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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shaping the Future of Food Security and Agriculture

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In the context of the global food crisis, a growing consensus has appeared within academia, the health field, among farmers, with policy-makers, in business and industry, as well as with consumers, about the virtues of establishing alternative food systems. In planning to better serve local farms, ranches, and consumers, WSU Ferry County Extension is working both locally, regionally, and at the state level to encourage a multi-system, interagency approach to food systems research and development initiatives. “Food system connectivity and organization are key to improving both health and community resilience,” asserts Director Trevor Lane. “WSU is systematically building a network of support across the tri-county region to address community food needs by engaging the public in the planning process to develop strategic solutions that will advance the regional food system.”

Due to conflict, climate change, and other dynamics, over 65 million people have been displaced throughout the globe. By 2050, the global population will exceed 9.8 billion people and the demand for food will increase to more than 70% of what is currently being consumed today. It is going to require a significant amount of leadership, coordination, and collaborative action to address these current challenges and uncertainties in the world. As such, there will need to be substantial improvements to the global food system in order to feed such an extended amount of the population both nutritiously and sustainably. This means increasing the global food system’s capacity to not only provide healthy food options and other nourishing agricultural products for consumers, but we must also address the need to increase the livelihoods of our farmers and ranchers as well. This is a pivotal moment for the global food system. The current practices in food production, transportation, processing, and waste amounts are putting substantially unsustainable strains on regional environmental resources. As a result, collective calls-for-action and large-scale community organizing are on the rise worldwide. If we can align our visions across sectors and industries, therein lies an opportunity to develop new partnerships to reshape the global food system in order to spur economic growth for a healthy population and a sustainable planet.

The United Nations envisions a world free of hunger and poverty by 2030. On September 25th, 2015, 197 countries adopted a set of 17 goals to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda. Each goal has specific targets to be achieved over the next 12 years. As such, the first two goals are to end poverty in all its forms everywhere and to end hunger by achieving food security and improved nutrition while promoting sustainable agriculture. Although extreme poverty rates have decreased since the early 1990s, there is still a significant amount of the population living at or below national standards for poverty rates and continue to be at risk for hunger and malnutrition due to food deserts and other food insecurities. The UN believes that both the reduction in poverty rates and food insecurities can be reduced and achieved through new business models, proactive policy, and meaningful civic engagement.

The World Economic Development Forum is also ambitiously working alongside the UN and others to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Currently, the *System Initiative on Reshaping the Future of Food Security and Agriculture* engages over 600 organization worldwide to strengthen food systems and translate global-level commitments into action on the ground at the local level. This initiative is built

around *Strengthening Global Food Systems* and the *New Vision for Agriculture (NVA)*, which offers access to a worldwide network of over 150 transformative action leaders who are working to advance food security and food system insight, foster platform collaborations and environmental sustainability, and develop economic opportunities through a market-based and multi-stakeholder approach.

Now is the time for us to rethink how we grow, share, and consume our food. Sustainable development is simply the organizing principle for sustaining finite resources as an ongoing process that meets the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. For Ferry County, this means we can use these new development tools and key insights to provoke local community action to achieve healthy diets and sustainable agriculture within our area's food system. As a member of this global platform, we are simultaneously working on a regional scale on a systems-based approach to enhance and strengthen the global food system by facilitating localized cross-sector collaborations; and utilizing field-related, action-research techniques and best practices to mobilize local efforts to pursue additional development goals and advocate for social change. If this global call to action is done correctly, it is possible for us to provide enough nutritious food for everyone; generate above living-wage incomes; and support people-centered development in both rural and urban communities; while also ensuring sustainable landscapes that help to protect the environment and improve the lives of people everywhere.

In order to improve overall health, nutrition, and food related issues and needs in northeastern Washington, we need your help. Ferry County Extension is conducting a Food Systems Survey for the entire Okanogan Highlands. The responses collected will be used to identify specific gaps in our service programs and identify new development goals for service projects in our region. To participate, there are anonymous survey links on the WSU Ferry County Extension Website and its Facebook page. If you have trouble accessing it, please contact our office directly at (509) 775-5225 x1112, or sarah.reaveley@wsu.edu, and one can be emailed to you.

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