



“Promoting agriculture & food systems that build healthy land, people, communities & quality of life for present & future generations.”

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Number 133

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The NSAS Newsletter is a bimonthly publication of Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society, a private, non-profit organization. Our mission is to promote agriculture & food systems that build healthy land, people, communities & quality of life, for present & future generations. The purpose of this newsletter is to inform its readers about sustainable agriculture issues, resources & activities. Members receive this newsletter as a benefit.

A Look at Scientific Spin

The Meatless Mondays campaign has caused quite a stir amongst the commodity livestock organizations since it encourages eating less red meat and meat from organic or grass-based systems. As part of a multi-million dollar campaign, the commodity groups have joined into the Animal Agriculture Alliance (AAA). They are putting out “scientific” data to clear up the “myths,” including Meatless Mondays.

Well we all have our bias, but it bothers me when science is spun. To me, it is most obvious in their rebuttal, [“The Myth of Meatless Monday...Alleviating the Consumer's Conscience without Affecting Climate Change”](#) to the Environmental Working Group’s (EWG) [“Meat Eater’s Guide to Climate Change + Health.”](#) Let’s take a look at the AAA’s allegations.

Several times the AAA paper, written by Dr. Jude Capper of Washington State University, alleges, “poor-quality data and erroneous assumptions,” “poor substitute for real science,” and inaccuracies in calculation. Well, the EWG’s information followed international standards and was validated with 14 peer-reviewed studies, including Dr. Capper’s! Their report has a 65 page documentation of the methods used.

Looking at a couple specific allegations, Capper says according to her calculations lamb should have fewer greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions than beef, but she does not give any references for her calculations, so we cannot actually compare. All the studies documented in the EWG paper have lamb higher than beef, so that tells me the AAA paper might be the one with “inaccuracies.”

Next, AAA tries to make EWG look irresponsible for having a higher number than the EPA. However this has a simple answer, which the author should know, since she is an expert in GHG. The EPA only counts the animals burping (rumination) and manure. The EWG looked at the entire life-cycle, so of course it would be higher.

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2012 NSAS Agrarian Art Calendar

The 2012 NSAS Agrarian Art Calendars are now available for Pre-Order. Working with our good friends at Slow Food Nebraska, we held an Agrarian Art contest at the annual meeting. Participants artwork ranged from photos of their farm, to hand spun wool toys and ornaments. All with the goal of highlighting the art inspired by Good Food and the Good Life here in Nebraska. The top 12 as picked by the conference attendees are featured in the 2012 NSAS Agrarian Art calendar!

Pre-order your today and save!

Pre-ordered calendars are \$10.00. Please pre-order by December 5th !

Please make checks payable to NSAS

Mail to:

William Powers

414 CR 15

Ceresco, NE. 68017

Wanna see your artwork in the next calendar? Bring it to the 2012 annual conference! More details to come!

Farm Beginnings Nebraska

The Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society (NSAS) will begin its next Farm Beginnings® Nebraska Program at the First National Bank (basement meeting room) in Syracuse on December 10th. As part of a USDA Farmer and Rancher Grant, NSAS is facilitating the Farm Beginnings® Nebraska Program to be held in Syracuse. The Farm Beginnings® Program is an educational training and support program designed to help people who want to evaluate and plan their farm enterprise. Farm Beginnings® Nebraska participants engage in a mentorship experience and network with a variety of successful, innovative farmers; attend practical, high quality seminars, field days and conferences. The program is unique in that several successful farmers participate in the program as presenters, explaining firsthand the nuts and bolts of their farming operation. While any beginning farmer would benefit from attending these training sessions, most of the farmers that present come from small to medium sized farming operations that produce and market many different diversified and value-added products. Many of these farmers direct market their products.

Costs for the program is \$500 and includes;

- Farm Beginnings notebooks and handouts,
- Joel Salatin's, Holy Cow and Hog Heaven book,
- Meals at each session,
- An NSAS membership,
- Registration to the annual Rural Advantage and Healthy Farms Conference

The next Farm Beginnings Nebraska program will begin December 10th and will be held in Syracuse. For information and to join the mailing list for the program email William at farmbeginningsnebraska@gmail.com.

