Despite lower crop prices, survey shows land prices up in 2014
Story source: Ron Plain, Professor of Agriculture Economics

Land prices in Missouri increased in the past year at a rate higher than expected.

Results of the 2014 University of Missouri Extension annual land value survey of lenders, appraisers and brokers showed an increase for cropland values by 4.6 percent, nearly double what survey respondents predicted last year.

“That’s a bit surprising given the weakness in crop prices,” says Ron Plain, University of Missouri Extension agricultural economist. “The days of $6 and $7 a bushel corn are behind us, with corn prices headed toward $3 a bushel and maybe in some spots a little bit lower.”

Pastureland values increased by 7.2 percent over the 2013 level, which is more than five times as much as last year’s survey predicted. However, Plain says, that is not as surprising as the steep increase in cropland, because the cattle prices have been a lot higher than anticipated.

With the huge drop in crop prices, survey respondents figure sooner or later that is going to push cropland values down.

“They predict cropland value will be down 1.2 percent in July of 2015 compared to July of 2014,” Plain says. “On the other hand, cattle prices are looking strong, so higher pastureland values were forecast, with the average of respondents estimating it up 2.2 percent next year compared to this year.”

Plain says there is every reason to think that cropland rent will come under pressure due to lower crop prices. He says we could be in for several years of lower cropland prices.

“On the cattle side of it, it is looking awfully good and expected to be better if possible in 2015,” Plain says. “So I don’t see much of a reason for pastureland values to stop going up anytime soon.”

MU Extension has conducted the annual survey for the past 40 years to keep track of what is happening to farmland values in Missouri. Plain says over the years the survey has matched up very well with the numbers that USDA has in its annual report.

See survey results at http://agebb.missouri.edu/mgt/landsurv/.
**Last vegetables of the season**  
by John Hobbs

**Saving the Last Tomatoes!**  
Cold nights are increasing in frequency now that we are into fall. If you have tomatoes, you may have some that are approaching maturity.

Leave them on the vine until mature or until a frost is forecast.

Tomatoes will ripen off the vine but must have reached a certain phase of maturity called the ‘mature green stage.’ Look for full-sized tomatoes with a white, star-shaped zone on the bottom end of the green fruit.

When harvesting fruit before a frost, separate tomatoes into three groups for storage: those that are mostly red, those that are just starting to turn, and those that are still green. Discard tomatoes with defects such as rots or breaks in the skin. Place the tomatoes on cardboard trays or cartons but use layers of newspaper to separate fruit if stacked. Occasionally a tomato may start to rot and leak juice. The newspaper will keep the juice from contacting nearby or underlying fruit. Store groups of tomatoes at as close to 55 degrees as possible until needed. Source: K-State

**Estate planning – where do I begin?**  
by Janet LaFon, Family Financial Education Specialist, Jasper County Extension

The topic of death and what will happen to your belongings when you’re gone is not an easy one to discuss with family members. But it is on the minds of many people. If you haven’t already developed an estate plan, you may be wondering where to start. A question that is frequently asked is, “Do I need an attorney?” While it may be legal to do-it-yourself, it’s not advisable. Lawyers can help you develop a document that says exactly what you mean in a manner that will see that your wishes are carried out. He or she can also help you understand the ins and outs of inheritance laws and estate taxes.

If you don’t already have an attorney, you may be wondering how to find one. Probably the best place to begin is through referrals. Visit with friends, relatives and business associates to see whom they would recommend. Another resource is the Missouri Bar Association. They have a lawyer referral service that can help you locate lawyers in your area. The service can be contacted by calling 573-636-3635 or on the Internet at www.mobar.org. There is a $50.00 fee for them to refer you to a lawyer. The fee is discounted for veterans. This fee entitles you to consultation with an attorney (up to 30 minutes).

One concern that is often expressed is about the fees charged for developing an estate plan. It’s appropriate to ask about fees up front. Many attorneys will give a free initial consultation and then quote a flat fee they would charge if you choose to hire him or her.

