

NEWS RELEASE

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NC State Grant Aims to Connect Hog Farmers with Consumers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Researchers at the Center for Environmental Farming Systems at North Carolina State University are implementing a new initiative designed to connect small-scale, independent hog farmers in North Carolina with local consumers through alternative production practices and new marketing strategies.

The project, called North Carolina CHOICES, is funded by a three-year, \$600,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and aims to expand consumer choices in pork products while increasing profits among farmers. The initiative is a partnership of NC State, N.C. A&T State University, the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and several sustainable agriculture and environmental groups.

“We will be partnering with farmers to produce three types of pork products for targeted markets – certified organic, environmentally friendly, and antibiotic-free – and will help them market these products directly to consumers,” says Dr. Nancy Creamer, director of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) in Goldsboro, N.C., and the primary investigator for the grant.

The CHOICES program combines direct marketing with aspects of the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model, in which consumers will purchase products at the beginning of the season, and farmers will deliver products on a regular basis.

This model is often used by produce farmers but is not generally associated with meat products. “This marketing model gives farmers a guaranteed market and takes away much of their initial risk because they know how many hogs they need to raise based on the number of consumers they have,” Creamer says.

“We believe our project creates a win-win situation for both farmers and consumers,” says Susan Jelinek, project manager for North Carolina CHOICES. “Farmers will have direct access to their consumers and be able to get a better price for their product. Consumers who

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want to support alternative agricultural practices and independent family farms will have access to products they prefer.”

Project managers are currently accepting applications from N.C. farmers who would like to participate in the program. Ten farmers will be selected by mid-December to participate in the project during the first year, with more farmers joining as the project grows. Once the farmers are selected, project managers will begin a statewide marketing and publicity campaign to solicit interest from potential consumers.

“We would love to see farmers in North Carolina dealing more directly with consumers and to see consumers take an interest in how their food is produced,” Creamer says. “We want this project to serve as a model for communities around the country that wish to develop markets for locally produced products from independent farmers.”

Interested consumers or farmers can contact Susan Jelinek at 919/513-7346 or susan_jelinek@ncsu.edu for more information about the project.

The NC State grant is part of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s Food and Society Initiative. Launched in 2001, the Food and Society Initiative is inspired by a vision of a future food system that provides for all Americans safe and nutritious foods grown in a manner that protects the environment, promotes health, and brings economic development to both rural and urban communities.

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation was established in 1930 “to help people help themselves through the practical application of knowledge and resources to improve their quality of life and that of future generations.” Its programming activities center around the common vision of a world in which each person has a sense of worth; accepts responsibility for self, family, community and societal well-being; and has the capacity to be productive, and to help create nurturing families, responsive institutions and healthy communities.