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CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL FARMING SYSTEMS' NC CHOICES DIRECTOR SARAH BLACKLIN RECOGNIZED BY FARM CREDIT IN NATIONAL SEARCH FOR 100 FRESH PERSPECTIVES SHAPING RURAL AMERICA AND AGRICULTURE

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RALEIGH, NC (March 15, 2016) – Sarah Blacklin, Program Director of NC Choices, is among the visionaries being recognized nationally through Farm Credit 100 Fresh Perspectives, a search to identify and honor 100 leaders who are changing rural communities and agriculture for the better. NC Choices is an initiative of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems that promotes the advancement of local, niche, and pasture-based meat supply chains through education, networking, and technical assistance for producers, processors, food professionals, and buyers. Blacklin was specifically honored for her role in creating and implementing Women Working in the Meat Business, trainings and conferences designed to help women overcome real and perceived barriers in their meat business careers. Honorees were announced at a National Ag Day event at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

Farm Credit launched the Farm Credit 100 Fresh Perspectives program as part of its 100th anniversary of service to rural communities and agriculture. As a Farm Credit 100 Fresh Perspectives honoree Blacklin joins an impressive list of leaders in agriculture and rural enterprise.

“Farm Credit has supported rural communities and agriculture for 100 years, and we understand the vision and commitment it takes to remain successful as rural America evolves and changes,” said Todd Van Hoose, president and chief executive officer of the Farm Credit Council. “The Farm Credit 100 Fresh Perspectives honorees are inspiring examples of leaders who are creating a brighter, more vibrant future for rural America.”

Selected by a panel of experts on rural matters, including Farm Credit leaders and others from around the agriculture industry, honorees like Blacklin are among the best-of-the-best who are positively shaping what is next for rural communities and agriculture.

“I believe women have the ability to problem-solve key supply chain challenges and advance our local food and farming system. I hope the Women Working in the Meat Business



FRESH PERSPECTIVES



programming is one step in that process and I'm grateful to Farm Credit, to our funders at the USDA Southern Risk Management and Education Center, and to the larger CEFS team for making these opportunities possible," said Blacklin. NC Choices' Women Working in the Meat Business programming builds upon "Leadership and Cattle Handling for Female Producers", a series of hands-on farm training workshops for women cattle producers offered by CEFS' Amazing Grazing initiative.

Women Working in the Meat Business developed out of a need and desire for specialized, intensive training expressed by women producers, butchers, processors and chefs. Now entering its third year, Blacklin has been the catalyst, designer, and implementer of the program since its inception. In addition to coordinating the program content and logistics, Blacklin worked tirelessly to secure sponsorships that enabled thirty-two women from across the country to attend the last conference. She has also been instrumental in promoting this important story through the media, initiating widespread conversations about the growing role of women in local foods and sustainable agriculture.

Women Working in the Meat Business was featured on local and National Public Radio segments and in an article in *The New York Times* which identified the program as the nation's only retreat for women in the meat business. Workshop participants unanimously report greater understanding and improved confidence in pricing and profit, efficient carcass utilization, marketing, and creating value-added products. The next Women Working in the Meat Business conference will be held October 2-4, 2016.

For a complete list of the Farm Credit 100 Fresh Perspectives honorees, visit farmcredit100.com/top100.

About CEFS

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 and provide economic opportunities in North Carolina and beyond. For more information, please visit www.cefs.ncsu.edu.

About NC Choices

NC Choices is a CEFS initiative that advances local and niche meat supply chains in North Carolina by providing networking opportunities, educational programming and technical assistance for producers, meat processors, buyers, and food professionals. For more information please see www.ncchoices.com

About Farm Credit

Farm Credit supports rural communities and agriculture with reliable, consistent credit and financial services, today and tomorrow. Farm Credit has been fulfilling its mission of helping rural America grow and thrive for a century by providing farmers with the capital they need to make their businesses successful and by financing vital infrastructure and communication services. For more information about Farm Credit please visit www.farmcredit.com