Perhaps the best thing you can do to keep down costs is to be prepared before going to see an attorney. Here are a few suggestions:

- Gather personal information for yourself and other family members. This would include such things as legal names, birth dates, addresses and telephone numbers, Social Security numbers, marital status, employers and citizenship status.
- Determine what you own and what you owe, the value of these items and how property is titled. Also include where the items and relevant documentation are located.
- Decide what is important to you. Who do you want to provide for through your estate plan? How do you want property distributed? How do you define “fair”? Who do you want to speak on your behalf?
- Discuss your thoughts with spouse and family members.

---

**Storing Peppers**  
Peppers are able to be stored fresh much longer than tomatoes. They can usually keep in a crisper drawer of a refrigerator for several weeks if kept moist but not wet. For longer storage, freezing works well. Though mushy when thawed, the flavor still comes through in cooked foods. Try dicing them into small pieces and then freezing on a cookie sheet. The frozen pieces can then be poured into a plastic bag for later use.

Measuring is much easier as the pieces are not frozen together in a clump. This method works equally well for hot peppers. Source: K-State
Multi-species grazing can improve utilization of pastures
by Dr. Jodie Pennington

Multi-species grazing is the practice of using two or more species of livestock together or separately on the same land in a specific growing season. With an understanding of the different grazing behaviors of each species, various combinations of animals can be used to more efficiently utilize the forages in a pasture. Different species of livestock prefer different forages and graze them to different heights.

Cattle tend to be intermediate grazers. They graze grasses and legumes and bite with their mouth and tongue. Sheep and horses graze closer to the ground than cattle. Sheep and goats eat forbs or brushy plants with a fleshy stem and leaves better than cattle or horses. Many weeds in a grass pasture are forbs. Cattle and horses tend to graze grasses better than small ruminants such as sheep and goats.

Goats are browsers and prefer to graze with their heads up. Browse is the tender shoots, twigs, and leaves of trees or shrubs that are acceptable for grazing. Goats browse like deer if given the opportunity. They will eat higher growing plants such as forbs and shrubs as well as high-growing grasses. With their mobile upper lip, goats and sheep can select individual leaves and strip bark off of woody plants. Their unique lip allows them to eat the parts of a plant that are highly nutritious while leaving behind the less digestible parts such as the thorns and branches of blackberries and multi-flora rose. Both goats and sheep will eat weeds although goats prefer browse more than sheep. However, recent data indicate that hair sheep seem to eat almost the same plants as goats.

Table 1. Dietary preferences for different livestock species (From “Nutrient management in mixed specie pastures for goats”, An Peischel, 2005 Nutrition Conference, University of Tennessee).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Grass (%)</th>
<th>Weeds (%)</th>
<th>Browse (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>--Horse</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Cattle</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Sheep</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Goats</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brush and weed management is the most noticeable benefit that producers see from multi-species grazing. Although research indicates that multi-species grazing can contribute to more efficient and uniform use of pastures, the results will vary with the type of pasture. Land that includes grasses, forbs, and browse are best utilized with multi-species grazing. Land that is uniformly in grass may best be utilized for cattle, sheep, or horse production. Multi-species grazing can improve utilization of forages by less than 5% to more than 20%, depending primarily on the type of vegetation on the land and the mix of animals used.

Varying terrain may also lend itself to multi-species grazing. If the terrain is steep and rough, goats and sheep are superior to cattle for handling the terrain. They also eat more forbs and browse than cattle so sheep and goats are well adapted to grazing rough borders around an otherwise relatively level pasture. Cattle prefer to graze grass and prefer more gently sloping land.

Although there are individual preferences, data do not define whether it is better to graze small ruminants before or after cattle. Cattle and small ruminants also may be grazed at the same time. Usually small ruminants are used to eat weeds and browse that cattle do not eat in a multi-species regime.

Concerns with multi-species grazing involving cattle and small ruminants include predator control and fencing for the goats or sheep. In the western states, often animals were allowed to roam the plains and no fencing was used. However, livestock guardian animals and possibly a shepherd were utilized to protect the small ruminants.

Labor also can be an issue with multi-species grazing when the species may be grazing at different times. In such cases, slightly more labor is needed to move the livestock from field-to-field. Depending on the situation, small ruminants may require a more extensive program to control internal parasites than cattle which adds to labor demands. However, pasture utilization improves and the parasite-control program for sheep and goats may also benefit from multi-species grazing, as the worms in cattle are usually different than the worms in small ruminants.

