

Cultivating America's Bread Basket

Agriculture on the Prairie

When settlers came to the prairie in the 1870s, they learned from the land that grasses grew better than any other crop here. In 1874, Russian Mennonite immigrants brought seeds of Turkey Red winter wheat from the Russian steppes. Well suited to this climate, Turkey Red and its varieties soon dominated Kansas wheat production and still make up half the state's wheat crop.

When farmers plowed the prairie to plant wheat, they replaced a complex ecosystem of hundreds of plant and animal species with single-species farm crops. Lacking the natural buffers and balances of the native prairie, crops are susceptible to the many challenges of prairie life, including insects, jackrabbits, floods, and drought. Despite these challenges, Kansas has become America's Bread Basket. In 2007, Kansas grew some 375 million bushels of wheat, more than any other state. Along the Byway, you'll also see corn, soybeans, and sorghum (milo) under cultivation.



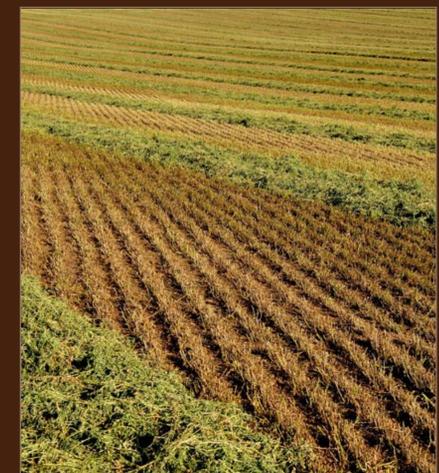
Stafford County Flour Mills/Ted Lee Eubanks

Stafford County Flour Mills Co.

In 1904, Gustav Krug founded the Hudson Milling Company, later renamed the Stafford County Flour Mills Co. Since then, the mill has turned Kansas wheat into a broad line of flours and baking mixes. Call ahead for a tour, and bring home a bit of Kansas - famous Hudson Cream Flour.



Shelterbelt/Diana Watson



Cut Alfalfa/Ted Lee Eubanks

Motion and Change

During the 1930s, soil erosion devastated prairie farms. Several new federal programs were created to tackle the problem. Both the Soil Conservation Service and the Great Plains Shelterbelt Program worked with Civilian Conservation Corps crews and local farmers to plant shelterbelts of cedar, juniper, locust, and cottonwood to stabilize soils.



Funded in part by the Federal Highway Administration through the Kansas Scenic Byways Program.