



Ohio Smart Agriculture: Solutions from the Land

An Upper Midwest Multi-Functional/Climate-Smart Agriculture Initiative

Project Synopsis:

The Upper Midwest is faced with a growing demand for affordable and nutritious food, feed, fiber and energy, clean water in healthy watersheds, thriving wildlife habitats and other ecosystem services. However, this demand must be met with dwindling land resources and increasingly unpredictable weather. We need a transition to integrated landscape management of a resilient, climate-smart and multifunctional agriculture for our farms, communities and cities to continue to grow and prosper. Climate related disruptions to agricultural production in the region are projected to increase further over the next 25 years leading to declines in crop and livestock production due to pollination problems, weeds, diseases, insect pests, extreme weather and other naturally induced stresses. Furthermore, one in six Ohio families that are already experiencing low food security, as well as the even more troubling statistic, of one in four children that are not sure where their next meal will come from, is another challenge that must be overcome.

Through this initiative, which will link with and build upon the multi-stakeholder partnership's that have been developing in the region, a diverse coalition of agricultural, environmental and food security leaders will construct a strategy and action plan for making Ohio agriculture more sustainable and resilient to the challenges before us. Based on a holistic and integrated approach to land management, the project leaders will identify, build and incubate value chains that support the sustainable production of food, feed, fiber, energy and ecosystem services, and the delivery of these goods and services up the food chain all the way to the most urban consumers.

While previous initiatives have largely been planning exercises designed to “increase production of farms”, our focus goes beyond this important dimension to include “getting food on tables”. In embracing the vision of Ohio agriculture helping to “feed the world”, we recognize that this starts with feeding our neighbors in Ohio.

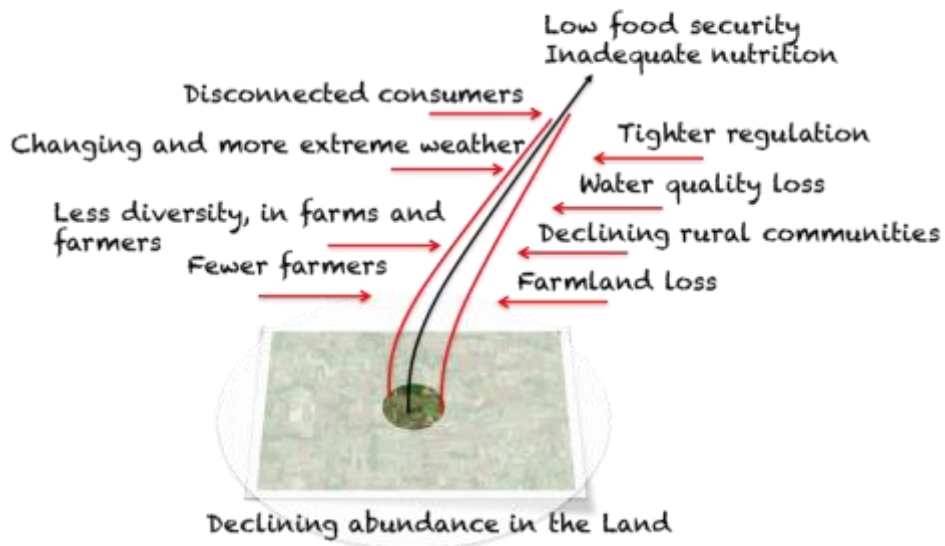
Vision:

Facing the specter of a rapidly changing and more unpredictable global environment, Ohio agriculture will adjust to these conditions and maintain a style of farming and a food system that benefits producers, consumers, the public, and the planet. Our vision is to boost profitability for farmers at all scales and in all settings (from rural to urban) while restoring environmental resilience, building strong communities, engaging consumers and ensuring public health and access to nutritious food.

Problem Statement:

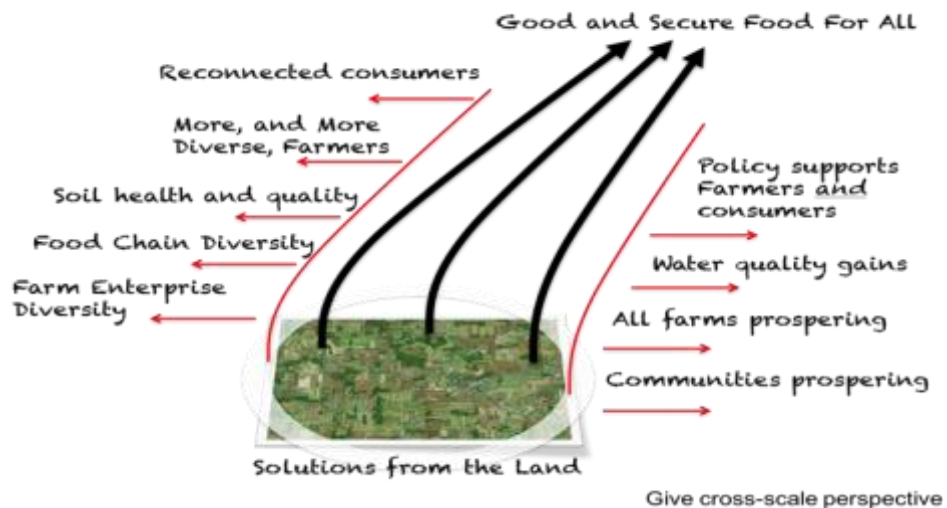
Increasingly complex markets, low commodity prices and more variable and unpredictable weather are contributing to crop losses and degraded environmental conditions, including harmful algal blooms, that have combined to create problems and elevate risks for Ohio agriculture. At the same time, household food insecurity in Ohio, a state that should be a land of plenty, ranks well above the national average (16.1% of the population of Ohio including one in four children suffer from food insecurity). Clearly the commodities we are so good at producing, are not relieving that insecurity, nor are they keeping all farms and farmers on the land.

Who can keep farming on this landscape?



Solutions from the Land

Who will join in the transition to this landscape?



¹ Source: 2015 ERS report, [Household Food Security in the United States in 2015](#).

Goals:

The goal of the initiative is to help Ohio and Upper Midwest farmers:

- Sustainably intensify productivity and profitability;
- Adapt to changing weather patterns and climatic conditions;
- Improve the efficiency – both economic and ecological – of farm operations;
- Increase the diversity of products produced and the diversity of producers; and,
- Extend that diversity across the region’s food value chain to transition agricultural landscapes into sustainable production platforms for producing nutrient rich food, improving public health, creating new economic opportunities for those who live below the poverty level, and by doing so improving the lives of vulnerable children.

Mission of Steering Committee:

The Ohio Smart Agriculture initiative will identify and implement pragmatic, proven, and innovative solutions to challenges confronting Ohio farmers in the face of environmental uncertainty and in support of a food system that benefits producers, the public, and the planet.

Deliverables:

1. A strategy and action plan for transforming Ohio’s agricultural landscapes into resilient/climate-smart and multi-functional production platforms that improve food and child nutrition security, public health, and environmental quality and mitigate the impacts of increasingly unpredictable and more extreme weather;
2. A multi-stakeholder coalition composed of agricultural, conservation, environmental, academic, rural development, government, public health, and tribal leaders to lead and begin multifunctional/climate-smart agriculture implementation work in Ohio; and
3. A donor circle to finance the implementation of the Ohio Smart Agriculture action plan.