



NCSU | NCA&TSU | NCDA&CS
www.cefs.ncsu.edu

For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Casey McKissick: casey@ncchoices.com

RALEIGH – March 20, 2012

NC Choices, an initiative of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS), has received a \$325,000 grant from the N.C. Rural Economic Development Center. The funds will be used over two years to provide small-scale, commercial meat processors across the state with assistance, including business development and technical training. The project is expected to help meat processors grow their businesses, create jobs, and advance the niche meat industry in the state.

Niche meats – pasture-raised, grass-fed, local, organic - are the fastest growing sector of the meat industry. The number of farmers in North Carolina who are raising and selling meats to local markets continues to rise and now includes over 550 registered farmer meat handlers. Meat producers and buyers both rely on independent, inspected meat processors to get their products to market.

“We are thrilled to have the opportunity to help independent processors appropriately scale their businesses. Demand for their services is exploding. Support from the Rural Center will allow us to work one-on-one with interested processors and help them grow sustainably,” says Casey McKissick, NC Choices Coordinator

NC Choices promotes sustainable food systems through the advancement of the local, niche and pasture-based meat supply chain in North Carolina with programming focused on meat production, processing and marketing. For more information see www.ncchoices.com and www.carolinameatconference.com.

The Center for Environmental Farming Systems develops and promotes food and farming systems that protect the environment, strengthen local communities and provide economic opportunities in North Carolina and beyond. For more information see www.cefs.ncsu.edu

The N.C. Rural Economic Development Center is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to develop sound economic strategies that improve the quality of life in rural North Carolina, with a special focus on individuals with low to moderate incomes and communities with limited resources. For more information see www.ncruralcenter.org