For complete details please visit,

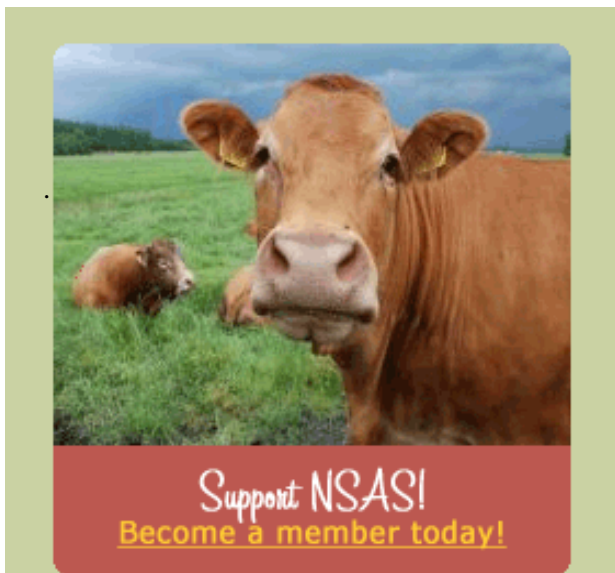
<http://nebsusag.org/farmbeginningsnebraska.htm>

Spin

Finally, EWG disparages EWG's suggestion to eat grass-based meats because grass-based beef has more GHG emissions. First off, EWG readily admits that in beef, grass-based does have more, but they consider the possibility of carbon sequestration in grasslands to possibly offset those emissions. Secondly, in other species the results are often similar between grass and confinement systems. But most importantly, GHG are only one indicator. For health reasons it is better to eat grass-based, not to mention the improvements in animal welfare, and reduced nutrient runoff, hormones, and antibiotics.

Certainly they are right to point out that for us in America, what we eat is a rather small part of our carbon footprint. We would be better off getting a car with better mileage or insulating our homes. However, as they also conclude, "we need to understand and quantify how all our choices have consequences – and act accordingly." Just another example of why it is important to critically analyze information that comes out.

By: William Powers



A Place to Grow

My life has been in visions that my eyes may never see.

The first vision:

The people who around me, as tender as I was, sheltered To respond in truth to the calling of the land Went forth with commitment, desire and fear of that which lay at hand "The place" it was new but somehow old, as the stars Old light that shines on the urban child's eyes

The next vision:

The young beans sprout and the water is given Summer sun becomes bright to make long the day After cutting and raking, the fragrance, we know signs the curing of hay This crop is good with the care of due process but to make next years' field, that is the vision

The next vision:

Our pain, love, comfort, exhaustion, peace, friendship, understanding, sorrow, celebration To measure the land, in acres or bushels, demeans this oasis, that which is given Not only this place, but also all people as they are sustained The metric I choose is the depth of the people, one communal refrain "Joy to the World" as we grow together

The unfinished vision:

As far ahead was the foresight for all these great visions The state of affairs pleads out to this place "Help me now" Life's corners and back alleys need the light nurtured here Put forth the great banner grown in this heartland near Life is people who care for the land Grow to sustain not exploit, nurture not horde, share not demand



Registration Now Open for the 2012 Rural Advantage & Healthy Farms Conference!

Mark your calendars and join your NSAS colleagues at the 2012 Rural Advantage & Healthy Farms Conference, February 10-11, at Lied Lodge & Conference Center in Nebraska City. The conference will feature Fred Kirschenmann. A longtime national and international leader in sustainable agriculture, he shares an appointment as Distinguished Fellow for the Leopold Center and as President of Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture in Pontico Hills, New York. He also oversees management of his family's 2,600-acre certified organic farm in south central North Dakota and is a professor in the ISU Department of Religion and Philosophy.

Roundtable Discussions: In June NSAS hosted representatives from the USDA, FSA and the White House in a series of roundtable discussions. As an extension on these roundtable format discussions we will be holding a series of discussions at the conference. For details email William at healthyfarms@gmail.com

Annual Awards: *Educator of the Year.* The NSAS Educator of the Year Award recognizes an individual who exemplifies sustainable agriculture in their teachings and interactions with others. *Beginning Farmer of the Year.* The NSAS Beginning Farmer of the Year award recognizes a farmer or farm family that is in the beginning stages of their farm adventure(s) and that is working towards implementing sustainable or organic practices on their farm. *Farm Family of the Year.* The NSAS Farm Family of the Year award recognizes a family who embodies the values of sustainable agriculture in their families and on their farms. Nominations are due and can be sent to William at healthyfarms@gmail.com. To be considered for an annual award, candidates must be nominated, members or supporters of NSAS and meet Board approval. All it takes to nominate someone is passing along their name.

