

****This is the corrected version of the August newsletter, including biography for this month's Leader Spotlight, Brian Snyder.*



OHIO SMART AGRICULTURE

SOLUTIONS FROM THE LAND

PROGRESS IN THE PROCESS

Ohio Smart Agriculture: Solutions from the Land leaders are expanding their reach to connect with the general public and identified communities of interest. During the month of August, OSA leaders will be conducting courtesy briefings and listening sessions with commodity producers; local and regional market producers; forestry, conservation and environmental partners; representatives of the immigrant and refugee communities and nutrition and health service providers.

The objective for these sessions is to gain stakeholder input and reaction to OSA;SfL's draft strategy and action plan to make Ohio agriculture more sustainable, resilient and relevant in addressing 21st century challenges. Through these and other engagements we hope to build partnerships with a variety of people and organizations with shared interests in shaping the future of Ohio.

These conversations will continue into September, culminating with a presentation at the **Farm Science Review** in London, Ohio. Join us Wednesday, September 19th from 10:00am-11:00am at the Tobin Building #1011.

You don't have to be at one of these events to provide input and help shape our recommendations. We invite you to share your input on our current solution pathways on [this document](#).

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ALIGNED INNOVATION:

VanTilburg Farms makes the most of the poop it's been dealt

Across Ohio and especially in the western Lake Erie drainage basin, improving water quality is a big priority. One family farm is taking on this challenge and creating their own solution. [VanTilburg Farms](#) of Celina, Ohio began in the early 1900s, when the great-grandfather of the current owners worked for room and board on a farm while saving up enough to purchase his own. VanTilburg Farms has evolved over the years, setting forth on many successful endeavors. The three brothers Matt, Kyle and Luke co-own 4200 acres of non-GMO row crops, a poultry fertilizer business, an excavation business and an ag retail business. One of their newest ventures showcases their commitment to the land, soil quality and a prolific value chain.

This fall 2018, VanTilburg's will open a 4200-head dairy farm. MVP Dairy is a partnership between VanTilburg's and McCarty Dairy LLC of Colby, Kansas. Their unique business perspectives align to cross-collaborate for land, grain, manure management and dairy experience. They will be part of the [Dannon Pledge](#), with this new farm's specific production and management practices in sync with the needs of the Minster, Ohio Dannon facility.



"It's about sustainability, it's about doing the right things," Luke VanTilburg said. "The sustainability part is a much bigger piece. The way we do things with no-till and cover crops is a pretty small percentage compared to conventional."

Their farm made the switch to non-GMO two years ago and has been implementing no-till and cover crops for even longer. The fields are fertilized with the poultry litter they offer to other farms in the area. They take precautions and use saturated buffers to prevent water run off on their fields.

VanTilburg Farms has volunteered to be part of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) for a three-year study on phosphorus and nitrogen levels. The current levels are a fraction of the average in Mercer County and as the study comes to completion, the results could positively impact the state.

"We felt we had a system and model that works and taking care of the environment is one of the most important things we can do," VanTilburg said. "Water quality is at the top of everyone's mind. We have a solution and did not want to sit on our hands."

The new dairy facility will uphold and increase water quality standards. Cows will be raised in a positive, sanitary environment, provided constant ventilation to minimize pests and frequent manure flushing. The manure will also go through a two-step system to separate solids from liquids; solids will be dried and handled like chicken litter. Meanwhile, liquids will settle in an anaerobic lagoon for nutrient dispersal and be pumped through a central pivot to fertilizer their crops. Using all byproducts in the product system allows the VanTilburg's to care for the environment, diversify their operation and showcase their unique brand. **In agriculture's "dog-eat-dog commodity business" world, where primary consumers—millennials—have specific needs, you must find your niche.**

"What's the story that makes their dinner conversations different about the food they are eating?" VanTilburg said. "You [agricultural producers] have to become a part of that story."

NEW DEVELOPMENT

Business is BLOOMING at Talisman Farms

As shared in the previous story, all eyes have been on Northwest Ohio's water quality. But there are other new developments in the region catching eyes with the "buy local movement." Near Custar, Ohio, on the Henry County and Wood County line, you'll see that diverse agriculture is BLOOMING! Millennial farmers Kristin and Greg Flowers grew up in traditional production agriculture raising row crops and livestock. They farm 300 acres of conventional corn and soybeans and, this past month, launched Talisman Farms, a field-grown, fresh-cut flower business.



