

**MICHIGAN STATE**  
**UNIVERSITY**

July 15, 2015

STARS Steering Committee

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to indicate my strong support for the Innovation proposal of the Centre for Sustainable Food Systems at University of British Columbia Farm. This is a novel research and teaching platform that has global reach. As described in the application, thousands of students are engaged in action learning at the Centre, in close collaboration with an interdisciplinary group of scholars and community members from all facets of the food system. I am highly impressed with the creativity and commitment expressed through the programming at the Centre for Sustainable Food Systems. My perspective on this is informed by having over three decades of experience in sustainable agriculture research and education.

A unique aspect of the Centre is the approach, it is at the pioneering edge of sustainability science, involving change agency in working landscapes. This includes deep collaboration with indigenous people, direct market production and farmers, as well as exceptional hands-on educational efforts to raise awareness of sustainable approaches to produce food and manage land.



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In my career I have helped develop undergraduate sustainable agriculture curriculum, graduate education in community engagement and I direct a university research station long-term ecological site. All of these qualify me to comment on the integration and transdisciplinary of the research and educational programs at the UBC farm. The breadth of the field to fork approach is one of the exciting dimensions of this Centre, as is the depth of the community engagement. Innovations in sustainable food production require an understanding of the entire value chain, and the human dimensions as well as the agricultural and environmental context. This Centre is at the nexus of a living food system, and provides unique opportunities for engaged research and education in sustainable systems. Please let me know if I can provide any further information.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sieg Snapp".

**Dr. Sieg Snapp**  
Professor of Soils and Cropping System Ecology  
Associate Director, Center for Global Change and Earth Observations



## YALE SUSTAINABLE FOOD PROGRAM

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter at the request of Charlene Ponto, who is coordinating the University of British Columbia's STARS submission. This purpose of this letter is to affirm and to attest to the distinct and innovative qualities of UBC's Centre for Sustainable Food Systems, in consideration for its inclusion towards the granting of an Innovation Credit in STARS 2.0.

Over the past decade, campus farms and gardens have moved from the fringe to the status quo across North America. According to estimates from one of our PhD students researching the topic at Yale, there are now over 300 sustainability-oriented campus farms operating at non-agricultural colleges alone in the United States. Amidst this growth, UBC's Centre for Sustainable Food Systems stands in a class by itself. The CSFS-UBC Farm is viewed across the country as a leader and an innovator on several counts.

Foremost among these is that CSFS-UBC Farm takes its multi-disciplinary charge seriously, both in intent and in practice. I am not aware of any other on-campus teaching and research farms that have successfully convened and engaged students and faculty members from such a wide range of disciplines. When it comes to problems of sustainability, which tend to confound solutions that emerge from any single discipline, an approach like the CSFS-UBC Farm's is essential. Secondly, the Centre's remarkable integration between campus and community means that its work resonates deeply through the Greater Vancouver Region. Finally, the Centre's core metrics for academic engagement, simply in terms of the number of visits from students, faculty members, the number of credit courses that use the site, and the number of active projects that take place on the site far surpass any reasonably comparable initiative.

By my estimation, however, the most innovative element of the Centre's approach is that it deftly manages to transcend a metrics-based description, even while it unquestionably excels on such terms. By weaving social science and humanities perspectives into the approaches of the natural sciences, the Centre greatly enriches our understanding of the multiple dimensions of sustainability, particularly as they relate to fundamental questions of human values. It is through this layering of qualitative depth that the Centre's work helps in the ethical interpretation and application of metrics-based approaches to sustainability.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with further questions.

Sincerely,

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