Visit us at www.HealthyFarms.org to learn more about this unique learning and networking event. Sign up for updates and we'll alert you as the program agenda, registration, exhibiting and sponsorship opportunities become available.

Contact us: healthyfarms@gmail.com

[Join the Sustainable Discussion!](#)

Events, Opportunities & Listings

Western Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Conference

December 3. Ogallala. Donald Tanaka will be keynoting the conference this year. Dr. Tanaka began conducting research with the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) at Sidney, MT in 1980. He has been a member of the research team at NGPRL since 1991. He has advanced degrees in agronomy with a concentration in soils and soil chemistry from the University of Nebraska. He has conducted soil and water conservation research in the northern Great Plains for 28 years. Other topics include; Marketing, Cover Crops, Mobile Meat Processing and more. Exhibitor and Sponsor Opportunities are available. To register please contact Liz Sarno 402-309-0944 or <http://nebsusag.org/conference.shtml>

Sioux Falls Organic Agriculture Conference; December 5-6.

Sioux Falls, SD. The Sioux Falls Organic Agriculture Conference is a great opportunity for information exchange among and between farmers and those who work with organic agriculture. This conference is open to all – especially organic producers, those interested in possibly transitioning to organic systems, and those otherwise interested in organic farming or adding value to their farm products. Peter Sexton, peter.sexton@sdsu.edu, (605) 688-6179

Tri-State Fruit & Vegetable Growers Symposium; December 2.

Sioux City, IA. Growers can choose from a variety of fruit vegetable production and marketing sessions led by university extension horticulture specialists and experienced local growers. Topics include fruit trees, aronia berries, grapes, ethnic vegetable varieties, organic insect and pest control, and community supported agriculture strategies. The symposium is planned in partnership with ISU, UNL, and SDSU. <http://www.flavorsofnorthwestiowa.org/>

Acres U.S.A. Conference; December 8-10. Columbus, OH. Find farmers & consultants from every side of eco-farming who come together to share their experience & expertise. Dozens of speakers cover all facets of eco-agriculture - soils, crops, weed & insect control, livestock management -& make the connection between the soil & human & animal health as well.

www.acresusa.com/events/events.htm

Explore Farming Class; December 3. This two-hour seminar will help you think through the resources, skills, & time you will need to launch a successful farm business. Local farmers & participants in the CROPS Growing Farmers Training Program will be on hand to answer questions. To register for this free class, simply send your name & phone number to warren@communitycrops.org.

Crates Wanted:

I am interested in some shallow plastic slotted vegetable crates, sometimes called bulb crates. They look like milk crates but shorter. Please contact Teresa Sosa omahatanguera@gmail.com

Involvement with Sustainable Ag.

We are Roger & Sharon Kappelman & we live near Grand Island. We are interested employment in the organic area - farming, greenhouse -whatever might be available. We want to be involved in organics & learn more about it. Roger has been involved in farming his whole life. He has been working for a Valley Irrigation dealer for 18 years. Has been a truck driver for many years & currently has his CDL. Operated many types of big equipment. Has done carpenter work, cement work, mechanics. Lots of experience with cattle and hogs. Email is rskap@charter.net. Phone is 402-886-2768.

Nebraska Beef Report Summaries 2010 (G425)

“Feeding wet distillers on the ground resulted in between 13 and 20% waste.”

Contributions Needed for Member News Column

In future issues, the NSAS newsletter will feature a section highlighting member activities. We would like to hear from as many of you as possible about what is going on in your lives, in your communities, and on your farms. Please write or email or call us and tell us about:

- Happenings on your farm or ranch; any research you are doing, experiments you've tried, new practices, varieties or breeds you've put into place, field days you've participated in, successes and failures you've experienced
- Community or family events: marriages, graduations, births, community activities and education projects
- Anything else you'd like to share with fellow NSAS members and supporters

Send contributions to: William by email at healthyfarms@gmail.com, or by mail to 414 CR 15. Ceresco, NE. 68017

Darby Springs Farm has a new addition!

