

Inter-institutional Network for Food and Agricultural Sustainability (INFAS)

Member Profile: Nancy Creamer, North Carolina State University

Background

Nancy Creamer is the WK Kellogg Chair of Sustainable Agriculture and Community Based Food Systems in the department of Horticultural Science and the director of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS). Established in 1994, 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' 2000-acre Field Research and Outreach Facility at Cherry Farm in Goldsboro, NC is one of the nation's premier research and demonstration sites for organic and sustainable production systems. Beyond the farm, CEFS' statewide Food System Initiatives include Supply Chain Development through NC Growing Together and NC Choices; Consumer Engagement through the NC 10% Campaign; Statewide Action Planning through Community Food Strategies; Advocating for Equity in the Food System through Food System Committee on Racial Equity (CORE); and Youth Engagement and Leadership Development through FoodCorps NC (co-hosted with NC-4H), Food Youth Initiative (FYI); and NC Farm to Early Childhood Education initiative. Work at CEFS promotes sustainable and equitable farming systems to protect ecosystems, strengthen communities, and improve the economy around food systems. The center is involved in farming and community development initiatives, several of which incorporate increasing racial equity within the food system¹.



Connection to INFAS

While Nancy's research areas are primarily horticulture and agriculture she strives to incorporate social justice and racial equity into all her projects. This type of integration of sustainable food systems and racial equity is precisely the work that INFAS set out to do when it committed to increasing racial equity within agriculture and the food system. The underlying goal of her recent Farm to Childcare project is to directly address food insecurity, social injustice and racial inequity within the food system at the level of child care facilities.



Another linkage between Nancy's work and INFAS is through her work as a board member with the Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research (FFAR)². This foundation, authorized by the 2014 U.S. Farm Bill, was founded to leverage public and private resources in support of U.S. agriculture. Nancy's involvement with this foundation exemplifies another vital component of the INFAS network: ensuring that advocates for sustainability (social, environmental, and economic) are included from the beginning during national discussions of agricultural priorities. Through her work, and the work of a number of additional INFAS participants, the Foundation is receiving a diversity of views on goals and priorities which will be used to inform future policies.

Value of INFAS

Nancy has been involved with INFAS since its early stages and has always found great value in the network. INFAS's commitment to racial equity parallels the work that she is doing locally, and the network proved to be a valuable asset for Nancy when she faced administrative challenges specifically to CEFS racial equity work. Nancy was able to leverage INFAS's commitments to racial equity and social

¹ <https://cefs.ncsu.edu/about-us/>

² <http://foundationfar.org/about-us/board-of-directors/>

justice in the food system to demonstrate the value of working with national agriculture and food systems networks, and the value of improving racial equity in University work. Nancy's connection with INFAS faculty located across the US helped her to legitimize and validate her racial equity work through CEFS. Nancy was able to share various sustainable agriculture initiatives across the country, their efforts to increase racial equity and, subsequently, to convince University administration of the value of this specific focus.

Nancy has found it valuable to participate in INFAS meetings and activities, including various opportunities to share information across institutions and regions. She feels that INFAS provides a network to learn from others about the projects that they are doing locally as well as the challenges and successes they face within their work. Additionally, Nancy believes that INFAS's commitment to racial equity has brought people together and has ensured that INFAS is advancing positively in its collaborative work, which increases the possibility of scaling up regional successes.

Local Work or Project

At CEFS, Nancy has worked on a number of projects including developing a legislated sustainable local food policy council, and a network of local food policy councils across North Carolina, conducting agricultural research and extension work, and working to improve racial equity in the food system. In her most recent project, Nancy and several colleagues received a grant from the WK Kellogg Foundation for the North Carolina Farm to Childcare project³. This activity seeks to increase children's access to food, education, and connections to local farm system. Additionally, the initiative will enable increased collaboration between organizations and across North Carolina, and connect children and families with local farmers, farms, and food. These connections will occur in different ways, ranging from introducing children to local food through snacks and meals, to meeting local farmers, to experiential learning through visiting farms, growing food, and cooking. The interactions will also foster a greater connection between the children and their community and increase parent involvement within the community and their surrounding food system. Finally, the program strives to increase financial sustainability for farmers, while increasing community support for local farmers.



The Farm to Childcare model is designed to ensure that young children get an early exposure to healthy and sustainable food systems and so that local food can also be brought into early childhood education settings⁴. The North Carolina Farm to Childcare is a state level initiative that seeks to serve as a model for the rest of the country for how to incorporate food education into early childhood education. This project also aims to increase areas of social justice and racial equity within the food system. The program focuses on how to bring fresh and affordable food to childcare across the state while honoring racial equity and farmers. The initiative plans to work with childcare workers in order to train them about the importance of sustainable and healthy food.

³ <https://localfood.ces.ncsu.edu/local-food-farm-preschool/>