



USDA Awards \$10M Grant to NC State and CEFS to Study Sustainable Agricultural Systems

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Raleigh, NC: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has awarded a five-year, \$10 million grant to North Carolina State University (NC State) and the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) to lead a collaborative project to determine how a comprehensive redesign of the current food system can stimulate a successful transition to a more sustainable and resilient food system during climate change.

By facilitating a shift in food production and distribution; institutional procurement; and community networks, the study will determine how a comprehensive food system redesign will address negative outcomes of the current structure. Areas of study include high food-insecurity rates; costly diet-related health issues; soil and water stress; pollinator decline; increase in invasive species, pests, diseases; and increased economic pressure on rural communities.

The effects of a changing climate will continue to intensify and increase the need to create solutions that simultaneously and systematically address these global consequences. The interdisciplinary team working on this project will research systems-based solutions that will take into consideration environmental improvements versus cost considerations; adequate producer profitability; and potential impacts on rural communities and small farms.

The project, led by Dr. Chris Reberg-Horton, Assistant Director of Collaborative Research at CEFS and Professor of Cropping Systems at NC State, will also involve additional faculty and research teams from NC State's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences working across 13 predominantly agrarian counties in southeastern North Carolina.

"Taking into consideration the current changes in climate, an ideal system will result in a synthesis of best practices and policies observed in both the mainstream food structures and distributed local and regional food systems," Reberg-Horton said. "Besides, the more revenue in the hands of farmers and local businesses will improve struggling rural economies and their people's health and well-being. Can we address all of these issues at once? We believe so."

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The Center for Environmental Farming Systems is a partnership of North Carolina State University, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University and the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. CEFS develops and promotes just and equitable food and farming systems that conserve natural resources, strengthen communities, improve health outcomes, and provide economic opportunities in North Carolina and beyond. For more information please visit www.cefs.ncsu.edu.