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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **KRC ANNOUNCES FUNDING FOR NURTURING COMMUNITIES THROUGH LOCAL FOODS NETWORKS**

*Lawrence, Kansas*— KRC is pleased to announce a funding award from the Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership (JFCGP) of New York and Tokyo for a project entitled NURTURING COMMUNITIES THROUGH LOCAL FOODS NETWORKS.

The project seeks to develop innovative responses to problems in modern food systems through cross-cultural dialogues between farmers, NGOs, and policy makers in two agricultural heartlands: the Kansas River Valley, centered in Douglas County, Kansas, and Saitama Prefecture in Japan (northwest of Tokyo). Facilitating the project in Japan is IFOAM Japan (Association of International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements members in Japan).

The twenty-member team, half Japanese, half American, brings together a diverse group of men and women at various stages in their careers and involved in various capacities in promoting organic food systems. On each side, a number of NGOs, government agencies, and universities are participating in the project. In Kansas cooperating institutions include: Kansas State University; the University of Kansas; Kansas Organic Producers; The Community Mercantile Education Foundation; The Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture; Van Go Mobile Arts and Jobs in the Art Make Sense (JAMS), and Rolling Prairie Farmers Alliance.

The project begins in late spring 2009 with reciprocal fact-finding visits between the team members, during which time public programs in Lawrence, KS and Saitama, Japan, will introduce our project and its goals to local residents. Following the visits each team will gather to strategize and develop pilot projects to spread interest in organic, locally produced foods in their respective communities. An interactive web site publicizes events and tracks the progress of the projects developed in informational pages, blogs and pictures.

The project emerges from our desire to act on scholarly studies about both Kansas and Japan by economists and social scientists, who have been pondering the possibility of agriculture disappearing in these places, evidenced by the decline of rural communities, the low rate of food self sufficiency, and other dire statistics. The goal of the project is to shed light on common problems, but more importantly suggest solutions applicable not only to these areas but others in the developed world. In particular, the group explores ways to further interest in smaller-scale, organic farming and the establishment of personal relationships between food producers and consumers. The grant will allow the two groups to strategize together, share successful ideas, and think in a global context about local issues

The project co-directors are Patricia Graham, Research Associate, Center for East Asian Studies, University of Kansas ([pgraham@ku.edu](mailto:pgraham@ku.edu)) and Dan Nagengast, director of the Kansas Rural Center ([nagengast@earthlink.net](mailto:nagengast@earthlink.net)) for the American side. Japan side coordinators are Satoko Miyoshi, of IFOAM Japan, and Takao Shibata, the former Consul-General of Japan for Kansas City.

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