



Convention Schedule

Wednesday, November 20 Schedule

8:00 AM – Registration Opens

9:00 AM - Welcome, Flag Salute, & Call to Order - KFU President Donn Teske

9:05 AM – Collective Land Histories – Dănia Davy began her legal career protecting the rights of farmers and rural homeowners during the Great Recession which allowed her to deeply connect with her clients and understand the devastating emotional and mental burdens these communities experience. Dănia, will challenge us to face our individual and collective land histories so we can recognize the critical role we each have to play in restoring our internal and external ecosystems.

9:45 AM - Farm & Rural Mental Health Session Part One - American farmers are sicker and more depressed than the average American and Kansas is losing 25-year-olds faster than any state in the nation. What happened to the greatest people in the greatest state? Can we reverse these trends? **Gail Fuller** will discuss his own personal journey of failing physical and mental health, how it affected his life, farm and family and the changes that he has been able to make.

10:45 AM – Break

11:00 AM – Farm & Rural Mental Health Session Part Two

12:00 PM - NFU Convention Delegate Caucusing & Nominations

12:15 PM – Lunch sponsored by Kubota-Great Plains

1:00 PM – 2025 - The International Year of Cooperatives - The UN General Assembly recently declared 2025 as the International Year of Cooperatives (IYC2025) to be celebrated under the theme "*Cooperatives Build a Better World.*" The theme highlights the lasting global impact of cooperatives and emphasizes that the cooperative model is a crucial solution for addressing various global challenges. NCBA CLUSA's Doug O'Brien will share details about the designation and how Farmers Union members can get involved.

1:30 PM – “Aqui Talk” – Join author **Lucas Bessire** for an open conversation about the Ogallala Aquifer. He will share insights from the research that led to his book on groundwater depletion in southwest Kansas, reflect on his family's relationships to groundwater, discuss the major myths that have prevented solutions, and think together with attendees about what can be done now.

2:00 PM – KFU Foundation Silent Auction Begins

3:00 PM - Bowersock Mills & Power Company Hydroelectric Plant Tour - Comprised of 11 hydroelectric turbines, the plant is capable of producing 7 MW of environmentally friendly energy. The Bowersock Mills & Power Company is the only operating hydroelectric plant in Kansas. Learning more about this over 140-year-old project will help tourists understand electricity and the history of its production – but perhaps more importantly, it can help people think about the future of energy – something we all need to consider.

4:30 PM – Join the K-State Produce Safety Extension Team of **Dr. Manreet Bhullar and Katelynn Stull** as they deliver information on the FSMA Produce Safety Rule. In this session, the team will provide an overview of the rule, its implications for produce safety, and upcoming training opportunities. Attendees will learn about the produce safety requirements for growers and discover resources to support compliance and safety initiatives. Additionally, the session will offer an interactive Q&A, allowing participants to connect with the team, gain clarity on specific produce safety requirements, and learn about upcoming produce safety related trainings.

5:00 PM - Convention Recesses

5:30 PM - Social

6:30 PM – Convention Banquet, Farmers Union Midwest Agency Update, Annual Awards, & Kansas Farmers Union Foundation Live Auction

7:00 PM – KFU Foundation Silent Auction Ends

Wednesday, November 20 Speaker Biographies

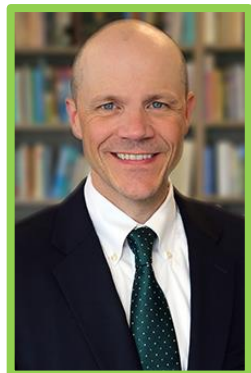
Dãnia Davy is the founder of Land & Liberation, a consultancy promoting liberatory relationships between humans, natural and financial resources, and land. She teaches "Examining Food System Equity through Critical Race Theory" each summer at Vermont Law School. She has served as Senior Policy Advisor for the US Southeast Region at Oxfam, Director of Land Retention and Advocacy at the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund and started her legal career as a Skadden Fellow at the Land Loss Prevention Project. Dãnia helped launch the Heirs Property Practitioner Network, has testified before Congress on Credit Access for Black and beginning farmers, served on the inaugural North Carolina Local Sustainable Food Advisory Council, and produced the film, "Our Land, Our Lives: The North Carolina Black Farmers' Experience," She earned her J.D. at the University of Virginia School of Law and her A.B. in Africana Studies & Community Health at Brown University. Dãnia currently serves on the boards of the Farmers Legal Action Group, Southern Rural Development Center, A Place Matters, Inc., and Agrarian Trust. Originally from Jamaica, Dãnia is currently expanding her work back home to promote ancestral land stewardship, ecologically-sound energy access, and rural culture preservation.



