

# WELCOME



## MEET THE BUYERS

**MARCH 11, 2026**  
**K-State Olathe Campus**  
**22201 W Innovation Dr, Olathe, Kansas**

PROVIDED BY



FROM THE LAND OF  
**KANSAS**



**KANSAS STATE**  
**UNIVERSITY**  
Extension

# MEET THE BUYERS

## Opening New Markets for Kansas and Missouri Producers

This one-day event brings together Kansas and Missouri farmers, ranchers and food producers with restaurants, retailers, grocers, and distributors who are looking to source fresh and local products. It's a chance for producers to showcase what they grow and raise, while buyers discover new partners who can supply the kind of high-quality, local food today's customers demand.

Hosted in partnership with Kansas Farm Bureau, Missouri Department of Agriculture and K-State Extension, Meet the Buyers is more than a networking event. It's an opportunity to strengthen the regional marketplace by building relationships that keep dollars in our local communities and support the future of local family farms.

In addition to one-on-one conversations and facilitated introductions, this event features an educational component designed to help farmers and food businesses prepare wholesale opportunities. Topics include what buyers are looking for, how to navigate wholesale requirements, and tips for building long-term business relationships. Whether you're a producer curious about entering wholesale markets or an experienced grower looking to expand your reach, this event provides valuable tools and insights.

Meet the Buyers is about creating connections by linking growers and producers directly with buyers. This event will help open doors to new markets, expand opportunities for local businesses, and ensure that more people across the region can enjoy food grown right here in Kansas and Missouri.

# MEET THE PLANNING TEAM



The **Kansas Department of Agriculture** is the nation's first state department of agriculture. The agency is devoted to the total support of agriculture in Kansas. The department works for the entire Kansas agriculture sector, including farmers, ranchers, food establishments and agribusinesses. The department is dedicated to providing support and assistance to make Kansas businesses

successful and encouraging more farms, ranches and other agriculture business to expand or relocate to Kansas.

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**Kansas Farm Bureau** is a non-profit advocacy organization established in 1919. More than 100 years later, KFB stands up for its members through leadership development, agriculture education, legal defense, environmental advocacy, farm safety, risk management, rural development and international trade.

As a grassroots organization, there is a county Farm Bureau in each of Kansas' 105 counties. Kansas Farm Bureau, the state organization, is in Manhattan.



**KANSAS FARM BUREAU**<sup>®</sup>  
The Voice of Agriculture<sup>®</sup>



— FROM THE LAND OF —  
**KANSAS**

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The ***From the Land of Kansas*** trademark program helps members promote their Kansas products and provides members with a variety of business development tips and opportunities including marketing assistance. In addition, the state trademark provides a consistent way to identify Kansas agriculture-based products.

*From the Land of Kansas* has partners and retailers who sell Kansas products. The program is also the central registration for Kansas farmers markets.

Its mission is to provide consumers with local, Kansas grown food; it offers resources for producers to provide fresh and healthy local food.

# MEET THE PLANNING TEAM



The **Missouri Department of Agriculture's** Domestic and International Marketing Program provides a variety of marketing services and has successfully linked Missouri's producers of processed foods, including meat and poultry; food ingredients; feed ingredients; identity preserved grains; forest products; purebred livestock; and other ag-related products to buyers throughout the U.S. and around the globe, resulting in millions of dollars and increased market exposure.

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**Missouri Grown** is Missouri's ag branded program. Their story began in the 1980s as the Agri-Missouri program, but as the program evolved so did our brand and their mission. Today, the Missouri Grown program is committed to connecting producers to consumers and consumers to agriculture. From cattle and cotton, to rice, barbecue sauces, jams and everything in between, Missouri Grown has something for everyone.



**K-State Extension** improves Kansans' lives, livelihoods and communities through education, research, engagement and leadership. With scientists, educators and volunteers in each of the state's 105 counties, their professionals strive to make the university's research and scientific accomplishments accessible and relevant to every household.

# SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

<b>10:00 AM</b>	Welcome Address <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kansas Department of Agriculture</li></ul>	Auditorium/Forum Hall
<b>10:10-10:30 AM</b>	Keynote <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scotty Thelman, Juniper Hill Farms</li></ul>	Auditorium/Forum Hall
<b>10:30-10:40 AM</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	
<b>10:40-11:10 AM</b>	Finding Retail Success <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Jenny Doty &amp; Quinlan Carttar; K-State Extension Community Food Systems Team</li></ul>	Auditorium/Forum Hall
<b>10:40-11:10 AM</b>	Understanding Buyer Landscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mark Rider; CPG Brands</li></ul>	Great Plains Room A/B
<b>11:10-11:20 AM</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	
<b>11:30 AM- 12:00 PM</b>	Panel Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Finding Success Through Challenges"</li></ul>	Auditorium/Forum Hall
<b>12:00-1:00 PM</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	
<b>1:00-2:00 PM</b>	Networking Event & Product Showcase <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Bakery, Beverages, Dairy and Specialty/Other</i></li></ul>	Bistro/Atrium 1st Floor Hallway
	Refine Your Product Pricing Across Market Channels <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mallory Rahe</li></ul>	Auditorium/Forum Hall
<b>2:00-2:30 PM</b>	Product Showcase Transition	
<b>2:30-3:30 PM</b>	Networking Event & Product Showcase <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Meat &amp; Protein, Produce, and Specialty/Other</i></li></ul>	Bistro/Atrium 1st Floor Hallway
	Refine Your Product Pricing Across Market Channels <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mallory Rahe</li></ul>	Auditorium/Forum Hall



# KEYNOTE SPEAKER



**Scott Thellman** is a first-generation farmer and agribusiness owner in Douglas County, Kansas. Juniper Hill Farms, Scott's farming enterprise, is a diversified agricultural operation producing organic and conventional specialty crops, row crops and hay. Along with production, Juniper Hill Farms aggregates and distributes produce from a variety of producers throughout the region to serve the farm's growing customer base that includes wholesale, corporate, grocery, restaurant, institutional and direct to consumer marketing channels.

Scott is also the owner of Pine's Garden and Market, a retail garden center and market in Lawrence and is co-owner of Sunflower Provisions, an online grocer and value-added processing platform focused on creating value from non-marketable produce and proteins and delivering quality local foods.

Scott has a passion for organic and sustainable agricultural production, post-harvest handling, food systems and the economics of growing. A graduate of Iowa State University, Scott, whose motto is "Building a Better Food System," currently serves as the president of the Kansas Specialty Crop Growers Association; as a member on the Governor-appointed State Board of Agriculture; and as a board member of the Kansas Land Trust and the Save Our Soil Kaw Valley Foundation.

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## FINDING RETAIL SUCCESS

**Jenny Doty** is a Food Business Resource Navigator with Kansas State University Extension's Community Food Systems Team. She supports food and farm businesses across Kansas through relationship-driven technical assistance, strategic guidance, and connection to resources. Jenny plays a key role in the Food Business Team and Rural Grocery Initiative and contributes to efforts such as the Kansas Food Business Summit and Kansas Food First. She is a K-State graduate and teaches sustainable agriculture at a local community college.



**Quinlan Carttar** is a Food Business Resource Navigator with Kansas State University Extension's Community Food Systems Team, where they support food and farm entrepreneurs through business development, program design, and ecosystem coordination. Based in Douglas County, Quinlan oversees the Culinary Commons Incubator Kitchen and helps lead initiatives including the Kansas Food Business Start-Up Summit and Kansas Food First. Their work centers on building collaborative, place-based food systems rooted in real-world entrepreneurial experience.

# UNDERSTANDING BUYER LANDSCAPE

**Mark Rider** builds commercial growth engines for CPG brands.

With deep experience across grocery, food service, and distribution strategy, he has helped brands expand into retail, improve velocity, and build sustainable margin structures.

Mark's background spans executive sales leadership, regional and national account management, DSD route optimization, broker development, and distributor partnerships including KeHE, UNFI, and direct-to-retail models. He has worked from the warehouse floor to the buyer's desk, aligning operations, pricing, and strategy to drive profitable growth.

Today, through ScalePoint CPG, Mark partners with founders and executive teams to provide fractional sales leadership and strategic growth planning that bridges vision and execution.



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## MEET THE MODERATOR



**Dan Shaul** is a seasoned professional and strong advocate of the grocery industry, currently serving as the President and CEO of Midwest Retail and Grocery Alliance and Executive State Director of the Missouri Grocers Association. With a distinguished career spanning over 25 years, Dan has been a stalwart advocate for the state's grocery sector at both state and federal levels. His extensive experience and leadership qualities were further evident during his tenure as a Missouri legislator from 2015 to 2022. Throughout his career, Dan has played a pivotal role in shaping and

advancing the interests of Missouri's grocery industry, demonstrating a deep commitment to its growth and success. His multifaceted expertise encompasses legislative affairs, industry advocacy, and strategic leadership.

