The Center for Small Farms & Community Food Systems is an Extension and engagement center, connected to communities all over Oregon. Our name recognizes that sustainable agriculture and food production are integrally linked with the economies and health of communities. The Center uses education, research, and collaboration to achieve a vision of successful, environmentally regenerative farms, sustainable community food systems, and students trained to work in a dynamic, rapidly changing food and farming environment.

Launched in September of 2013, the Center organized around these strategic goals:

1. Expand the Small Farms Program with new faculty and programs aimed at the long-term viability of small farms and local food systems;
2. Tackle broader food systems challenges – especially at the interconnections of agriculture, food, and health – through interdisciplinary research, education, and outreach partnerships;
3. Provide OSU students with opportunities to develop high “Food IQ”; and
4. Build a nimble, entrepreneurial, and resilient Center that supports all of the above, for the long haul.

Here, we report on our progress and highlight selected accomplishments since 2013. The integrated nature of the Center’s work means that our extension, research, and collaborative relationships are woven together, influencing and benefiting each other.
**Goal 1:** Expand the Small Farms Program—new faculty and programs

**Results:** We expanded our reach and impact with new faculty, new funding, innovative education, and applied research on high priority topics.

The Center is a national leader in Extension education and engagement with small farmers and ranchers, other local and regional value chain businesses, and applied research with field and policy applications. The mission of the Small Farms Program is: *To provide Oregon’s small farms, ranches, and local food system stakeholders with the training, tools, and research they need for long-term financial and environmental sustainability.*

**Our Faculty**
- Since 2013, the core Small Farms Program has grown from 6 (4.15 FTE) positions serving 8 counties to 12 positions (8.81 FTE) serving 18 counties.
- On-campus Center staffing – 2 leadership positions – stays lean by design, so we focus our growth and connections out in counties and communities.
- Our faculty have secured over $2 million in extramural funding for cutting edge educational programs and applied research since 2013.
- Our team-based approach to programming is effective and an aspirational model for peer programs in other states.
- Our faculty have been recognized with individual and team awards from OSU and from state and national organizations.

Our vision and goals touch on and work towards all three of Oregon State University’s Strategic Mandates – Sustainable earth ecosystems, Human health & wellness, and Economic growth & social progress – at a local scale and in partnership with communities.

**Our Innovative Education & Applied Research Programs**
Farm viability and environmental sustainability are top priorities nationally. Our farm-level programs focus on whole farm management, sound financial and accounting systems, and ecologically based solutions to farm production challenges. Farmers are involved every step of the way in shaping how we do this work. We also address the broader food system, from market linkages and value chains to the role of these farms and food systems in rural economies to the public policy environment.

**Key programs and progress since 2013**

**EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT – in person, online, hands-on, participatory, and effective**
We are national leaders in new and beginning farmer and rancher education. We have always worked with farmers at all experience levels, but in 2014, we pivoted to focus not just on launching new farmers but keeping farmers farming in the face of challenging markets and a changing climate. Highlights include:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Flagship Educational Programs Expanded:</th>
<th>New Educational Programs:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growing Farms</td>
<td>Managerial Accounting curriculum and cohorts</td>
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<td>Growing Agripreneurs</td>
<td>Dry Farming Collaborative</td>
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<td>Women’s farming networks</td>
<td>Affordable Packhouse: Design and Demonstration</td>
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<td>Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network</td>
<td>Organic Extension Program</td>
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<td>OSU Small Farms Conference</td>
<td>Strategies for Efficient Grazing Management</td>
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<td>Ecological Strategies for Managing Insects</td>
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Key programs and progress since 2013 (cont’d)

**APPLIED RESEARCH – on-farm, on-station, participatory, timely, and high impact**

Since 2013, the Center has engaged in a wide variety of applied research regarding farm production, new farmers, local/regional markets and economies, and policy. Research highlights include:

**Production-focused research:**
- Dry Farming Grower Research Collaborative
- *Croptime* Degree Day Modeling for Vegetables
- Winter Vegetable Production

