



# Geary County

K-STATE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION NEWS

MAY 2024

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## Kansas Farm Outlook for 2024



*Kyler Langvardt, Ag and Natural Resources Agent*

In an unusual twist, Kansas State University agricultural economists are reporting divergent paths for net farm income and net cash income in the coming year.

Jenny Ifft, the Flinchbaugh Agricultural Policy Chair at K-State, said it is rare that the two measures of farm revenue move in different directions.

“This is one of those annoying situations where an economist says ‘it depends,’” Ifft said, referring to projected farm profitability this year.

Most areas of the state have recovered from drought in 2022, and other areas are currently experiencing moderate drought. Yet, assuming that crop yields follow normal trends, and the fact that economists project lower prices for fertilizer, fuel and oil, 2024 could be similar to 2023 for some farmers. Ifft said Kansas 2024 crop receipts projections show about 6% growth over 2023 if yields are similar to the historical average.

Joe Parcell, director of the Center for Risk Management Education and Research at K-State, said some areas of the livestock sector — dairy and hogs, for example — are expected to do better this year than in 2023, and the cattle dynamics are “a wildcard in Kansas.” Cattle price forecasts are high, but inventories are also down.

“The big question in the cattle market is how fast can cow-calf producers rebuild the herd that they sold off last year as a result of high prices and the drought,” Parcell said. “The other thing we see

is that feed yards have been extremely resilient. Compared to five years ago, (feed yards) are spending \$1,000 more per head in costs. If you take \$1,000 for every 1,000 animals, that’s \$1 million more they are putting through that feed yard.

“We’re still projecting for all cattle receipts to be even year-over-year, and that’s really holding up Kansas farm income right now.”

Ifft said that combining factors weighing on crop and livestock production, “we expect net farm income to increase 21%, but net cash income to decrease by 14%.”

“And so if we’re talking about a return to normal crop yields this year, producers are going to have more crops; they are going to have higher inventories at the end of 2024,” Ifft said.

But, she adds, “you can also look at net cash income, and this is something that lenders like to look at because they’re interested in producers’ ability to repay loans. Cash is what you can see easily... what’s in your bank account. And we expect net cash income to be down about 14% in 2024.”

The net cash income forecast puts Kansas closer to what is projected nationally, according to Ifft.

“It looks like we’re moving into a period of tighter profit margins after some years where a lot of producers, though not everybody, did well,” Ifft said “We’re not below historical average farm income yet, but unfortunately, the normal in agriculture is a fairly tight profit margin.”

[geary.k-state.edu](http://geary.k-state.edu)

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# Benefits of Storing Fresh Produce



By Karen Blakeslee, K-State Research & Extension Specialist

In most locales, the changing of seasons from spring to summer translates into an abundance of fruits and vegetables.

That's good news for health, but if the wealth of fresh foods is allowed to spoil before they're eaten, it could cause a pinch in the pocketbook.

"Fruits and vegetables are so important for health and they provide lots of good nutrition," said Karen Blakeslee, a food scientist at Kansas State University. "But there are some general guidelines when it comes to purchasing those foods, and the first is to look it over – whether you're purchasing at the grocery store or at a farmer's market – to make sure you buy good quality produce."

Blakeslee said most fruits and vegetables should be cleaned before eating, as well as before they're put into storage. Lettuce, leafy greens and fresh herbs, for example, may contain a small amount of dirt or even a stray bug crawling on the leaves.

"If you leave dirt and other visible contamination on the produce, that can reduce quality, so clean them up before you store them," Blakeslee said. "If it needs to be rinsed before you put it into the refrigerator, do so. With some foods, it's better to wait until you're ready to use them before rinsing them with water."

Rinsing, she said, should be "with plain water. There is no need to use produce washes or other cleaning products. Use a vegetable brush with water on produce that grows on or in the ground to remove visible dirt."

"When you're getting ready to prepare those foods, keep the fresh produce that is ready to eat away from raw meats," Blakeslee said. "You don't want raw meat juices to cross-contaminate those foods. Be mindful to wash your hands, use clean equipment and keep foods cold, if necessary."

If food spoils, throw it out, or compost it, Blakeslee says. Clean storage bins, dishes or counters that may have been in contact with the spoiled product.

"There are some categories of foods that should be stored in the refrigerator, such as fresh berries, cherries, grapes, fresh herbs, lettuce and fresh vegetables, such as carrots," Blakeslee said. "Once you start cutting produce, you have to store them in the refrigerator because they are going to deteriorate quickly."

