WASHINGTON, DC—July 19, for Immediate Release – Research on the role of forest buffers in reducing crop gene flow will be the subject of National C-FAR’s research seminar on Friday, July 22, at noon in 1300 Longworth House Office Building. The presenters are Susan Stein, Director, National Agroforestry Center, U.S. Forest Service, and Dr. Carol Auer, a plant scientist at the University of Connecticut.

“Dr. Auer’s research sheds light on yet another potential contribution of agroforestry – the intentional integration of trees and agriculture – to American agriculture, in addition to soil conservation, water quality enhancement and economic diversification,” says Stein.

“Our research demonstrates that forest buffers are effective tools for reducing crop gene flow,” states Auer.

“This presentation provides an excellent example of the value of federally funded food and agricultural research, extension, and education in producing the scientific outcomes and outreach needed to meet 21st century challenges and opportunities,” says Andy LaVigne, President of the National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research (National C-FAR).

Highlights: Crop gene flow is the movement of genes from one plant population to another. This natural process was not much of an issue until genetically engineered (GE) crops were adopted in the U.S. and transgene flow led to challenges for crop exports, seed purity, and biocontainment. Today, markets and consumers are looking for coexistence between conventional, GE, and organic crops and food systems. Meeting these demands can be accomplished, in part, through research and policies supporting adaptable tools that can mitigate gene flow for a wide variety of crops. The lab group of Dr. Carol Auer has been studying crop gene flow in turfgrass species and biofuels crops. They recently demonstrated the ability of a narrow forest windbreak to greatly decrease switchgrass pollen dispersal in an agricultural landscape. Experiments showed that the forest windbreak decreased downwind pollen concentrations by as much as 20,000 fold compared to a control field which showed about a 77 fold decrease due to distance alone. Thus, windbreaks might be able to block pollen drift or reduce adventitious presence below accepted thresholds. This presentation will include an introduction to crop gene flow and coexistence, a review of agroforestry and its benefits, a description of current research results, and a discussion of future directions. Research support was obtained from Biotechnology Risk Assessment Grant awards from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

The seminar is open to the public and the media [NOTE-Seminar rescheduled from May 13].

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The National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research (National C-FAR) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, consensus-based, and customer-led coalition that brings food, agriculture, nutrition, conservation, and natural resource stakeholders together with the food and agriculture research and Extension community, serving as a forum and a unified voice in support of sustaining and increasing public investment at the national level in food and agricultural research, Extension, and education. National C-FAR’s Hill Seminar Series, now in its tenth year, regularly presents leading-edge researchers working to provide answers to pressing issues confronting the public and Congress. The Hill Seminar Series helps demonstrate the value of public investment in food and agricultural research—investment that returns 45 percent per year on average, and $20 in economic benefit from every $1 investment in food and ag research.

Go to http://www.ncfar.org/Hill_Seminar_Series.asp for more information about the seminar series and past topics. Interviews with National C-FAR President Andy LaVigne are available by request. For additional information, go to www.ncfar.org; or contact Tom Van Arsdall, Executive Director, at tom@vanarsdall.com or (703) 509-4746.