**Crucial issues for farmers beyond production:**
- Future of Oregon Farmland: Succession and Access
- How Small Farms Define Success
- Developmental Stages of Beginning Farmers
- Economic Impact of Local Food Producers

**Market linkages research:**
- *Use it or Lose It*: value chain research (USDA)
- Farmer Perspectives on Organic Transition in Oregon and nationally

**Policy research:**
- Five Year Assessment of Oregon’s Farm Direct Marketing Law

Our research reports and related outreach are used by farmers, food and farm advocates, researchers, and policymakers. They are also shared with peers and stakeholders through conference presentations, journal articles, research monographs, extension publications, and books.

**A few examples of farmer-focused education programs and applied research**

**Growing Farms: Successful Whole Farm Management**

*Growing Farms*, originally developed in 2007 as an in-person workshop series for beginning farmers, was transformed into a comprehensive online course in 2014.

- The course won the *Gold Award* from the Association of Communication Excellence in 2013, and the OSU Division of Extended Campus *Best Course Innovation Award* in 2018.
- China’s Central Agricultural Broadcasting and Television System (CABTS) has proposed a memorandum of understanding with OSU to bring the course there to “combine the national conditions of China to develop an online course suitable to Chinese family farm learners.”
- The course material has been transformed into a book that will be published by Storey Publishing in 2019.

**Dry Farm Demonstration and Grower Collaborative**

An increasingly unpredictable climate means farmers need new tools for sustainability. Dry farming, practiced with grains in the PNW for decades, also works for vegetables and fruits in some regions.

- Demonstration plots at three western Oregon research stations are providing data and hands-on education for farmers.
- The Grower Collaborative in Oregon and the western U.S. is replicating on-farm research, sharing methods, community plant breeding, and more.
- Participating farmers have increased knowledge about drought mitigation, are more able to produce crops in water shortages and with reduced labor, are more able to solve problems, and are more positive about their future.
A few examples of farmer-focused education programs and applied research (cont’d)

**Managerial Accounting and Cost Study Cohorts**

Highly diversified farms need better systems to gather cost of production information. We developed a three-part, online course for multi-crop vegetable farmers. The curriculum is integrated with hands-on, season-long Cost Study Cohorts at a variety of sites across Oregon. Participating farmers have increased their knowledge not only about their costs but where to invest their time and resources to their best advantage. These well-established, successful farmers see a direct link between this program and their long-term sustainability.

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**Organic Extension Program**

Oregon ranks 6th among U.S. states in the certified organic acreage and 4th in farmgate sales. In 2017, we launched a new initiative, the Organic Extension Program, responding to high demand from Oregon’s organic farmers, with a $100,000 commitment from Oregon Tilth, Inc. Our initial goal is to build the current part-time staff position into 1.0 FTE with contributions from OSU and the organic sector. Our longer-term goal is to have four or more positions around Oregon, focused on different crop and livestock systems.

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**Goal 2:** Tackle broader food systems challenges at the interconnections of agriculture, food, and health through interdisciplinary research, education, and outreach partnerships.

**Results:** We have built strong partnerships – inside and outside OSU – that have already resulted in valuable education and research projects and are a solid foundation for the work ahead.

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Around the U.S. and in Oregon, communities are rethinking and reshaping their food systems to address persistent challenges related to health, equity, the environment, and local economies. These systemic challenges need interdisciplinary teams that work in true partnership with communities. This work takes time. In our first five years, we have led and shared leadership for two collaborative networks that are connecting across expertise, geography, and experience to transform the food system.

**Oregon Community Food Systems Network (OCFN)**

OCFSN is a powerful network of 53 organizations – from statewide to local, representing 28 of Oregon’s 36 counties – united under a shared vision: *All Oregonians thrive with healthy affordable foods from an environmentally, economically resilient, and equitable regional food system*. Network members serve diverse communities around the state, including farmers and local food businesses, low income populations, rural communities, and communities of color.

