

## **Think About Food Production During National Ag Day**

### **AGRI-VIEWS**

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

March 15<sup>th</sup> is National Ag Day. National Ag Day is one day a year set aside to recognize and celebrate the abundance (of food, fuel, and fiber) provided by agriculture. I sometimes have to shake my head and wonder when I overhear conversations about food and read some of the things that are written in the press and on social media about food. To put it very bluntly, we live in a very spoiled society and one that is, to be blunt, extremely ignorant about food, where it comes from and how it is produced.

One of the best ways to realize what an incredible abundance of food we have available to us is to simply travel to a developing country. Visit the local markets, sample the local cuisine, or as a good friend said while we were in Africa, let's go eat where the locals eat. Spend a few weeks doing that, return home and go spend a couple of hours wandering the aisles of a grocery store and listen in on conversations. There may be 50 brands of cereal on the shelf, but if the right brand isn't there, someone's going to be mad! These are the rants of an affluent and spoiled consumer base.

Let me state up front that I have nothing against foods labeled and sold as "non-GMO", or "organic", or "natural", although most people honestly don't have a clue what they mean and are, in many cases, very misleading. But labels like this are not an issue in countries where the population doesn't have enough money or access to food to even have three meals a day and safe drinking water. If you are hoping for even one meal a day, you don't really care where it came from or how it was produced, you're just relieved to have food. It is not my intent to berate the food consuming public, but rather to point out that we truly do have an abundance of food in this country that is taken for granted.

Fifty years ago, most people in this country still had an immediate family member that was involved in food production. Most people still visited these family members on the farm at least once a year. Today, two or more generations later, food comes from a fast food restaurant or a grocery store. Give these folks a plot of land and some seeds and they'd be hard pressed to raise any food. It is simply how our world has changed.

Locally we are very fortunate. For some of our food, we have the choice of going right to the dairy and buying milk from the people that raise the cows and milk them twice a day. We can buy beef from the ranchers that have raised it. Multi-generational farms where you can look the producer in the eye and know that they are eating the same beef or drinking the same milk that you are about to buy.

We can drive down the road and see the rolling fields of wheat where our bread comes from. We can see the soybean, corn, and grain sorghum fields that feed us and the livestock that become the meat we enjoy. We are still very close to agriculture here in Kansas and we can never forget, for an instant, that these men and women toil 365 days a year in all kind of weather caring for the soil, the livestock and the plants that they grow. Being a farmer and rancher isn't a job, it's a calling.

So as you pull yourself up to the dinner table or go about your work in the coming days, every time you prepare to put some food in your mouth, think about the folks that made that possible. We are fortunate here in the Kansas to truly live in the bread basket for the world. Let's never take that for granted!