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For immediate release

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Food access in North Carolina gets major funding

A \$750,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation will help get to the root of food-system inequities influenced by structural racism, in a project being led by The Cooperative Extension Program at North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in conjunction with the Center for Environmental Farming Systems.

A racially diverse team of experts will work with grassroots groups in Nash, Edgecombe and Scotland counties throughout the two-year span of the grant to assess how racial barriers can influence access to food. The project will also address ways to remove those barriers.

Leading the team is Shorlette Ammons, N.C. A&T-based community food-systems outreach coordinator at the Center for Environmental Farming Systems. CEFS is a partnership of A&T and N.C. State University - the state's two land-grant institutions - and the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; has a statewide focus on research, Cooperative Extension and education in sustainable agriculture and community-based food systems; and operates a 2,000-acre research program at Cherry Research Farm in Goldsboro.

Ammons has a background in food-justice issues and the work she administers through the Kellogg Foundation-funded initiative is to help create a national model that other communities can apply to their problems with food access.

"It's a very complex problem and it will take a variety of different approaches," Ammons says of the initiative. "We chose to work with community organizations that live these conditions every day and to let them be experts in their own realities and experiences."

Among the most limited-resource challenged areas in the state, Nash, Edgecombe and Scotland counties have high incidences of food insecurity, unemployment and poor health. North Carolina is the 5th most food insecure state in the nation according to USDA reports; one of every four children is food insecure; and eating nutritiously is particularly burdensome for low-income residents in food deserts, who can have limited transportation access to areas to buy fresh fruits and vegetables.

"We're looking at how we can support communities in developing more equitable sustainable, local-food systems that create access to opportunity for all people," Ammons says. "Creating a better food system involves creating better access to opportunities for underserved farmers, building career ladders in the food system for youth, increasing wages for farmworkers, decreasing chronic health conditions in low-income communities and communities of color. So this effort should involve a wide range of our community."

For more information about the project, contact Ammons at sammonss@ncat.edu

About the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

The W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF), founded in 1930 as an independent, private foundation by breakfast cereal pioneer, Will Keith Kellogg, is among the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive, WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work and life.

The Kellogg Foundation is based in Battle Creek, Michigan, and works throughout the United States and internationally, as well as with sovereign tribes. Special emphasis is paid to priority places where there are high concentrations of poverty and where children face significant barriers to success. WKKF priority places in the U.S. are in Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico and New Orleans; and internationally, are in Mexico and Haiti. For more information, visit www.wkkf.org.

About the Center for Environmental Farming Systems

CEFS develops and promotes just and equitable food and farming systems that conserve natural resources, strengthen communities and provide economic opportunities in North Carolina and beyond. For more information please visit www.cefs.ncsu.edu.