticide contamination. The deformity rate was only 2% in ponds near land with no recent pesticide use such as abandoned farmland and land used mainly for grazing.

Ag Giant Feeding Frenzy

In a brazen challenge to weakly enforced U. S. antitrust laws, the nation's largest grain trader, Cargill, Inc., has announced a deal to buy the grain storage, transportation and trading businesses of the Continental Grain Co., the second largest. Cargill is also the nation's largest privately held corporation with sales in excess of \$60 billion. Federal agencies say they will closely scrutinize this transaction and Congress will hold hearings. Since 1980, however, few deals of this type have been thwarted by the federal government.

Farmers Supply and Operate Restaurant

On a happier note, vertical integration is not just for the corporate giants. From the November issue of Acres, USA comes the story of an organic farm couple near Eau Claire, Wisconsin who cut out all the middle people and supply their own restaurant called Beautiful Soup. Only the excess produce from their fields and 13 greenhouses goes to the farmers market. The rest is made into, hear tell, some of the finest food around. Restaurant scraps are used to feed the chickens or made into compost, courtesy of mail order worms.

The Beautiful Soup Restaurant in Eau Claire is supported by about 200 regular customers and advertising is all word of mouth. The menu, which changes every day, consists of two soups, one vegetarian and one meat, and a main dish. They also sell pies, breads and cookies. The theme of their operation is "Get to Know Your Food" and who grows it. They want to help start this type of operation in other communities. On a smaller scale, we are fortunate to have the Blue Bird Cafe at the City Garden at 17th and Summit near downtown KC. I hear one of our farmers has been thinking about doing the restaurant thing elsewhere in the metro area. We're waiting...

This is a re-mastered copy – you can find the whole KCFC archive at www.KCFoodCircle.org

The Art of Environmentally Sound Eating... or (If we are what we eat, some folks are in deep doodoo!)

A six part class on the current state of our industrialized, petro-chemical dependent food system and the Kansas City Food Circle's local, organic alternative.

When: Tues. evenings, 7-8:30p.m., Feb. 9, 16, 23, & March 2, 9, 16, 1999.

Where: All Souls Unitarian Universalist Church, 4500 Warwick, K.C., MO (except Session V) **Cost:** \$10.00 Pre-registration required. To do so, call 292-2846 or send check payable to Gaia Community to: P.O. Box 45195, K.C., MO 64171.

Session I "Ethical Eating: a Spirituality of Food" An overview of today's petro-chemical dependent agriculture and the KCFC alternative, including the Humane Farming Association's video, *The Pig Picture*. **Presenter:** Rev. Vicky Combs

Session II "Corporate Control of the Food System and the True Costs of Industrial Agriculture" An in-depth look at who controls the processing and distribution of our food both nationally and internationally and the hidden costs thereof. **Presenter:** Craig Volland

Session III "The Social Costs of Our Global Food System" A presentation on the global food systems' impact on the family farmer and rural communities here and abroad. **Presenter:** Mary Hendrickson, Ph.D., Rural Sociology, UMC

Session IV "Intensive Confinement: Today's Animal Concentration Camps" A slide presentation and discussion of today's factory farms versus the humane, chemical and antibiotic free methods of animal husbandry used by KCFC farmers'. **Presenters:** John Kuhrmann with David Schafer & Alice Dobbs of Schafer Edinburg Farms

Session V "Sensuous Foods from Your Own Back Yard: Whole Foods Cooking at Its Best" A practical demonstration on preparing delicious whole foods; samples and recipes provided. **Presenter:** Chef Zoe LaGrece. **Note:** This one class will be held at Wild Oats Market in Mission, KS.

Session VI "Eating to Your Heart's Content: The KCFC Alternative" An in depth discussion of Community Supported Agriculture (subscription buying), all the foods offered by KCFC farmers and the area restaurants serving local, organic foods. **Presenters:** Judy & John Kaiahua of JJ Farms and Rich Heffern.

Winter '98-99