
FFAR Awards \$295,000 Grant to Strengthen Urban Agriculture Systems for Farmers and Communities

University of California, Berkeley Researchers Will Use Integrated, Collaborative Research to Promote Economic and Ecological Resilience for Urban Farms

BERKELEY, CA, Nov. 29, 2017 – The Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR), a nonprofit established in the 2014 Farm Bill with bipartisan congressional support, awarded a \$295,000 Seeding Solutions grant to the Berkeley Food Institute at the University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley) to improve the ecological resilience and economic viability of urban and peri-urban farming systems and improve urban food distribution systems to reduce waste and meet fresh produce needs of low-income consumers. The FFAR grant has been matched with funding from UC Berkeley and other private sources for a total investment of nearly \$600,000.

“The Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research is pleased to support this integrated approach to improving the economic and environmental strength of urban agriculture systems,” said Sally Rockey, Executive Director of the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research. “This project shows exciting potential to improve urban farmer livelihoods and nutrition in food insecure communities.”

The project team will work to improve the sustainability and resilience of urban farms by building health of soils, conserving water, and promoting beneficial insects. Researchers will also evaluate the effectiveness of existing urban and peri-urban food access and food distribution methods for meeting food needs of urban low-income, food insecure communities.

Policy recommendations and best practice outcomes will be developed in close collaboration with low-income and culturally diverse communities, community leaders, technology and marketing innovators, policy advocates, food producers, educators and extension specialists. The Berkeley Food Institute is providing coordination in this project and will work with the team to disseminate the results widely to decision makers, community advocates, and urban food producers and distributors.



Jennifer Sowerwine, Ph.D., Lead Principal Investigator and Assistant Cooperative Extension Specialist, UC Berkeley College of Natural Resources

Researchers on this project include:

- Jennifer Sowerwine, Ph.D., Lead Principal Investigator, Assistant Cooperative Extension Specialist, College of Natural Resources, UC Berkeley
- Céline Pallud, Ph.D., Co-PI, Associate Professor, College of Natural Resources, UC Berkeley
- Tim Bowles, Ph.D., Co-PI, Assistant Professor, College of Natural Resources, UC Berkeley
- Charisma Acey, Ph.D., Co-PI, Assistant Professor, College of Environmental Design, UC Berkeley
- Collaborators at several Bay-Area nonprofit organizations including Multinational Exchange for Sustainable Agriculture (MESA) and Planting Justice

“In order to ensure urban agriculture can grow and sustainably feed urban populations into the future, we need to better understand urban agriculture challenges from a policy and systems perspective,” said Sowerwine. “This Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research grant will support both research and a participatory process with the public to co-create solutions that can support ecological sustainability, economically viable livelihoods, and equitable access to fresh, healthy, and affordable foods in culturally acceptable ways.”

Research will take place in the San Francisco East Bay Region of Northern California and findings will be applicable to other urban communities throughout the United States.

This project is supported by FFAR through its Seeding Solutions grant program, which calls for bold, innovative, and potentially transformative research proposals in the Foundation’s seven Challenge Areas. This grant supports the Urban Food Systems Challenge Area, which aims to enhance our ability to feed urban populations through urban and peri-urban agriculture, augmenting the capabilities of our current food system.

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About the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research

The Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research, a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization established by bipartisan congressional support in the 2014 Farm Bill, builds unique partnerships to support innovative and actionable science addressing today’s food and agriculture challenges. FFAR leverages public and private resources to increase the scientific and technological research, innovation, and partnerships critical to enhancing sustainable production of nutritious food for a growing global population. The FFAR Board of Directors is chaired by Mississippi State University President Mark Keenum and includes ex officio representation from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and National Science Foundation.

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About the Berkeley Food Institute

The Berkeley Food Institute (BFI) is a multi-disciplinary research center at the University of California, Berkeley that seeks to transform food systems to expand access to healthy, affordable food and promote sustainable and equitable food production. We empower new leaders with the capacity to cultivate diverse, just, resilient, and healthy food systems.

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