On Friday July 29th, Crystal and William Powers welcomed Aiden John Alden into the world! Aiden was 7lbs. 13 ozs. & 20". Aiden was born at 9:03am.



Congratulations to NSAS Board President!

Joe Mazour (DeWeese), the current NSAS Board President was recently married to Gwynn Smith of McCool.



Our CSA's rate of return: 8.75%

I wrote about our CSA in [February](#) when we joined and again in [June](#) when we were enjoying fresh asparagus. I am writing again with the hope that others will consider investing in a CSA next year. [CSA](#) programs are immensely important to the local food movement. CSAs are often thought of as a way for consumers to buy farm fresh food. They are actually so much more than that. CSA stands for community supported agriculture. CSAs are an investment in a farm, and in the farmers that grow local food. These are the farmers that we invested in this year (photo from [Robinette Farms' Facebook page](#)):



Here's how [Robinette Farms](#) describes a CSA:
"The risk and bounty of farming is shared over a group of people. In a sense, each member becomes a bank and loans a few hundred dollars repayable in fresh, organically grown produce. By spreading out the risk, no single person — farmer included — shoulders all the burden of the debt. Your investment ensures the existence of small, family farms and gets you access to farmers and the land. . ."

If you think about your CSA as an investment, then you should know how that investment performed. I am happy to report that 2011 was a great growing season for Robinette and as a result, our CSA shares were large and our rate of return was high. According to Robinette's calculations, we received an 8.75% return on our investment. We invested \$400.00 and received \$435.00 worth of vegetables. That's pretty good considering that the S&P 500 was down 14.3% in Q3 2011 and off 10% for the year.

We were extremely happy with the quality and quantity of the vegetables that we received this year. We will definitely invest in Robinette Farms again in 2012. If you are interested in investing in a CSA, do your research now because shares are typically sold as early as December.

Community Supported Agriculture Resources

Local Harvest, <http://www.localharvest.org/csa/>
USDA, www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/csa/csa.shtml

Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association,
<http://www.biodynamics.com/csa.html>

NCAT Sustainable Agriculture Project,
<https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/summaries/summary.php?pub=262>

Land Stewardship Project,
<http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/csa.html#csa>

Madison Area CSA Coalition,
<http://www.csacoalition.org/resources/growers/>

Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society,
http://nebsusag.org/resources/res_mkt.shtml

Nebraska SARE, <http://nesare.unl.edu/sarewebinars>

University of Nebraska Extension-Neb Guide,
<http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/epublic/pages/index.jsp?what=publicationD&publicationId=11>

The Sustainable Attorney:

I was born in Wahoo, Nebraska and grew up on 80 acres three miles southwest of Prague. I obtained both my undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Nebraska. After practicing law for 3 years in Kansas City, my wife and I returned to Lincoln in 2004. We live in a crooked century-old American foursquare with two beautiful daughters, three cats (ugh), and a fluffy little dog. While the majority of my law practice involves business and personal litigation, much of my brain is occupied with sustainability, the environment, waste reduction, local food, and technology. Read more from the Sustainable Attorney, <http://thesustainableattorney.com/>

Winter Controlled Grazing

Now that summer is over and the grass isn't growing you're probably thinking you can roll up all that portable fencing and put it away for the winter. But there are some excellent opportunities to get extra use out of that fence and extend your crop residues. Once you have established your boundary fences around stalk fields, you might want to try some cross fencing. Cross fencing to allow 3-5 days of feed at a time can be beneficial for several reasons. You can better control the ration that the cows will consume. They don't eat all the corn the first few days in a field. By letting them have fresh stalks with an even daily supply of grain, your cows should remain in better body condition longer without extra feed. You can control the quantity and quality of residue that the livestock will harvest before you supply them with a new area.

As residue management becomes more important in your conservation plan, you will need to be in control of consideration future residue losses due to tillage and weathering. You can also have some control over the quality of ration the livestock will consume. Just as in controlled grazing of pastures, you can make them eat almost everything which may result in lower performance. Or you can let them select the highest quality residue and grain for better gains.

