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Testimony on SB 120
to
The House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
By Chad Bontrager
Kansas Department of Agriculture
March 14, 2013

Good afternoon, Chairperson Schwartz and members of the committee. I am Chad Bontrager, agribusiness development coordinator, with the Kansas Department of Agriculture, and I am here to express KDA's support for SB 120, which will improve the ability of the department to serve our state's farmers' markets.

KDA works each day to support the entire agricultural sector in Kansas, including farmers' markets. As consumers become further removed from production agriculture, Kansas farmers' markets provide them the opportunity to support local agricultural producers and Kansas agriculture.

From 1987 to 2012, the number of farmers' markets in Kansas increased from 26 to 118. These markets give consumers access to fresh, locally grown produce as well as other food and agricultural products while also providing an opportunity for farmers to cultivate trust and confidence from consumers. Farmers' markets are an important economic tool in many communities as they keep money in local Kansas communities.

KDA recognizes the important role farmers' markets play in agricultural advocacy and rural economic growth. The department is committed to supporting this growing sector of agriculture and would like to help farmers' markets access federal grants and other resources as well as promote the markets. Unfortunately, there is no farmers' market registration program in Kansas to allow the department the ability to provide this service.

SB 120 would designate the Secretary of Agriculture as the registration authority for farmers' markets, establish a central registration of the markets and would limit the legal liability of registered farmers' markets. There would be no fee associated with the registration. However, registered farmers' markets would have access to marketing, outreach and advocacy efforts through the *From the Land of Kansas* state trademark program, the ability to apply for federal grants and legal liability protection.

When discussions began about setting up central registration for farmers' markets with KDA, we reached out to the markets for their input. Approximately 25 percent of the Kansas farmers' market coordinators were contacted and 93 percent of them responded with positive feedback. Attached are three letters of support. As we work together to grow all sectors of Kansas agriculture, passing SB 120 will move us forward by promoting Kansas farmers' markets.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.



Allen County Farmers' Market
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Annarose Hart
Agribusiness Development & Farmers' Market Specialist
Kansas Department of Agriculture
109 SW 9th Street, 4th Floor
Topeka, KS 66612

January 31, 2013

Dear Annarose,

The Allen County Farmers' Market recognizes the benefits of the Kansas Farmers' Market Promotion Act, soon to be before our State Legislature.

There is a need for registration, without fee, in order for the public to access the location and contact information of each market in the state so that they can buy and sell locally.

Networking among the markets and vendors and acquiring grant funding are also benefits of a registered database.

Coordinating educational efforts for market management and vendors would be easier if basic contact data were available.

The act limits the liability of registered farmers' markets which, hopefully, would negate the necessity for each market to purchase liability insurance. In our case, that represents \$500 a year that could be put to use elsewhere in our meager budget.

As long as the registration is at no cost and will not create an opening for unnecessary regulation, we encourage adoption of the act as presented.

Thank you for considering this legislation.

Sincerely,

Debbie Bearden
Allen County Farmers' Market Secretary



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Annarose Hart
Agribusiness Development & Farmers' Market Specialist
Kansas Department of Agriculture
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Dear Ms. Hart:

The Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library will host a Farmer's Market for the fifth year in 2013. It has become an important component of our connection with the community. We not only provide an outlet for good, local produce, but we also tie the market to library information and programs about gardens, healthy eating, recipes and other relevant topics.

We support the Farmers' Market Registration. It will provide us many benefits:

- Best way to recruit new vendors
- Provide access to knowledge to help us make our market better for the community
- Help us understand technology solutions and benefits
- Many other benefits.

The Farmers' Market Registration is an important program for Farmers' Markets in the state and will help improve the opportunities for the local farmers as well as the local customers.

Sincerely,

Robert Banks
Chief Operating Officer

Annarose Hart

Thank you for the time and energies being used to better the programs and assure awareness of available resources to the farmers markets and producers within the State of Kansas.

My farm, located in Butler county currently offers vegetables for sale at two Farmers Markets here in south central Kansas. We sell at the Walnut Valley Farmers Market in Winfield and at the Augusta Farmers Market in Augusta. In addition to the markets we also offer at a roadside stand and have a “pick your own” option.

Markets continue to develop and evolve as a sustained interest in local produce and products sweeps our country. In my area I have observed some differences in the operation and management of the area Farmers Markets. Whereas I do respect the right for each market to be individually managed, the need for some basic consistencies is apparent. Regardless of the venue, format or the theme of a market the regulations set forth by the Kansas Department of Agriculture, Kansas Department of Weights and Measures, and Kansas Department of Revenue should be honored.

Compliance with all applicable policies and regulations by all regulated parties lends to a safer, more consistent market experience for both the producer and consumer. Without persistent research many of these regulations may go unknown to managers or venders.

Questions such as;

- What can and can't I sell at a Kansas Farmers Market?
- In what units of measure can I sell my product?
- Why does my scale need to be state certified?
- Is pesticide use more restricted for produce being sold?

These and many other questions should be answered prior to selling at any market.

I support the registration of all farmers markets operating within the state of Kansas. This will enable the governing body to access a data base of all markets operating throughout the state for the conveyance of information on regulation, pending policies availability of market development assistance and food safety issues relative to the industry. It will also allow the consumer to locate local market options.

I feel the sustained interest in locally grown produce will continue to encourage the development of additional markets requiring information readily available. By seeking state registration new markets will be able to capitalize on information available from a single source that is up to date and informative.

Thank you for consideration of this matter,
Todd m. Griggs

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