# SPEAKERS



As operations manager at Hildebrand Farms Dairy, **Melissa Hildebrand-Reed** has transformed her family business into a Kansas-known brand. In 2008, the Hildebrand family began selling their milk direct to consumers in their signature glass bottle. They currently distribute to more than 150 locations, including partnerships with Kroger, Whole Foods, Natural Grocers, Hy-Vee, Sprouts, and several coffee shops and restaurants. Melissa has led the charge for Hildebrand Farms Dairy's marketing, sales, distribution, and growth for the last 15 years.

Hildebrand Farms Dairy has been recognized as the Marketer of the Year by the North American Agricultural Marketing Officials (NAAMO), the Innovative Dairy Farmer of the Year by the International Dairy Foods Association, and Agribusiness of the Year finalist for the State of Kansas. Melissa has served as the chair of the Kansas Livestock Association Dairy Council, president of the Kansas Dairy Association, and is currently chair of the Kansas Animal Health Council. She lives north of Abilene with her husband Brett and their three kids.

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**Daniel Hipsher** lives and breathes the world of food manufacturing and product development. A serial entrepreneur with a passion for bringing delicious ideas to life, he has dedicated his career to building bridges between innovative concepts and market-ready products that consumers truly love.

His journey in the food industry has been nothing short of exhilarating. Over the years, Daniel has worn many hats including sauce manufacturer, distributor, consultant, and product development specialist embracing each

role with enthusiasm. He is driven by the energy of transforming a concept from a simple idea scribbled on a napkin into a fully realized product on shelves across the country. Creating that kind of magic is what motivates him every single day.



# SPEAKERS



**Kelly Perry** is the co-owner of Perry's Pork Rinds, a rural Kansas food business built with her husband from a home-based start up into a growing regional brand. The company produces pork rinds, fudge, candied nuts, and other value-added foods while also operating a country store that supports local growers, artisans, and small food producers in a rural food-access area. Her work centers on practical food production, wholesale market expansion, and strengthening local food systems. Perry's products are now distributed across Kansas through retail, fundraising, and wholesale partnerships, with plans to expand nationally as regulatory licensing allows.

Beyond business operations, Kelly is active in rural economic development, local food access initiatives, and community partnerships that connect producers with viable markets. She focuses on realistic pathways for scaling small food businesses while keeping production consistent, compliant, and financially sustainable.

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**Jenny Osner** and her husband, Clint, own Hired Man's Grocery & Grill, Inc. in Conway Springs, Kansas, a store they built from the ground up in July 2008. Hired Man's Grocery takes pride in serving fresh produce (local sourced produce when possible) and butcher common and specialty meat items on site daily. They offer the Double Up Food Bucks Program in store, as well as being the first store in Kansas to launch the Add Milk Program sponsored by Hunger Solutions Institute at Auburn University.

Jenny currently serves on the National Grocers Association Board of Directors, National Grocers Association Government Relations Committee, Retail Grocers Association of Kansas and Missouri Board of Directors, and the Kansas Healthy Food Initiative Board of Directors.

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**Lou Malaponti** is a 45-year veteran of the produce industry with extensive experience in retail produce and floral operations. Lou has played a key leadership role in overseeing and developing produce and floral programs for Balls Food Stores, helping build one of the Midwest's most respected fresh departments. Lou has served as a consultant to growers, wholesalers, and retail chains across the United States. His work has focused on building sustainable produce programs that strengthen partnerships while delivering high-quality, fresh products to customers.



# REFINE YOUR PRODUCT PRICING ACROSS MARKET CHANNELS

Join a demonstration of how to use a free online tool to refine your product prices across different markets. Account for the costs to enter each market channel, your break-even product costs, and your expected product units sold. Bring your computer to use the pricing tool in real time as you evaluate wholesale and retail markets.



**Mallory Rahe** is an Associate Extension Professor at the University of Missouri who focuses on building stronger farm and food businesses. She leads the Missouri Agriculture, Food and Forestry Innovation Center which provides no-cost technical assistance to value-added agricultural farms. She also creates resources to aid producers who are making on-farm decisions about how to start and scale their operations. All tools are free and publicly available including specialty crop enterprise budgets, product pricing calculators, and direct marketing tips.

## THANK YOU



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