



Ohio
Smart
Agriculture
SOLUTIONS FROM THE LAND

**DRAFT OSA Solution Pathways
Recommendations and Launching Pad Initiatives
June 22, 2018**

Key:

Launching Pad Initiatives identified by the Steering Committee or the Work Groups are highlighted in pink.

1. Establish agriculture and the food system as a public policy priority.

This pathway seeks to create and support a platform where farm, forest, food, nutrition and health partners come together to develop and implement strategies to meet Ohio's growing demand for locally grown, affordable and nutritious food, feed, fiber and energy, and provide high value ecosystem services from agricultural landscapes.

a. Build and energize a Farm, Food and Health Partners Alliance

- i. Create an ongoing interface between different aspects of the food and public health system to act as a platform for education, consumer/producer outreach and solution generation.
- ii. Align Ohio agriculture efforts with other food, nutrition and health, and economic development partners to advocate for public policy priorities surrounding food insecurity.
 1. Provide leadership in helping to establish a state-wide food strategy that addresses food insecurity from producer to consumer. Ex. Update/revive the [2009 state-funded Ohio Food Policy Advisory Council plan](#) and integrate it with the Ohio Food Policy Network Report - Mapping the Vision for the Future of Ohio's Food System.
 2. Maximize use and increase public commitment to programs that directly connect Ohio production to low-income families (e.g., Produce Perks, prescription programs for local fruit and vegetables, Community Food Initiatives' Donation Station program, WIC coupons at farmers markets).
 3. Support livable wages in the food system, including farmers, farm labor, and other workers in the food industry.
 4. Invest in economic development (market and infrastructure initiatives) that will improve access for underserved Ohioans.
 5. Strengthen communication and connection between organizations/initiatives state-wide (public-private partnerships through a state-wide food policy council). Ex. Ohio Food Policy Network.
 6. Explore options to address food insecure people who do not qualify for existing state and Federal programs.
- iii. Explore which model would be best for this – i.e. nonprofit, subscription model, network of related organizations, etc. The [Chesapeake Foodshed Network](#) is a possible model.

b. Create a multi-stakeholder Task Force to explore connecting agriculture, food and health within a single state agency.

- i. Cultivate relationships with representatives and policy advocates, with this overarching goal in mind, throughout gubernatorial election cycle and next 5-10 years of policy outreach.

c. Call on policy makers and business leaders to adopt a 21st century ecosystem services model for Ohio agriculture

- i. Encourage less government-centric paths; adopt policies that promote public-private partnerships and optimize public and private investments.
- ii. Reduce or eliminate overlapping and contradictory regulations.
- iii. Develop policy frameworks that support new markets for ecosystem services and create economic incentives for sustainable management of natural resources.
- iv. Reward stewardship of ecosystem services.
- v. Embrace landscape scale planning and integrated strategies that deliver multiple solutions from the land; shun silo management approaches.
- vi. Eliminate crop insurance penalties for growing small gains and cover crops.
- vii. Develop funding mechanisms and programs that improve soil health and water quality.
- viii. Design supply chain programs to reward those who produce ecosystems services.
- ix. Set benchmark goals and measure progress.

d. Support Ohio farmers' impact on food insecurity

- i. Connect Ohio farmers to existing programs:
 1. Increase gleaning programs.
 2. Scale and grow agriculture clearance programs.
- ii. Leverage/enhance the effectiveness of institutions (e.g., schools, churches and hospitals) in underserved areas purchasing Ohio farm products.

e. Initiate Education, Outreach and Advocacy

- i. Establish a speakers' bureau of farm leaders that can talk to the agricultural community about food insecurity and its connection with Ohio agriculture.
- ii. Advocate for successful existing nutrition education programs.
- iii. Support agri-education:
 1. Communicate value of agriculture, educating consumer on benefits, positive environmental changes, eco-system services, etc.
- iv. Establish community and school gardens.
- v. Teach kids how to grow and prepare nutritious food.
- vi. Make healthy diets a pathway for reducing health care costs.

f. Improve access to affordable and nutritious food

- i. Aggregate food for distribution at food hubs.
- ii. Promote incentive programs such as double-up bucks.

2. *Encourage 21st century infrastructure and markets that support development and processing of profitable, diverse products from the farming landscape.*

This pathway seeks to build resources in Ohio agriculture by supporting market access, as well as built and financial capital, in the form of public and private sector investment and infrastructure for 21st century agriculture.

- a. **Increase specialty and small-scale meat processing infrastructure**
 - i. Investigate mobile processing options for meat and fish.
 - ii. Explore collaborative cold storage options.
 - iii. Encourage models that allow regulatory flexibility without compromising food safety.
- b. **Develop processing infrastructure for fresh produce to meet increasing institutional demand**
 - i. Support access to institutional buyers for all scales of fruit and vegetable production.
- c. **Examine, evaluate and promote strategies for integrating commodity production with diversified, identity preserved or value-added production in ways that enhance ecosystem services, farm profitability, and public support for Ohio agriculture**
- d. **International trade placeholder (pending commodity group recommendations)**
- e. **Infrastructure placeholder (pending commodity group recommendations)**
- f. **Use landscape model for infrastructure to develop local farmer-to-farmer information sharing, broadband internet/market access, and value-added processing supply chains**
- g. **Invest in broadband infrastructure to allow farmers utilize precision agriculture technologies and participate in 21st century marketing**
- h. **Adopt value added processing as a regional economic development strategy**

3. *Encourage production of fresh, locally produced fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy eggs and other edible food.*

This pathway seeks to encourage food production on Ohio farms, increasing the capacity for Ohio to feed Ohio.