Our Center is one of OCFSN’s two “backbone” organizations, with Oregon Food Bank. OCFSN values our research, education, and technical expertise, our commitment to building member and Network capacity, and our role as “gateway” to expertise and resources at OSU and beyond.
Oregon Community Food Systems Network (OCFSN) (cont’d)

Our involvement with OCFSN has already resulted in high impact projects done in close partnership with other OCFSN members:

- **The Future of Oregon Farmland** research project and report led to statewide listening sessions, new educational workshops for farmers and farm service professionals, additional publications, and support for the new Oregon Agricultural Heritage Program, created by the 2017 Oregon Legislature.

- **The Economic Impact of Local Food Producers** study has not only benefited the study region, Central Oregon, but has inspired at least three other regions (so far) to request similar studies with us.

- The **Oregon Community Food Systems Indicators**, originally developed for Meyer Memorial Trust’s CFS Initiative, are now a curated collection in OSU Rural Communities Explorer and are a crucial data source for OCFSN members. We believe this database is unique in the U.S.

With OCFSN, the Center is accomplishing something that OSU and the Extension Service have never done before: engaged and collaborated with over 50 independent statewide and community based organizations and participated in moving the organization toward common goals with potentially transformative results.
OSU Extension Community Food Systems Working Group

Systems-level engagement with outside partners becomes more powerful when we are connected inside OSU. Extension Director Scott Reed established a CFS Steering Committee in 2015 to coordinate and communicate Extension’s CFS work. Under our leadership, the 8-member committee has grown to an active, 22-member working group representing Small Farms, Family & Community Health, Master Gardener, 4-H, Community Economics, Sea Grant, and the Linus Pauling Institute. What began as information sharing and peer learning has fostered creative collaboration that integrates our varied food systems expertise and experience in communities. A few examples:

- Small Farms and FCH faculty combined FCH’s traditionally consumer-focused food preservation curriculum with Small Farms’ enterprise development training to create a new, high demand workshop series for farmers wanting to launch new, value-added food microenterprises. The course has been taught in 3 regions so far, and an online/classroom version is in development.
- 4-H, Small Farms, and Master Gardener faculty involved with farm to school and school garden programs conducted a statewide capacity assessment that led to Extension leadership investing in a statewide strategic plan for OSU in this nationally important initiative.
- FCH and Small Farms faculty involved with “Veggie Rx” produce prescription programs share best practices, while working toward a multi-site evaluation with community and statewide partners.
- A CPHHS-CAS team in our group won a 2-college mini-grant for integrated food systems research to investigate formal and informal emergency food sources for migrant farmworkers in Oregon.

Our presentations to peers are well attended and received, catalyzing new ideas, projects, and connections. We have also influenced how OSU Extension Leadership understands, values, and supports cross-cutting food systems work.

In short, our CFS collaborations have put OSU Extension on the map as a responsive and respected partner for Oregon’s community food systems movement, and also as an innovator among peer institutions nationally.

Goal 3: Provide OSU students with opportunities to develop high “Food IQ”

Results: Our graduate students are knowledgeable and skilled and on their way to making a difference.

Since 2013, we have provided unique opportunities for students to engage with food systems issues and practitioners, through their academic work and internships. We have worked with 14 graduate students, as lead professors or on committees, who have come from a range of disciplines (see box). Their research has focused on collaborative plant breeding, transition to organic agriculture, defining small farm success, local food system policy, small farm profitability, and land access challenges for beginning farmers and ranchers. These experiences have led to careers with non-profit organizations involved in farming and policy, university teaching and research, and private business.
Our operating model for the Center embraces its Extension and engagement mission, and high contact with communities. Therefore, our staffing on campus is lean with just two faculty positions that provide statewide coordination to our programs with small farms and community food systems, plus robust staffing in communities (at research stations and Extension offices) with 12 positions serving 18 counties. Resources in the form of extramural and other funding flow from campus to communities. We also have four unique positions shared by CAS and CPHHS, designed to integrate across the two colleges’ food systems expertise.

