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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

National Climate Assessment Released; Implications for Agriculture Studied in Michigan

MICHIGAN...January 15, 2013. The National Climate Assessment, released in draft form on Friday, predicts “profound effects” on agriculture and rural economies. At Michigan State University and 9 other universities in the Midwest, scientists are working to create a suite of farm management practices aimed at building resiliency into corn-based cropping systems in response to the effects of a changing climate, such as more frequent and prolonged periods of drought. Safeguarding crop production’s most basic components: fertile soil and fresh water; maintaining crop yields; reducing atmospheric greenhouse gases that are responsible for climate change; and training a new generation of scientists are included in the goals of the USDA-funded Climate and Corn-based Cropping Systems Coordinated Agricultural Project (CSCAP).

Sasha Kravchenko, an associate professor at Michigan State University, is one of 140 scientists on the CSCAP team. At MSU, she and other researchers are conducting studies to explain the mechanisms by which cover crops increase carbon sequestration, to what extent that affects greenhouse gas emissions, and how cover crops influence corn yields and soil nitrates. Kravchenko is particularly interested in how variable field topography affects various benefits of using cover crops.

“I want to know what will happen across diverse terrains so the results of our science will be more relevant for real life farmers who have to deal with variable terrains in their fields,” said Kravchenko.

Thanks to USDA funding from the CSCAP, Kravchenko established at MSU two new experimental sites scaling across land with diverse topography. She is looking forward to working with other scientists in the project who are collecting the same kind of data on different fields in the Midwest and team scientists who are experts in utilizing field data to create predictive models.

Some experts on the CSCAP team were contributing authors for the 2013 National Climate Assessment. Referring to the National Climate Assessment Kravchenko said, “I was hoping we were in better shape, that things were not as bad as they are. But that makes me feel that our work is more important than ever.”

Learn more about the team's research at <http://www.sustainablecorn.org/>.

The National Climate Assessment can be downloaded at <http://ncadac.globalchange.gov/>

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The Climate and Corn-based Cropping System Coordinated Agricultural Project (CSCAP) is a transdisciplinary team creating new science and educational opportunities. The team seeks to identify productive corn-based cropping systems that have a light environmental footprint under changing climate conditions, that farmers will adopt and policy makers will support, with the next generation of scientists trained to further the science. The project spans 9 Corn Belt states and is supported by a grant from the US Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture. For more information about CSCAP, see <http://www.sustainablecorn.org>.

Sasha Kravchenko, PhD is available for interviews...

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