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The Center for Environmental Farming Systems Announces Recipients of Inaugural Graduate Student Fellowships

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Raleigh, NC: The Center for Environmental Farming Systems has announced the first recipients of its Graduate Student Fellowships. The CEFS NC State University Graduate Fellows Program was developed to provide financial support and recognition for the future leaders, researchers and contributors to sustainable agriculture and local food systems while they pursue academic research to further the field of study. The Fellowship offers a one-year, $5,000 stipend for Master's students and a two-year, $5,000-per-year stipend for Doctoral students. Stipend awards can be used at the student's discretion.

CEFS is one of the nation's most recognized centers for research, extension, and education in sustainable agriculture and community-based food systems. "We are very excited to launch our new graduate fellowship program, which was made possible by an endowment from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. These inspirational young people will certainly make their mark on agricultural sustainability and we are excited to support and promote their work through our new fellowship program," said CEFS Director Dr. Nancy Creamer.

The 2016 CEFS NC State University Graduate Fellows and their departments/research areas are:

- **Rachel Atwell – Ph.D. candidate, Crop Science: "**My graduate student research focuses on two major topics related to sustainable grain and fiber production in the Southeast region. The first research topic is using cover crops to provide sustainable production solutions for both organic and conventional producers. The second focus area is specialty crop production to diversify crop rotations and enhance profitability for grain producers. Cover crop use can provide an abundance of environmental and economic benefits to both organic and conventional producers. "

- **Angel Cruz – Ph.D. candidate, Crop Science:** "In El Salvador, high population density and lack of land have contributed to high food insecurity rates. Soil conservation and sustainable production techniques could potentially improve corn and bean yields and reduce household food security among poor rural families. However, little research has examined how to adapt sustainable practices to the needs of small farmers in El Salvador. In this research, I am working with small farmers to evaluate the potential for incorporating soil and water conservation practices to improve food security. The unique nature of this

research is that it has the potential to directly improve food security for the participating families and communities."

- **Johanna Elsensohn – Ph.D. student, Entomology:** "The global challenges of today require examination at multiple scales and from multiple perspectives to develop sustainable solutions. Food security is one such problem. While many confounding and interrelated factors contribute to this issue, the tremendous crop loss incurred from insect pest damage and over-reliance on insecticides are two prime targets for increasing sustainability on farm and in local and regional food systems. My research investigates the development of sustainable solutions for management of invasive species in agriculture at different focal levels, using *Drosophila suzukii* (or spotted wing Drosophila, SWD), an economically important global pest, as a study system."

- **Fallon Fowler – Ph.D. candidate, Entomology:** "The human population is rapidly growing and so too will the demand for meat, milk, and arable land. Therefore supporting cost-effective sustainability practices in an expanding agricultural sector will become increasingly relevant on a local, if not global, scale. My project seeks to understand which dung beetle groups and traits enhance efficient resource use of cattle dung by reducing dung-emitted greenhouse gases (GHGs) and increasing carbon and nitrogen mineralization (soil quality)."

- **Kaitlyn Sutton – Poole College of Management/Jenkins MBA Program** : "I am a supply chain research assistant for the UFOODS team and am working to provide greater insight as to how food moves onto university campuses. UFOODS stands for "University Food Systems" and is two year project designed to develop new market opportunities for farmers by creating supply chain links from farms to university campuses in North Carolina. The purpose of my research is to provide information to contribute to *How it Works* and *How to Engage* food system guides for six North Carolina universities and the surrounding small to mid-size farms that would benefit from engagement with these colleges."

- **David Suchoff – Ph.D. candidate, Horticultural Science** (and former CEFS Sustainable Agriculture Apprentice): "As our climate becomes increasingly erratic, nowhere are its effects more strongly felt than in food production systems. To maintain or improve yields sustainably, farmers must rely on improved resilience in their crops while reducing their resource usage. The use of grafted tomatoes is a sustainable and environmentally friendly alternative to hazardous soil fumigants. Moreover, the use of grafted plants is system- and scale-neutral - whether the grower is large or small, conventional or organic, grafted tomatoes can be used effectively."

For more information about the CEFS NC State University Graduate Fellows Program, please visit the CEFS website.

The Center for Environmental Farming Systems is a partnership of NC State University, NC Agricultural and Technical State University and the NC 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, visit www.cefs.ncsu.edu.