For long-term sustainability, we have pursued secure funding for faculty positions. Since 2013, we have more than doubled the number and FTE of faculty on secure funding. We now have 12 positions (8.85 FTE) on secure funding, up from 6 positions (4.15 FTE) in 2013. Three additional positions (1.2 FTE) are partly grant-funded. In addition to adding a crucial tenure position for the Center, most of the growth in secure funding has been through local Extension tax service districts. Their interest in supporting our positions demonstrates the value of the Small Farms & Community Food Systems work to Extension Regional Administrators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure Track and Professor of Practice Positions (fixed term)</th>
<th>9/2013</th>
<th>6/2018</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type and Source of Funds</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State supported tenure track</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State supported fixed term</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax service district</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total secure funding</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>12</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

We have institutionalized a team-based approach to programming that fosters innovation and is the aspiration of our peer programs. Our team has a culture of good ideas that attract extramural funding. Our model uses our securely funded faculty positions as a foundation to pursue extramural funds to enhance consistent and long-term programs and projects. Our campus based faculty lead large, statewide and national education and applied research projects funded through competitive grants, industry partnerships, and foundation and public support. Field based faculty lead regionally based education and applied research projects funded through competitive grants.

**Summary of Extramural Funding** (September 2013 through June 2018)

| On campus faculty (Stephenson & Gwin): | |
| National Competitive Grants | $1,371,682 |
| Foundation & Public Funding (NMPAN) | $ 249,017 |
| Partnership with Oregon Tilth, Inc. | $ 109,000 |
| Center endowment fund | $ 47,750 |
| Total campus extramural funding | $1,777,449 |

| Off campus faculty: | |
| Competitive (federal, state) | $1,019,745 |
| **Total of Totals** | **$2,797,194** |

These funds have supported our leading edge education programs such as our beginning farmer programs, and applied research on developmental stages of farmers, degree day modeling, and most recently, olive and winter vegetable production. Our nascent endowment includes 500 small donations from farmers whose endorsement will help to position the Center for larger donors in the future.
**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion**

A crucial part of resilience is relevance. As the College of Agricultural Sciences and Oregon State University work collectively to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion, we too are doing this work. The Center engages three audiences of farmers considered under-served by the USDA: Women Farmers, Limited Resource Farmers, and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers. Our 10 women faculty and program assistant and three men faculty strive to reflect and direct outreach to these groups. Some examples of our effort include:

- We support and facilitate four Women’s Farmer Networks in four regions of Oregon with over 400 women farmers participating. These networks increase connections to information, have enhanced a sense of community, and led to undertaking innovative approaches that support long-term success.
- To assure access for limited resource farmers, our program fees are affordable. For instance, our annual Small Farms Conference charges only $55 and is heavily underwritten by sponsors, and our basic online farm management course is priced significantly less than similar non-credit courses.
- We collaborate with three non-profit organizations serving Latinx farmers: Adelante Mujeres, Huerto de Familia, and Raices/The Next Door. We provide educational presentations on request, are arranging for Spanish translation of high-priority Extension publications, and devote staff and resources to organizing a Spanish language track at our annual Small Farms Conference co-designed with these groups. We offer a significantly reduced registration fee and make special accommodation for the registration process.
- We aim in the coming years to develop similar supportive partnerships with other organizations serving communities of color, for example, with MudBone Grown, an internship program for farmers of color based at the Oregon Food Bank.

**The Next Five Years**

The Center for Small Farms & Community Food Systems has accomplished a great deal in its first years. We were launched with a small investment and have proven the value many times over.

We have made significant progress on the goals we set nearly five years ago. The Small Farms Program has grown in number of faculty, and the breadth and recognition of its educational programs and applied research; the Center is leading OSU in community food system engagement; students are securing satisfying careers in farm and food system work; and the Center’s nimble and entrepreneurial approach positions it for extramural funding and endowment growth.

There is continued demand for the Center’s work from our constituents and partners. Together, we have laid crucial groundwork for future accomplishments and are looking forward to the next phase.