It began with two years of planning, researching and networking with veteran farmers, floriculturists and florists. Kristin has transposed her dream to paper and Talisman Farms was successfully launched in July 2018. Using a one-quarter acre patch of land, they grow 16 different spring and summer flower varieties, like Pro-Cut Sunflowers in White Nite and Orange Excel and Giant Mix Dahlias. They are the only specialty flower grower in the immediate area and offer wholesale orders for florists, special events and community “you pick” events.

The floriculture business has been a different “pace” for the Flowers’ family. Everything is field-grown, hand-planted, and hand-harvested. It’s a nice change and gives them a great appreciation for the advancements in grain farming.

“With our row crop operation, we have the opportunity to take advantage of using modern day equipment. Introducing the floral operation gives us appreciation for the technology of the row crop operation,” Flowers said. “The equipment we use—the size, speed and technology—is amazing!”



Although theirs is predominantly a row crop region, the Flowers’ note that it has “worked to their advantage to dive into a new area” of agriculture. **Farming for the Flowers’ is three things: faith-based, family-based, and community-based.** Flower production has brought them closer as a family, and even more importantly, helped them grow closer with consumers and the community.

“We are excited to provide to local consumers and be introducing specialty crop operation to the farm,” Flowers said.

OSA's leadership is comprised of many active, prominent Ohioans involved in agriculture, nutrition and healthcare, the environment, academia, and the food and fiber value chain. Each month in this space we recognize a different leader and share a bit about their passion for OSA.

Brian Snyder is an active member on the OSA:SfL steering committee and serves as executive director of the [Initiative for Food and AgriCultural Transformation \(InFACT\)](#) at The Ohio State University. InFACT pursues holistic approaches to ensure environmentally sound agricultural practices and good food for all. Its work is based on collaboration across the sciences, engineering and humanities, as well as the engagement of external partners in the community, government and private industry.



As such, he is addressing challenges along the entire value chain from field to fork, with an aim to ensure the future health of farms, the environment and consumers alike.

Why you are a part of OSA?

Brian: I chose to be a part of OSA because there really is no way to assure the future viability of farms, protection of the environment, and food security of people living in Ohio and elsewhere, unless groups working on these issues are talking to each other and developing plans together that serve all these interests.

We no longer have the luxury (if we ever did) of working separately, on our respective issues, without regard to the unintended consequences elsewhere. The demands of changing direction in order to address the acceleration of climate change make this a “now or never” proposition that we bridge the traditional divides within our own culture, and between cultures, in order to restore balance within nature and hopefulness with respect to the future.

What segment of the initiative are you most passionate about, and why?

Brian: All the workgroups are important, equally so, but my heart has been with the marketing group all along. I believe the loss of local and regional supply chains is at the root of problems related to the success of individual farmers, damage to the environment, and marginal food security in major agricultural states like Ohio. Restoring those supply chains, as with providing more localized processing and distribution systems, will go a long way to solving the whole host of issues in front of us. It will also reconnect consumers with the agricultural community in meaningful ways such that eaters and farmers can work together to meet the challenges wrought by loss of such linkages in the past. We cannot progress if the consequences of increasingly global markets are “out of sight, out of mind” on a routine basis. All people can make better choices if they know where the food is from and how it was produced, processed and procured in ways to benefit the local and/or regional food economy.

Ohio Ag: Did You Know?

Did you know that [The Ohio State Fair](#) (tail end of July into first week of August) is considered one of the **top 5 fairs** in the country? Since 1850, it has featured many unique attractions, from general rides and games, to livestock shows and youth projects, to art and inventions. And of course, a plethora of indulgent foods!



OHIO STATE FAIR
THE BUTTER COW
a tradition in agriculture
www.ohiosmartag.net

Agriculture has been featured in different ways, including the infamous butter cow! In 1903, the first butter cow and calf were featured at the Fair, sculpted by A. T. Shelton & Company, distributors of Sunbury Co-Operative Creamery butter. A rich history of food and family has steamed from the state fair and each year, it becomes bigger and better.

This year's butter sculpture paid tribute to 35th anniversary of a movie partially filmed in Cleveland, A Christmas Story.

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