



## **Center for Environmental Farming Systems Receives Award from the Appalachian Regional Commission to Strengthen the Sustainable Local Food System in Western North Carolina with Regional Partners**

**Media Contact: Laura Lauffer, [lwlauffe@ncsu.edu](mailto:lwlauffe@ncsu.edu), 919-444-1478**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 3, 2019**

**Raleigh, NC:** Today, the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) was awarded \$1,100,000 from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to develop sustainable infrastructure for local and regional food systems in Western North Carolina. The project will be done in collaboration with several Western North Carolina partners and emphasizes technical assistance, market development, career ladders, value added opportunities, and other supply chain needs. Direct funding will be available to farms, value-added businesses and apprentices.

CEFS will convene partners around ten objectives in a seven-county area in Western North Carolina — including Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, and Swain Counties, and the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians — to accomplish the overall goal of developing a sustainable infrastructure for local and regional food systems.

The three regional community colleges – Tri-County Community College, Southwestern Community College and Haywood Community College – and Western Carolina University will expand value-added and farming training and business development support. Students from the seven-county region will also receive supply chain and production training through an innovative apprenticeship program.

The Southwestern Commission Council of Governments provided support and guidance during proposal development and will be a key part of the local advisory team. NC Cooperative Extension will play a major role in supporting the three-year project, providing matching funding and collaborating with project staff in training, supply-chain development and outreach. The Cherokee Preservation Foundation is also supporting the project. The Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project will launch the effort with a regional local food assessment.

“We are excited to begin this collaboration with our partners in Western North Carolina to grow the local food economy in the seven-county region. This project leverages CEFS’ supply chain and local food system development expertise and brings to bear the formidable strengths of our local

partners to the challenges facing our Appalachian communities,” said Nancy Creamer, Director of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems.

The award was one of three major awards from ARC, totaling \$3.36 million, to continue supporting economic diversification in the Region’s coal-impacted communities. The other investments focus on strengthening responses to the substance abuse crisis Kentucky and Ohio.

Funding for today’s awards was made via POWER (Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization), a congressionally-funded initiative that targets federal resources to help communities and regions that have been affected by job losses in coal mining, coal power plant operations, and coal-related supply chain industries due to the changing economics of America's energy production.

#### *About the Center for Environmental Farming Systems*

*The Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) 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](http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu).*

#### *About the Appalachian Regional Commission*

*The Appalachian Regional Commission is an economic development agency of the federal government and 13 state governments focusing on 420 counties across the Appalachian Region. ARC's mission is to innovate, partner, and invest to build community capacity and strengthen economic growth in Appalachia to help the Region achieve socioeconomic parity with the nation. For more information, visit <https://www.arc.gov/>*