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N.C. State names director for Kannapolis institute

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Mary Ann Lila, Natural Resources and Environmental Studies, NRES, College of Agricultural Consumer and Environmental Sciences, ACES

By Emily Ford

KANNAPOLIS -- N.C. State University has named an internationally known scientist from the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign to lead research efforts in Kannapolis.

Dr. Mary Ann Lila will direct the N.C. State Fruit and Vegetable Science Institute at the N.C. Research Campus. The institute aims to develop "super" fruits and vegetables that pack an extra nutritional punch.

Lila has 24 years of research experience with plant chemistry and animal nutritional studies.

The mission of the Research Campus and N.C. State's institute is "completely in line with my background and philosophy and research," she said in a press release.

David H. Murdock, a California billionaire who owns Dole Food Co., is developing the Research Campus in downtown Kannapolis to focus on health and nutrition. Six schools in the University of North Carolina System, plus Duke University, have a presence on the campus.

Lila said N.C. State's institute will "produce fruits and vegetables that have properties beyond what we have normally bred plants for. We'll be looking at plants from a whole different perspective." Lila studies plants found in some of the most inhospitable parts of the world. She has large ongoing research projects in Egypt, Central Asia, Oceania, Mexico and sub-Saharan Africa.

Currently the director of the ACES Global Connect program at the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, Lila will begin work in Kannapolis Aug. 1.

Contact Emily Ford at eford@salisburypost.com.

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