- a. **Harmonize and streamline local school board procurement policies to maximize opportunities to source locally (see also 2 a. and 2 b.)**
- b. **Create “Ohio feeding Ohio” program**
- c. **Research/develop emerging markets, guided primarily by consumer demand and preference**
- d. **Evaluate consumer needs/preferences of Ohioans, communicate value of agriculture**
 - i. Focus efforts with these preferences in mind, with the understanding that the consumer is the ultimate authority and guarantor of success.
 - ii. Strive to communicate value of Ohio agriculture to consumers, educating them on developments in environmental stewardship, humane animal treatment, ecosystem services, and societal value.
- e. **Establish a network of supply chain options for meat, fruit, vegetables, and food-grade grain (cold storage, processing, transportation, distribution)**
 - i. Explore option to utilize existing Ohio supply chains.

4. *Develop an agricultural workforce and workforce support system, including livable wages and healthcare.*

This pathway seeks to build resources in Ohio agriculture by supporting the creation of human capital in the form of workforce development and community resources for rapidly changing rural and urban agriculture.

a. Create a roadmap to invest in intentional agricultural workforce development

- i. Research and delineate skills required for 21st century farming.
- ii. Create programs that remove barriers and enhance aspiring farmers' access to land.
- iii. Train farm owners and operators on ways to produce and market food, feed, fiber and ecosystem services.
 1. Develop process for training agricultural professionals, starting at school-age (4H, FFA, etc.):
 - a. Offer Vo-Ag in all high schools.
 2. Remove barriers to young adults learning their craft and exploring their agricultural options; recognize value of youth working alongside experienced adults in influencing future career decisions.
 3. Create avenues for young adults to advance and pursue their desired agricultural professions; utilize on-the-job training, technical school curriculums, and bachelor/master degree programs.
 4. Advocate for, and remove regulatory barriers from, innovative development opportunities (internships, work programs, semester sabbaticals, etc.)
 5. Collaborate with education and trade groups to train/empower non-traditional growers/workers (second career, veterans, urban farmers, etc.)
 6. Ensure farm families have access to affordable health care and livable wages.
 7. Offer loan forgiveness in return for becoming an ag educator or farm mentor.

5. *Protect/enhance landscapes and create an ecosystem services pathway/model through research and integration of farms, small plots, urban and forestry elements.*

This pathway seeks to build resources in Ohio agriculture by supporting the creation of natural capital, in the form of an ecosystem service model for protecting and enhancing Ohio farmland, water and air across all Ohio landscapes.

a. Pursue research and actionable standards for zoning policies, water resource protection, and traceability of both food and ecosystem services from rural farms, small plots/micro farms, urban farms and forests to create a landscape model that will value the full range of goods and services that can be delivered from the land

b. Transform and modernize knowledge sharing platforms and information networks

- i. Farmer to farmer learning; apprenticeship programs.
- ii. Align and integrate technical assistance delivery systems (public and private sector).
- iii. Document options that transitioning producers could try on a small scale.

c. Fund the following research priorities

- i. Pathways for diversifying production to improve economic and environmental health;
- ii. Climate smart production systems that improve sustainability, enhance resilience and deliver ecosystem services;
- iii. Nutrient management systems that enhance productivity and improve water quality;
- iv. Better ways to communicate and share knowledge of ecosystem service benefits;
- v. Urban farming as a pathway to improve nutrition and public health; and
- vi. Platforms for knowledge exchange between agricultural and research communities.

d. Develop a climate smart action plan for Ohio agriculture to improve resiliency and deliver products and services that mitigate climate change impacts

- i. Conduct a climate opportunity and vulnerability assessment.
- ii. Create a “futuring” document for Ohio that:
 - a. Identifies vulnerabilities and opportunities that increasingly erratic weather extremes and a changing climate present.
 - b. Recommends an array of solutions to enable Ohio agriculture become climate smart (sustainably increase production, adapt/improve resiliency and mitigate impacts.)
- iii. Design a process for:
 - a. Establishing a brand and certify “Ohio Smart Ag” farms.
 - b. Engaging wider communities of interest in climate smart agriculture conversations.

e. Promote agroforestry as a valuable land management system

- i. Strengthen forest health programs.
- ii. Capitalize on economic value of wood.

f. Protect productive farmland from conversion

- i. Facilitate access to land, reduce barriers for those who desire to farm.
- ii. Strengthen and fund farmland preservation programs.
- iii. Educate landowners on pathways to improve sustainability and resilience.
- iv. Plan across an ecosystem region at a policy level:
 - 1. Create a network of planners and consultants (connect city, county and state planners.)

Respectfully submitted by the Ohio Smart Agriculture Steering Committee.
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