

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 23, 2018**

*Public announcement to be held today during the monthly [SNF DIALOGUES](#) (17:30 Athens, 10:30AM EST) – at the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (Event will be live streamed in Greek and English and is available on demand in both video and podcast format on the SNF's [website](#)).*

## **Stavros Niarchos Foundation Provides Major Grant to Rutgers University to Promote and Stimulate Greece's Youth Employment, Agriculture, and Food Systems in Collaboration with The American Farm School and Agricultural University of Athens**

**Athens, Greece** – The [Stavros Niarchos Foundation](#) (SNF) has gifted a landmark grant of \$27,477,000 to support a major initiative that aims to help revitalize one of Greece's most critical sectors—agriculture—by training and developing a new generation of farmers and inspiring agriculture and food entrepreneurs.

The three-year project is spearheaded by [Rutgers University–New Brunswick](#) in partnership with the [Agricultural University of Athens](#) (AUA) and [American Farm School](#) (AFS). The interdisciplinary team from Rutgers, AUA, and AFS will strive to create job opportunities for youth in agriculture, which is Greece's second-largest employer; help to prepare young workers for jobs at food-related businesses and family farms; and help them start their own businesses.

The grant is part of SNF's *Recharging the Youth* €100 million euros initiative that unfolded at the height of Greece's socioeconomic crisis to help create meaningful employment opportunities for thousands of unemployed young people. “The starting point of this landmark initiative was our desire to help as many young people as possible with employment opportunities within Greece's agricultural and food sectors, that have unlimited growth potential.” said Andreas C. Dracopoulos, SNF Co-President. “But the grant is so much more than just an employment vehicle. It has the potential, we hope, to jump-start one of the country's most important and strategic assets with unlimited growth potential, agriculture. We are not seeking to reinvent the wheel through this major grant. We are just trying to help boost its chances to become the growth and development engine that it should be.”

“This is a strong collaboration to tackle this complex and critically important project,” said Rutgers–New Brunswick Chancellor Deba Dutta. “It illustrates how our research benefits society, as well as the range of our problem-solving and interdisciplinary skills at home and abroad.”

In 2015, SNF awarded Rutgers and its partners a \$2.1 million grant to begin planning a multiyear project. In this first phase, faculty and leadership from AUA and AFS with support from Rutgers conducted 20 studies on a range of sectors, such as alternative fruit crops, incubators, agro-tourism, Greek wine and spirits, technology, and aquaculture. The goal of this first phase was to determine the current state of the sectors, their growth potential, and their overall viability for employing Greek youth.

SNF then asked Rutgers and its Greek partners to prepare a proposal to implement the next phase of the project, called "[Recharging the Youth: New Agriculture for a New Generation.](#)" This new \$27,477,000 grant is the largest philanthropic foundation gift in Rutgers' history.

"This historic and benevolent grant brings to light the work that Rutgers researchers do to change lives and improve conditions across the globe," Rutgers President Robert Barchi said.

"Agriculture has always been an integral part of Greece's economy," said Eva Polyzogopoulou, SNF Assistant Director of Programs and Operations. "Nowadays it has also become a gateway for many young Greeks looking to return to the countryside and revive the work and the land of their ancestors. SNF's grant aims at providing existing and new farmers with the training and tools required in order to assist them in improving their cultivating methods and developing quality products. The talent is already there. What we need to do is to simply connect the dots and offer them the guidance needed in order to excel. It is undoubtedly a complex endeavor that requires the support of all actors in the specific field. Our collaboration with Rutgers University and two of the most renowned academic institutions in the country, the Agricultural University of Athens and the American Farm School, will bring in best practices and guarantee that agriculture in Greece is offered a bright future."

"As one of the founding partners in this initiative, our collective expertise in cutting edge agricultural research, business-oriented innovative solutions, economics and advisory services will help support the future needs of the agro-food system in Greece," said Deputy Rector and Professor Maria Kapsokefalou at AUA.

Panos Kanellis, President of AFS/Perrotis College, shared, "Through this collaboration we are committed to creating those new action-learning arenas that will bring Greece to the forefront of European innovation in the agro-food sector and create a fertile, sustainable environment for youth entrepreneurial engagement in the sector - we will make this project a game-changer for Greek youth and a significant development opportunity for rural communities."

