



March 31, 2020

Dear Small Farmers of North Carolina,

As dean of the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences (CAES) at N.C. A&T, I have the privilege of traveling with my colleagues and seeing first-hand the remarkable work you are doing to feed our state and our world.

At A&T, we've supported North Carolina agriculture – the state's largest economic sector – since we were established as an 1890 land-grant university. We offer inspiration to our students, farmers and others in the agriculture community through our research and education. Through Cooperative Extension, we work with farmers and communities to sustain their farms and their way of life through programs that teach best agricultural practices, environmental stewardship and business expertise.

We know that healthy rural communities depend on healthy small farms. We are hard at work to support the small-scale growers who represent 80% of our agriculture economy. Last year, we were awarded over \$21 million to research food and agricultural topics. Let me offer you a few examples.

- We continue to give small farmers the information they need to grow industrial hemp. We held our first hemp conference on campus last month and more than 250 farmers, Extension agents and industry partners actively participated.
- Our research also explores new uses for crops. For example, a new, highly competitive grant from the National Institutes of Health will help us examine whether components of the popular spice ginger can help asthma patients control their symptoms.
- Our researchers investigate ways to boost farm income through cash crops such as mushrooms and ginger, and the use of high tunnels to extend the growing season for strawberries and other produce.
- Of course, research needs to be shared. Our Extension programs offer training, advice and research-based information at locations across the state, and our University Farm continues to test and demonstrate new crops and farming practices.

All these efforts help small farmers by introducing them to new crops, new production methods, new markets and new practices. As we move forward in a world fraught with uncertainty, one thing remains certain: We at A&T and in the CAES will always stand with you, North Carolina's small farmers. You cultivate our land and put food on our tables. We are honored to work with you, to inspire and be inspired by you, and to help you create a sustainable future.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mohamed Ahmedna'.

Mohamed Ahmedna
Dean, College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences
North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University