You can also use strip grazing when supplementing the cows with alfalfa hay. Place the bales or stacks throughout the field where your strip grazing will take place. As

you move the fence, you can move your bale feeders around the bales in that strip.

Protein supplementation with alfalfa is just as effective every other or every third day.

An added benefit of this system is that you don't have to start a tractor every day. Plus it can be food exercise, to keep you in shape for next spring.

I have also utilized a single electric fence wire to heed stacks of alfalfa and corn stover. It will work for a silage pile, but the site must be well drained because of the heavy traffic. If your silage pile is too high you may need to experiment with heights of your wire and fencing materials to use. I like to use 4 feet fiberglass posts with wire clips to hold the wire. The posts are flexible and your fence will not ground out as easily if the wire touches the post. It works well to stretch the feeder wire between two heavier permanent wires located on each end of the stack.

I like to use a wire that is very strong and flexible. That way I can wrap it around the posts to take up slack. Adjust the wire height according to your livestock. It takes a lot of training to teach to reach over a hot wire. Be sure to provide plenty of feeding area so all cows have access to feed without fighting. Be careful of overhangs of silage that will fall on the cows. Select a silage pile site that is well drained to prevent mud problems. Feeding cows with electric fencing can reduce your machinery costs and repairs. And it can help you to monitor your livestock closer!

New Agricultural Council Brings Nebraska Farmers, Ranchers and Animal Welfare Advocates to the Table to Discuss Common Goals

Long-term benefits seen for animals, for ranchers and for consumers

LINCOLN, Neb. – To advance more humane practices on farms and ranches and to promote food producers who share that goal, The Humane Society of the United States joined the Nebraska Farmers Union in Lincoln to announce the formation of an advisory body, the Nebraska Agriculture Council of The Humane Society of the United States.

The council will work jointly with the Nebraska Farmers Union, the second oldest agricultural organization in the state, to pursue market opportunities for farmers and ranchers whose agricultural practices adhere to animal welfare standards, as well as facilitate a dialogue with individual farmers, ranchers and the organizations that represent them. The parties agree that this pathway is preferable to a ballot initiative. The agriculture council will also act as a sounding board on agriculture policy for Jocelyn Nickerson, Nebraska state director of The HSUS.

The announcement was made at a press conference by Nickerson; John Hansen, president of the Nebraska Farmers Union; and Kevin Fulton, a Nebraska cattleman. Also present was Joe Maxwell, director of rural affairs for The HSUS and himself a pig farmer from Northeast Missouri.

The organizing members include several NSAS Board members and all are members of NSAS. The organizing members of the Agriculture Council of The Humane Society of the United States include Kevin Fulton; Jim Knopik, livestock producer with North Star Neighbors; Martin Kleinschmit, a Nebraska organic farmer, cow calf producer and NEFU board member; and Doug Dittman, a Nebraska dairy producer from Branched Oak Farm.

http://www.humanesociety.org/news/press_releases/2011/10/new_agricultural_council_nebraska_101811.html#.Tp3I8MC-pEY.facebook

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Ogallala hosts 5th Annual Western Sustainable Ag Crops and Livestock Conference

Ogallala, NE – A broad range of topics will be discussed by expert speakers at the Fifth Annual Western Sustainable Ag Crops and Livestock Conference Dec. 3 at Ogallala, including growing crops in high tunnels, mobile meat processing, and using the same field for both crops and grazing.

“Integrating Crop and Livestock Enterprises – Strengthen Your Operation and Reduce Risks” is the theme of the conference, which will take place at the Quality Inn, 201 Chuckwagon Road, from 8:45 a.m. until 3:45 p.m.

Keynote speaker Don Tanaka, research soil scientist with U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Research Service, will speak about integrating grazing into crop production, especially no-till crops. Tanaka has been conducting a long-term research project at the Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory at Mandan, N.D., since 1999.

“We were looking at integration of crops and livestock to extend the grazing system for dry-bred cows,” Tanaka said. “The cropping system was developed under no-till, so a number of questions came up as to the impact of livestock production on no-till crop production, and how the cropping systems have extended the grazing system for the cow herd.”