Among other projects, the team plans to lay the groundwork for a Greek advisory and business development extension service in Greece that incorporates elements of the U.S. cooperative extension system of which Rutgers is a part.

"Researchers from the Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences and the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station bring expertise in a host of fields that are essential to this effort," said Robert M. Goodman, Executive Dean of agriculture and natural resources at Rutgers. "Our work in Greece draws upon our strengths in many areas."

This next phase of the project will focus on agricultural and food system sectors that are considered most promising and attractive for developing jobs for youth and that will set the stage for further growth and success—including an emphasis on entrepreneurship and new business development.

"By promoting agriculture as a dynamic and profitable industry, prioritizing workforce development training, and supporting innovative entrepreneurial initiatives in the agro-food industry, the proposed project will target sectors with great growth potential and successfully reduce youth unemployment," said Kenneth M. Karamichael, youth development expert and project leader at Rutgers.

About one-third of the grant will help develop a network of farm incubators and regional food innovation centers similar to the model followed at Rutgers. The incubators, which are key facilities for training programs, will be supplemented by other training locations, such as existing farms and businesses that could host internships, including those operated by the Greek university partners and the private sector.

“The overall conclusion that emerged from this process is that youth employment in the agro-food sectors is a critical component to the revitalization of the Greek economy, as well as a timely response to the nation’s youth unemployment crisis,” said Effie Lazaridou, Rutgers’ Greece-based managing director of the project.

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The [Stavros Niarchos Foundation](#) (SNF) is one of the world’s leading private international philanthropic organizations, making grants in the areas of arts and culture, education, health and sports, and social welfare. The SNF funds organizations and projects that are expected to achieve a broad, lasting, and positive impact for society at large; that focus on vulnerable groups, such as children and the elderly; and that exhibit strong leadership and sound management. The SNF also seeks to actively support projects that facilitate the formation of public-private partnerships as an effective means for serving public welfare.

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[Rutgers University–New Brunswick](#) is the flagship location of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, founded more than 250 years ago. Ranked among the world’s top 60 universities, Rutgers–New Brunswick is a leading public research institution and a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities. It is home to internationally acclaimed faculty and has 12 degree-granting schools and a Division I Athletics program. It is the Big Ten Conference’s most diverse university. Through its community of teachers, scholars, artists, scientists, and healers, Rutgers is equipped as never before to transform lives. The [Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences](#) pursues excellence in research, teaching, and outreach in areas of study that address the biological spectrum from organisms to ecosystems. Students also have access to a robust program of applied research and outreach hosted by the [Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station’s](#) laboratories, farms, business incubators, and marine stations throughout the state.

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The [Agricultural University of Athens](#) is the third oldest University in Greece. It was established in 1920, with the vision to co-create and support the development of the agro-food sector in Greece. Today, AUA’s vision is to achieve educational and research excellence in order to occupy a dynamic position in the international academic environment and to respond to the productive and development needs of the Greek economy and society. AUA offers high-level undergraduate and graduate education and pursues research in the agricultural sciences, addressing a wide range of basic and emerging issues in crop and animal sciences, aquaculture, biotechnology, agricultural engineering, resource management, food science and nutrition, environmental ecology, and agricultural economics. In continuous contact with stakeholders, the AUA academic community provides solutions to problems that arise within the agro-food sector.

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The [American Farm School](#), of Thessaloniki, Greece, is an independent, nonprofit, educational institution founded in 1904 to serve the needs of Greece and the surrounding Balkan areas. Today, AFS and the Perrotis College of Agriculture, Environment and Life Sciences cover the whole agro-food value chain with programs that range from secondary education to postgraduate studies. The school has a strong tradition in Adult Education and Extension Services. Large projects that require

cross-departmental mobilization of resources are designed and implement by the Strategic Project Management Office. The school's vertically integrated Educational Farm and its Center for Agricultural Innovation & Entrepreneurship, as well as its positioning membership in a national network of collaborating institutions, make AFS an "Innovation Facilitator" that specializes in bringing cutting-edge scientific knowhow to real economy stakeholders.

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**Broadcast interviews:** Rutgers University–New Brunswick has broadcast-quality TV and radio studios available for remote live or taped interviews with Rutgers experts. For more information, contact Neal Buccino [neal.buccino@echo.rutgers.edu](mailto:neal.buccino@echo.rutgers.edu)

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