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**Testimony on SB 120
to
The Senate Committee on Agriculture
By Chad Bontrager
Kansas Department of Agriculture
February 19, 2013**

Good afternoon, Chairman Love and members of the committee. I am Chad Bontrager, agribusiness development coordinator, with the Kansas Department of Agriculture, and I am here to express KDA's support for SB 120, which will improve the ability of the department to serve our state's farmers' markets.

KDA works each day to support the entire agricultural sector in Kansas, including farmers' markets. As consumers become further removed from production agriculture, Kansas farmers' markets provide them the opportunity to support local agricultural producers and Kansas agriculture.

From 1987 to 2012, the number of farmers' markets in Kansas increased from 26 to 118. These markets give consumers access to fresh, locally grown produce as well as other food and agricultural products while also providing an opportunity for farmers to cultivate trust and confidence from consumers. Farmers' markets are an important economic tool in many communities as they keep money in local Kansas communities.

KDA recognizes the important role farmers' markets play in agricultural advocacy and rural economic growth. The department is committed to supporting this growing sector of agriculture and would like to help farmers' markets access federal grants and other resources as well as promote the markets. Unfortunately, there is no farmers' market registration program in Kansas to allow the department the ability to provide this service.

SB 120 would require farmers' markets to register with the state and would limit the legal liability of registered farmers' markets. There would be no fee associated with the registration. However, registered farmers' markets would have access to marketing, outreach and advocacy efforts through the *From the Land of Kansas* state trademark program, the ability to apply for federal grants and legal liability protection.

When discussions began about whether to require farmers' markets to register with KDA, we reached out to them for their input. Of the 97 markets registered on the USDA National Farmers Market Directory, more than 25 percent of the Kansas farmers' market coordinators were contacted and 93 percent of them responded with positive feedback. Attached are three letters of support. As we work together to grow all sectors of Kansas agriculture, passing SB120 will move us forward by promoting Kansas farmers' markets.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.

Senate Agriculture Committee

Date: 2-19-13

Attachment # 1-1