

# CEFS



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**Center for Environmental Farming Systems**  
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## Small Farm Unit

### Goal

CEFS' Small Farm Unit (SFU) brings together the resources of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, North Carolina State University, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and other community partners to deliver research and demonstration of sustainable production and marketing practices to diverse audiences.

The CEFS SFU works in partnership with a network of farmers, researchers, educators, students and other community members to develop and support a healthy, viable, community-based food system in Wayne County and beyond.



### Small Farm Unit Structure

The Small Farm Unit covers approximately 30 acres with a wide range of soil types, equipment, buildings and educational focal points. The function of the unit is to model a systems-based approach within a whole farm context. Embedded within the farm design are ongoing research projects in systems rotation and other production topics relevant to small farm stakeholders.

In a typical season, the Small Farm Unit produces up to 100 varieties of twenty different kinds of small fruits and vegetables. Farm produce is donated to local community organizations, food kitchens, and shelters. Farm transplants are grown in a greenhouse with solar-assisted heating, cutting propane use by two-thirds. The unit composts organic waste, which is incorporated into the farm's fertility management strategy.



The Small Farm Unit also includes a 15-acre certified organic area and a model GAP (Good Agricultural Practices)-certified postharvest handling area.

### Research Areas

The Small Farm Unit is home to various short- and long-term research projects including enterprise budget studies (field projects studying the economics of production), greenhouse and high tunnel monitoring (testing various season extension techniques), organic transplant production, organic systems work (utilizing various cover crops as part of whole season rotation), and entomology projects (studying agricultural pests' life cycles).



### Educational and Community Impacts

Each year, hundreds of people visit the Small Farm Unit to learn about sustainable food production. Farmers, extension agents, community members, and home growers learn about new production practices through tours, demonstrations, and workshops on topics including cover crops and rotations, beekeeping, blueberry production, farm equipment selection and use, greenhouse management, alternative enterprises, and more. Since 2006, CEFS' educational workshops have attracted more than 7,500 attendees to the SFU and other community locations.



The SFU provides “hands-on” learning opportunities for volunteers from Wayne County and surrounding areas, including co-op students from Wayne Community College’s Business and Sustainable Agriculture programs and the University of Mount Olive. The SFU also serves undergraduate and graduate students from NC State and N.C. A&T, and provides a living classroom for CEFS’ Farm Apprenticeship and Internship programs.

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