Tanaka’s site is rain-fed agriculture. Crop rotations were developed based on the class of animals that would be grazed. Since the herds consisted of cows without calves, the forage quality didn’t have to be as high, he pointed out.

The rotation consisted of oats underseeded with a cover crop, followed by sorghum sudan underseeded with a cover crop, followed by corn for grain. The plots at Mandan allowed each crop to be planted every year, as well as a check plot that livestock did not graze on.

When Tanaka began researching integrated crop and livestock production, cattle prices were really low and profit margins were tight. Crop residues were used then, and grazing the fields allowed for producing crops with less fertilizer. Tanaka said integrated grazing and cropping systems can fit crop producers as well as livestock producers. For example, one farmer might not have livestock, but his neighbor does, and this could reassure him about the potential effects of grazing, Tanaka said.

Registration deadline is Nov. 29. For registration and information about the conference or exhibitor booths, contact Extension Educator Karen DeBoer at the UNL Extension Office, P.O. Box 356, 920 Jackson St., Sidney, NE 69162. Phone: [308-254-4455](tel:308-254-4455) or [866-865-1703](tel:866-865-1703); Email: kdeboer1@unl.edu. To download a brochure and registration form, go to <http://www.ckb.unl.edu>.

USDA Expands People's Garden Initiative to Sow Seeds for Community-Based Agriculture across the Country

WASHINGTON, Nov. 10, 2011—Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan visited a community garden in Baltimore today to announce 10 grants to support 155 People's Gardens in neighborhoods from Maryland to Hawaii, continuing the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) efforts to combat malnutrition while supporting local and regional food systems. These sustainable community gardens will give residents direct access to fresh fruits and vegetables in underserved neighborhoods. A lack of access to fresh and nutritious food fuels obesity and domestic food insecurity—a condition where households experience limited or uncertain access to adequate food.

"The simple act of planting a garden can help unite neighborhoods around a common effort and inspire communities to find solutions to challenges facing our country—from hunger to the environment," said Merrigan. "The People's Garden Initiative has demonstrated that one direct and effective way of improving food access is to plant a garden. Since establishing our People's Garden Initiative, we're excited to see more and more people working together to create nurturing communities around these sources of nutritious food."

USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) manages the People's Garden Grant Program (PGGP), with funding from the Agriculture Marketing Service, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Forest Service, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The grants announced today, totaling \$725,000, are the first awards given under the PGGP. USDA received more than 360 proposals requesting more than \$4 million.

PGGP was designed to invest in urban and rural areas identified as food deserts or food insecure areas, particularly those with persistent poverty. In addition, PGGP seeks to address health issues closely related to malnutrition, including food insecurity, obesity, diabetes and heart disease, through onsite education programs.

Projects were funded in Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, Michigan and Ohio. Grants were awarded to:

- Homer Soil and Water Conservation District, Alaska, \$110,500
- Arizona Board of Regents, University of Arizona, Arizona, \$5,000
- Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust, California, \$29,000
- Denver Urban Gardens, Colorado, \$70,000
- Knox Parks, Inc., Connecticut, \$50,000
- Heritage Ranch, Inc., Hawaii, \$110,500
- Alliance for Community Trees, Inc., Maryland, \$150,000
- Towson University, Maryland, \$60,000
- Calhoun Conservation District, Michigan, \$70,000
- Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation, Ohio, \$70,000

The People's Garden Initiative is a grass roots effort to grow healthy food, people and communities. There are more than 1,400 People's Gardens across the nation, three U.S. territories and nine foreign countries. USDA is working with over 600 local organizations to create school gardens, community gardens and small-scale agriculture projects in urban and rural areas, collectively referred to as community-based agriculture.

People's Gardens are located at faith-based centers, on federal leased or owned property, at schools and other places within communities. All produce grown at a People's Garden on USDA owned or leased property is donated to help those in need. To date, the People's Garden has donated over 1 million pounds of produce to local food banks, food kitchens and other charitable organizations through their 'Share Your Harvest' campaign, whereby USDA invites partners to share their harvests with neighborhood food pantries, kitchens and shelters, which helps improve access to healthy, affordable food at a local level. Search the [People's Gardens Interactive Map](#) to find out where our gardens are located. To learn more or to register your community garden as a People's Garden, visit www.usda.gov/peoplesgarden.