Gail Fuller's life journey has taken him on a path from a conventional 3200-acre corn/soybean farm to a 162-acre food farm. Along the way, he has learned the value of healthy ecosystems to both his farming operation as well as his own health. Fuller puts emphasis on principles, not practices and thinks farming should be about (re)growing communities. He believes we need to be growing our food in systems designed to live and thrive according to nature's principles. Gail has spoken at conferences and workshops all over the country and in 2012, along with help from his partner Lynnette and Dr. Jill Clapperton, started the Fuller Field School. It has quickly become recognized as one of the premier educational events in the US with speakers and attendees coming from all over the globe.

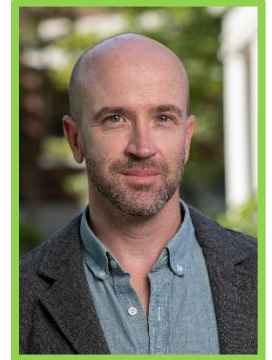


Doug O'Brien is the President & CEO National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International (NCBA CLUSA), where he works with the cooperative community, both domestically and internationally, to deepen its impact on individuals and communities. NCBA is the primary voice for cooperatives in the United States for using the cooperative business model to empower people in their businesses and communities. Doug has been with NCBA since 2016, where he has served as the Executive Vice President of Programs before becoming president and CEO in January 2018. Before coming to NCBA CLUSA, Doug led the work of the White House Rural Council and served in top positions at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, a community economic development agency with over



40 programs and 5000 employees that annually finances more than 30 billion dollars. O'Brien was raised on a diversified farm in Dubuque County, Iowa, and holds degrees from Loras College (Dubuque, Iowa), the University of Iowa Law School, and the University of Arkansas Masters in Agricultural and Food Law Program.

Lucas Bessire is an American author, filmmaker and anthropologist. A fifth generation Kansan originally from Grant County, he graduated from Kansas State University before earning his PhD in cultural anthropology. Lucas is the author of several films, essays and publications, including the prize winning books Behold the Black Caiman: a Chronicle of Ayoreo Life (University of Chicago Press, 2014), and Running Out: In Search of Water on the High Plains (Princeton University Press, 2021), which was named a Kansas State Book of the Year and a finalist for the National Book Award in nonfiction. Among other honors, he was named a 2023 Guggenheim Fellow. In 2025, Lucas will be joining the faculty of the Colorado School of Mines.



Dr. Manreet Bhullar is an Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist of Produce Safety at Kansas State University. He holds a B.S. in Agricultural Sciences from Punjab Agricultural University, an M.S. in Animal and Food Sciences from Tennessee State University, and a Ph.D. in Food Science and Technology from Iowa State University. His research program focuses on microbial safety in fresh produce, mainly through agricultural water testing, UV light technologies, and novel antimicrobial interventions to ensure FSMA compliance and reduce foodborne outbreaks. The produce safety extension program focuses on educating and training growers on the FSMA Produce Safety Rule and providing technical assistance to growers to comply with the Produce Safety Rule.



Katelynn Stull is an Extension Associate of Produce Safety at Kansas State University. She received her B.S. in microbiology and M.S. in food science from Kansas State University. As a student, she worked on food microbiology research projects related to fresh produce and meat. Katelynn previously worked in produce safety extension at the University of Florida. In her current role, she provides education and technical assistance to Kansas produce growers. This includes working with growers to assess risks, water testing, and compliance with the FSMA Produce Safety Rule.