Some foods – peaches and pears, for example – can be left on a counter to ripen. Then they should be used or refrigerated. Potatoes, onions, tomatoes and bananas can be left at room temperature until ready to use. Keep potatoes and onions separated because onions can cause potatoes to grow sprouts.

Blakeslee said K-State Research and Extension has a publication titled, *Storing Fresh Produce*, to help consumers care for many fruits and vegetables. The publication is available to purchase at your local Extension office or view online from the K-State Research and Extension bookstore.

"There's a lot of food waste that ends up in the landfill, and it creates environmental problems," Blakeslee said. "A better choice is to re-purpose foods that may be spoiled, such as a compost pile or maybe you've got animals that can eat those foods."

Food preparation scraps, such as produce peels, can also be composted or fed to animals.

Blakeslee said decreasing the amount of spoiled foods often begins at the time of purchase.

"Be a smart shopper," she said. "Plan your meals and make a shopping list so you buy the right amount of food for the week. Plan around how much you can store to help avoid food waste."



**MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE 2024 GEARY COUNTY FREE FAIR!**

# Medicare Minute



*Deb Andres, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent*

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One of the most common questions I get from those approaching Medicare age is “When do I sign up?”. The easy answer is: Three months before your 65th birthday, the month of your birthday, and up to three months after your 65th birthday, in order to avoid any late penalties. Yet, here are some other things to consider:

- 1) You have to have your Medicare # and activation date in order to sign up for Medicare Supplement, Medicare Advantage or Medicare Prescription plan.
- 2) It is currently taking Medicare 4 – 6 weeks to get cards out to new beneficiaries.
- 3) It is recommended that everyone signs up for Part A Medicare when they turn 65, even if they already have credible health insurance from an employer. Part A premiums have been paid through the years of paying Medicare taxes while working (generally at least 10 years.) For this reason, most people will not have a Part A premium.

4) You can sign up for Medicare online on your own by going to the Social Security Administration website at [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov). In that system, you will need to create an online account user name and password. You will also need to have the ability to access your email or smartphone to verify your identity through their 2-step authentication process. Additionally, you can go to the Social Security Administration office in Manhattan to sign up with one of their staff to assist you. You can also reach out to any K-State Research & Extension Office that has an Extension Agent who has been through SHICK training. Our area of Kansas has several qualified Family & Consumer Sciences agents to choose from in: Geary County, Riley County, Pottawatomie County, Wabaunsee County, Flint Hills District (Morris & Chase Counties), or Chisolm Trail District (Dickinson and Marion Counties).

## Geary County Free Fair Count Down is On!



*Deb Andres, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent*

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Summer is getting closer which means county fair season is almost here! Would you like to judge foods or food preservation?

There are some tips and tricks to being a judge and an educated judge can be a benefit to the exhibitor to give tips to improve exhibits. This is a great opportunity for you to teach others about creating final food products that taste great and look great.

Another important factor is food safety. While there are thousands of recipes to choose from, not all are appropriate for the fair.

Even if you aren't interested in judging, you can learn a lot from these interesting and informative recorded workshops!

Learn more at [www.rrc.k-state.edu/judging/index.html](http://www.rrc.k-state.edu/judging/index.html)

Geary County Free Fair Open Class fair books are in! Drop by the Geary County K-State Research & Extension office at 119 E. 9th, in Junction City to pick one up if you are interested in exhibiting your skills at the fair this summer OR if you want to promote our event for others to enter their products in.

***JULY 21ST - 25TH AT THE GEARY COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS  
ON SPRING VALLEY ROAD.***

**Geary County**  
119 E. 9th Street  
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## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### 2024 Walk Kansas:

Walk Kansas 2024 continues! Keep walking through May 25, 2024 and keep on encouraging your team! For more information, check out the Geary County Walk Kansas Facebook page or go to: <https://www.geary.k-state.edu/health-home-family/walk-kansas.html>

### Geary County 4-H Free Fair:

The Geary County Free Fair will feel like Christmas in July on July 21st through the 25th at the Geary County Fairgrounds on Spring Valley Road. With opportunities for both 4-H members and community members to enter a variety of project types and showcase their hard work to the community.

### Geary Community Farmers Market:

Hosted by Live Well Geary, the Geary County Market is now open. The Geary County K-State Research & Extension SNAP-Ed program will have a resource and program sign-up booth every first and third Thursday. Market location: JC Naz Church parking lot; 1025 South Washington; Thursdays, 4:00 - 7:00 pm; May through October.



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