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Rich Pirog Succeeds Mike Hamm as Director of Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems

EAST LANSING, Mich. – Rich Pirog will succeed Dr. Mike Hamm, Michigan State University C.S. Mott Professor of Sustainable Food Systems, as director of the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems (CRFS).

As director, Pirog will guide the Center as it continues to engage partners across Michigan, the United States and the world in developing regionally integrated sustainable food systems through applied research, education and outreach. Hamm will remain with CRFS as a senior fellow, but will dedicate more time to writing and developing international food systems collaborations while continuing his teaching and research as MSU faculty.

“I have every confidence that Rich will expand the Center’s influence through its research and engagement. He is both creative and diligent around the Center’s needs,” said Hamm. “The Center is blessed with a cadre of very skilled and passionate people – I am sure they will all expand their reach under Rich’s leadership. I look forward to remaining a part of the Center and watching Rich effectively lead and grow the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems.”

Under Hamm’s leadership, CRFS has made substantial contributions to state and national food systems work – including the creation and advancement of the [Michigan Good Food Charter](#); the establishment of the [MSU Student Organic Farm](#) and [Organic Farmer Training Program](#); the formation of [Michigan Farm to School](#), the [Michigan Farm to Institution Network](#), the [Michigan Food Hub Network](#) and the [Michigan Livestock Network](#); the launch of the [Michigan Good Food Fund](#); the implementation of several food systems infrastructure and planning initiatives and the production of local food [economic impact assessments](#).

“In creating and leading the MSU Center for Regional Food Systems, Mike has helped to make the state of Michigan a premier national example of collaborative innovations that advance and strengthen local and regional food systems,” said Doug Buhler, Interim Dean of Michigan State University College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. “I congratulate Mike on his accomplishments as founding director of CRFS, and look forward to his ongoing contributions to the field as he continues in his role as C.S. Mott Professor of Sustainable Agriculture.”

Hamm has served as CRFS director since the Center’s creation in 2011 after founding the C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Agriculture at MSU in 2003. Pirog has been CRFS senior associate director since 2011, and served as CRFS acting director from January 2015 to August 2015 while Hamm took study leave at the University of Oxford in Oxford, England.

“I have known Rich Pirog since his time with the Leopold Center and have always admired his foresight, leadership, and ability to collaborate with a broad range of partners,” said Oran B. Hesterman, president and CEO of Fair Food Network. “I look forward to our continued partnership under Rich’s leadership as CRFS advances its important work supporting local and sustainable food systems.”

While serving as CRFS senior associate director, Pirog led development of the Michigan Food Hub Network, provided leadership for the Center’s first strategic plan, spearheaded CRFS’s role as a core partner in the Michigan Good Food Fund and authored numerous resources, including a history of United States local food initiatives titled, [The Local Food Movement: Setting the Stage for Good Food](#).

Before joining CRFS, Pirog served as associate director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University. Pirog has more than 25 years of experience in sustainable food systems research and outreach. His research and collaborative work on food value chains, food hubs, economic impacts of local foods, food networks and communities of practice has been cited in magazines and media outlets across the globe, used by local food practitioners and are often referenced in books and college courses.

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The Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems (CRFS) engages the people of Michigan, the United States and the world in developing regionally integrated sustainable food systems. CRFS extends MSU’s pioneering legacy of applied research, education and outreach by catalyzing collaboration and fostering innovation among the diverse range of people, processes and places involved in regional food systems. Our vision is a thriving economy, equity and sustainability for Michigan, the country and the planet through food systems rooted in local regions and centered on Good Food: food that is healthy, green, fair and affordable. Learn more at <http://foodsystems.msu.edu> and connect on Twitter and Facebook: @MSUCRFS.