

Farm – Water

The purpose: of the low-water-use grant program is to provide grants to persons wishing to grow and cultivate low-water-use crops in the state of Kansas and to assist in the development of educational and research programs for growing and cultivating low-water-use crops in order to preserve water resources in the state.

When I heard about this hearing I wanted to come and communicate my feelings and that of my family, as well as what I feel are shared views of families with neighboring farms.

I have a home in and live in Johnson County, and my family also owns and is actively involved and interested in the preservation of our family farm in Smith County. The original quarter section of the home place was homesteaded by my great-grand parents Isaac and Sarah Anderson back in 1879 (you may recall Rutherford B Hayes was the President at that time).

The farm is modest in acreage by western Kansas measures but it consists of about 3 sections or 13 quarters of land. The day-day farming is handled by 3 separate tenants and is mostly dryland (and with some irrigation and a little bit of pasture). The current principal crop rotation consists of Corn, Milo, Wheat, Beans and occasionally Sunflowers. The average annual rainfall (last I checked) here in north central Kansas is about 24 inches/year. Which tells you that about half the time there is enough rain to make things work (if it comes at the right time) and the other half, we are short of the moisture we need.

We are genuinely interested in the rebuilding and improvement of our soils so that they may be productive now and for future generations. At least two of our tenants are doing a good job along these lines with a combination of no-till planting, experimentation with cover crops and a

systematic plan for crop rotations. One of the things that is of particular interest to us, is the discovery of another potentially profitable crop that could be included in the crop rotation and also be an effective source of ground cover to help keep the moisture in and less run off.

I believe it gets all of our attention when you bring up the topic and discuss implementing a plan to:

- Identify a new crop which would be well adapted to our climate and be able to thrive with a low amount of moisture. Effectively taking less of the limited amount of rainfall we expect to receive.
- Develop crops in which we are able to utilize the land, equipment and resources we already have in place.
- That requires a reduction in (or, eliminates) the need for nitrogen fertilizer, herbicide, pesticide or diesel fuel making passes over the land.

We need research and development of low-water crops. We need Universities to do the experimenting with the genetics and farmers experimenting with the planting and cultivation of low-water crops. I have observed that the best farmers out there are the ones who are open to trying new things. One of my good friends and high school classmates (Mark Overmiller who farms in northern Smith County) recently expressed it to me quite clearly “the farmers that will survive to the next generation are those that do the better job of managing their moisture”.

It does seem that when the topic of “cannabis” comes up the debate gets bogged down by people looking at the past. We (Kansans) need to take a leadership roll in looking to the future. Every farmer knows this stuff will grow just about anywhere with a little bit of rain. They just need some help and getting the ball rolling to have a market for it. Who knows what those markets could be without some University

research and resources put into it. I am not talking about research that is limited to the development of products for human consumption. It could be research for animal consumption, or research not for consumption by humans or animals. It could be for the development for industrial uses. We are taking Corn now and turning it into bio-fuels. We taking Soybeans and using it to make plastics. The two major types of soybean-derived plastics are **polyurethane** products and polyester **thermoset** products. Is there an industrial and commercial use for these low-water plants that could be grown in Kansas? Let's have the courage to look into this and find out.

Every Kansas farmer lives with the fact "they are always just about a week away from losing this year's crop". In any growing season "if it doesn't rain today or within the next few days - this year's crop could be lost".

If all of our prayers for rain are going unanswered, because for whatever reason it is not in our makers plan. Why don't we answer these prayers with the development of crops that will thrive - with less rain.

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