Overall, multi-species grazing can improve utilization of pastures by 10-15%. However, this increased utilization must be weighed against the increased costs of fencing and predator control as well as increased time for management of the animals.
Pumpkins provide plethora of possibilities
by Dr. Pam Duitsman, Nutrition and Health Education Specialist, Greene County Extension

October's most famous squash is also its most versatile. Whether you are using this fruit disguised as a vegetable to decorate for fall or preparing it for consumption, the possible uses of pumpkin are endless.

Pumpkins lend themselves to a variety of cooking methods. It is possible to serve pumpkins as a side dish, soup, cake, muffin, bread, custard and even pie. Pumpkin can also be substituted for winter squash or sweet potatoes in recipes, and even the seeds can be toasted for healthy snacks.

The color of the pumpkin offers a clue to its great nutritional value as an excellent source of carotenoids, including beta-carotene that the body converts into vitamin A.

A good supply of these disease preventing compounds are in as little as a half cup of cooked pumpkin, which contains only about 24 calories. This same amount supplies over 100 percent of your recommended daily intake of vitamin A, a good amount of vitamin C, fiber, and several health beneficial phytochemicals.

Storage and selection
To be preserved, pumpkins don't have to be stored in a refrigerator so that is one other aspect that makes them so versatile.

Whole pumpkins (not cut and free of bruises) can last two months if stored in a dry, cool and airy location where they won't freeze or be exposed to insects or rodents.

Let the use of the pumpkin determine the selection. To make a jack-o-lantern, select a large, well-shaped pumpkin. Pumpkins that are best for cooking will be small and heavy for their size, ranging from about five to seven pounds.

Pumpkins for cooking will often be marketed as pie pumpkins and will contain more pulp than the larger jack-o-lantern varieties. Choose a pumpkin that has at least a one inch stem firmly attached, and that is free from soft spots or damage. It should feel firm and have a consistent color.

Preparation and cooking
Before using for food preparation, rinse and scrub the pumpkin clean. Cut open the pumpkin before cooking and remove the seeds and stringy material. Go ahead and save the seeds for roasting. Then cut the flesh of the pumpkin into wedges or halves.

Once you cut the pumpkin open, you must cook it right away.

To boil: place the wedges or halves in a large pot with enough water to cover the pumpkin. Bring the water to a boil, cover, reduce heat and let simmer. Cook until you can pierce flesh easily with a fork. Drain and let cool. Peel the flesh from the skin.

Oven baking: place the pumpkin halves on a baking sheet and bake at 350°F for about 1 to 1.5 hours, or until flesh is tender when pierced with a fork. When cool enough to handle, scoop out the flesh.

The flesh of the cooked pumpkin can be mashed or pureed with a food processor or blender. A five pound pumpkin will yield about four cups of mashed, cooked pumpkin. Chill cooked pumpkin immediately.

Use cooked pumpkin within 36 hours or freeze at 0 degrees F for up to one year. Use rigid plastic containers leaving an inch headspace for expansion, or use freezer bags. Package in amounts that you will use for a recipe such as two cups for a pumpkin pie. Use puree in recipes or substitute in the same amount in any recipe calling for solid pack canned pumpkin.

To roast the seeds: Just wash the seeds in warm water, and spread them out to dry. Toss in a little oil or spray a shallow baking sheet with oil and spread the seeds in a single layer. Bake them at 250 degrees Fahrenheit for about 15-20 minutes, occasionally stirring. Salt if desired, cool and store.

Roasted pumpkin seeds make a terrific energy snack. They are a great source of protein, minerals, vitamins, and omega-3 fatty acids. Store roasted seeds in an airtight container in the refrigerator. If they are going to be kept longer than 10 to 14 days, place them in the freezer.

Recipe idea

**Pumpkin Pancakes**

- 1/2 cup regular, uncooked oats
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 2 eggs
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup pureed pumpkin
- 1/3 cup low-fat or skim milk
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 cup whole wheat flour
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons wheat germ
- 1 tablespoon sugar

Combine oats and buttermilk and let stand for 15 minutes to soften. Mix eggs, oil, pumpkin, and milk and blend well. Combine dry ingredients and mix with the egg mixture. Add oats and buttermilk and blend until batter is fairly smooth. Add extra milk if batter is too thick. Bake on lightly greased griddle. Makes: 4 servings.