Thursday, November 21 Schedule

8:00 AM – Farmers Union Washington Update - NFU government relations **Layla Soberanis** will provide an update on NFU's 2024 policy priorities, legislative wins, and end of year lame duck expectations. Soberanis will also cover 2024 election results and what that means for 2025 and getting a Farm Bill done.

8:30 AM – Farmers Union Topeka Update - KFU contract lobbyist **Sean Gatewood** will provide an update on the upcoming 2025 Kansas Legislative Session.

9:00 AM – Kansans for Conservation is a coalition of more than 40 organizations working to ensure a sustainable future for Kansas. The mission is to establish dedicated state funding for conservation, with a focus on three key resources: working lands, wildlife, and parks and recreation. **Dawn Buehler**, Kansas Riverkeeper and Executive Director of Friends of the Kaw, will share more about this initiative and how you can get involved.

9:30 AM - Current Conditions and Trends of the Kansas High Plains Aquifer - The High Plains Aquifer (HPA) is the primary water source for western and south-central Kansas is economically the most important groundwater resource in the state. **Brownie Wilson**, Kansas Geological Survey will look at water resources and use patterns across the entire state with particular emphasis on water level changes and trends of the HPA and its subsystems- the Ogallala, Great Bend Prairie, and Equus Beds.

10:15 AM - Break

10:30 AM - Immigration Law - Immigration is always a favorite talking point for politicians, but what does it mean for Kansas? Attorney **Valerie Sprout** will present on the immigration programs and policies that help sustain agriculture, and what changes could be made to the immigration law to continue to help rural communities.

11:15 AM - Agriculture, Animation, and the War Effort - Join Smoky Hills PBS' **Max Aguiar** and discover how animation promoted food conservation and production during both World Wars, turning everyday tasks like rationing and farming into patriotic acts. These early shorts made agriculture a key part of the war effort, inspiring people to contribute on the home front. Today, they remind us how media can mobilize communities around critical issues, from wartime efforts to modern-day sustainability challenges.

12:00 PM – Lunch sponsored by Kansas Department of Agriculture

12:30 PM - Kansas Department of Agriculture's From the Land of Kansas Program - The From the Land of Kansas program's goal is to help businesses that grow, produce, process or manufacture products in Kansas. In addition, the program works with and supports restaurants using Kansas products and retailers selling Kansas ag products and ingredients. KDA's **Sammy Gleason** will also share how the trademark program helps members promote their Kansas products and provides members with a variety of business development tips and opportunities including marketing assistance.

1:00 PM - KFU Business Meeting - Elections, Policy, Special Orders of Business

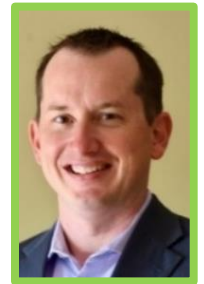
Kansas Farmers Union Board reorganization upon adjournment of convention

Thursday, November 21 Speaker Biographies



Layla Soberanis serves as Senior Government Relations Representative for the National Farmers Union (NFU), covering issues related to trade, transportation, agricultural workforce, competition, and rural development. Layla also serves as NFUPAC Treasurer (National Farmers Union Political Action Committee). Prior to joining NFU in 2020, Layla represented the National Corn Growers Association and the Laborers International Union of North America (LiUNA) and has also worked on several federal and state campaigns. A native of Virginia, Layla earned her bachelor's degree from the College of William and Mary and a Juris Doctorate from Ave Maria School of Law. Layla is bilingual in both English in Spanish.

Sean Gatewood is a contract lobbyist and grassroots advisor. He represents KFU in the legislature and works for a variety of other, largely health related interests. Prior to joining us, Sean served as the Advocacy Director and Interim Executive Director of the Kansas Health Consumer Coalition. Before that he served two terms in the Kansas House of Representatives. He is a Council of State Governments BILLD Fellow, Kansas Leadership Center alumni, and a graduate of the KARL program. Sean has a BA in Organizational Leadership from Fort Hays State University.



Dawn Buehler is the Kansas Riverkeeper and Executive Director with Friends of the Kaw. In her role as the Kansas Riverkeeper, Dawn is a non-governmental public advocate that works to protect and preserve the Kansas River. Dawn holds a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Conservation from Oregon State University and a bachelor's in business administration from Baker University. Dawn is Governor Kelly's Appointee as Chair of the Kansas Water Authority and the Governor's Appointee for the Oil & Gas Advisory Committee.

Brownie Wilson graduated from Kansas State University with a Bachelor and Master's degrees in Geography. He started his working career with the Kansas Department of Agriculture, Division of Water Resources in 1993 as a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Analyst. In 1999, Wilson accepted an Environmental Scientist IV position with the Kansas Water Office and in 2001 moved to the Kansas Geological Survey where he holds his current appointment as the Manager of the Geohydrology Division's Applications and Services unit. His research interests include application development and data assessment, environmental database modeling, analysis of Kansas water rights, and water resource management.



Valerie K. Sprout is a solo practitioner who has devoted her legal career to helping immigrants and their families since she was first admitted to the bar in 2011. She is licensed to practice law in both Kansas and Missouri. Her practice is focused on representing individuals at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the Department of State, Executive Office of Immigration Review (Immigration Court), as well as at the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA). She has volunteered with the CARA Family Detention Pro Bono Project and serves on the board of the Asylum Clinic Kansas City (ACKC). Valerie is a frequent presenter on immigration law to bar and community associations. She is a life-long Kansan and lives with her family in Shawnee, KS.



Max Aguiar is a director and producer of Real Ag on Smoky Hills PBS. His work sheds light on farming histories, food systems, and rural issues with a mix of insight, humor, and accessibility, bringing fresh perspectives to overlooked topics in agriculture.



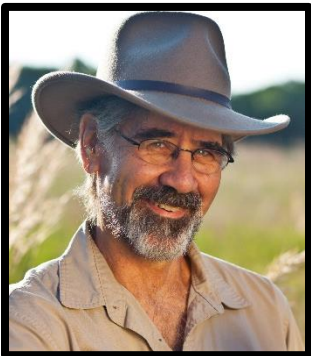
Sammy Gleason graduated from Fort Hays State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Organizational Leadership. She grew up in a rural community in North Central Kansas. Her passion for rural communities and building relationships has led her to where she is today. During her time with the From the Land of Kansas program, Sammy has built relationships with members, enhanced marketing benefits, designed new websites, increased member product opportunities online and in-stores, promoted ag products, managed grants, coordinated and hosted events, and helped grow a wide range of Kansas farms and businesses.



Screening 7:00 PM Tuesday, November 19 ~ SpringHill Suites Ballroom

As our planet continues to warm, we are experiencing an increase in extreme weather of all types. How is the changing climate impacting us and what's being done locally to address the challenges we face? A feature-length documentary entitled "Hot Times in the Heartland" explores a range of activities taking place in Kansas and across the Great Plains. It spotlights individuals and organizations directly involved with various approaches designed to mitigate the impact of climate change and to help communities adapt to changing conditions.

This program has been produced by Dave Kendall of Prairie Hollow Productions, former host of the "Sunflower Journeys" series on public television, with the assistance of Rex Buchanan, director emeritus of the Kansas Geological Survey, and Laura Mead, a multimedia artist grounded in the tallgrass prairie of the Flint Hills.



With a BA in cultural geography and an MA in media anthropology from KU, **Dave Kendall** directed his first documentary in 1982 and has since produced dozens of programs related to Kansas history and culture. After serving as host of the "Sunflower Journeys" series on public television for 27 years, he retired from his position as Executive Producer at KTWU to form Prairie Hollow Productions, an independent production company through which he continues to produce documentaries. A fifth generation Kansan, his great, great grandfather served as a teamster on the Santa Fe Trail before settling down to farm in Morris County shortly before Kansas entered the union.

Rex Buchanan is Director Emeritus of the Kansas Geological Survey (KGS), based at the University of Kansas. Rex grew up near Little River, in Rice County, Kansas, on the edge of the Smoky Hills. He has an undergraduate degree from Kansas Wesleyan University and graduate degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Buchanan began his career at the KGS in 1978 and was the Interim Director from 2010 to 2016. He is the co-author of numerous books, is active in various professional organizations, and has been recognized nationally for his contributions to the field of geoscience.

