



OHIO SMART AGRICULTURE

SOLUTIONS FROM THE LAND

PROGRESS IN THE PROCESS

The Ohio Smart Agriculture: Solutions from the Land Steering Committee, using input from the multiple communities of interest listening sessions that were held over the course of the summer, continues to refine the broad concepts and vision for the Phase One initiative report. Over the past several weeks, we have been collecting impressions and feedback about the drafted solution pathways and launching pilot initiatives. At the end of September, the OSA Design Team met to review and revise the proposed drafts.

In crystallizing the draft ideas that have emerged so far, OSA leaders have focused on several future Solution Pathways, which will incorporate transformational ideas on how to build up Ohio's agriculture infrastructure, human capital and social support. In order to reach all Ohioans, the Steering Committee is testing a new "elevator pitch," as shown below. OSA is not just a group of farmers searching for answers, but rather, farmers and consumers joining together to solve big problems in Ohio, like environmental degradation and food insecurity. This concept, the idea of "Ohioans Sustaining Ohio," may help farmers and consumers together bring forth solutions from the land.

These themes and discussions were taken one step further at the Farm Science Review organized by The Ohio State University College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. There, OSA:SfL's leaders shared their work to date and obtained valuable input from FSR attendees. Project Co-Chairs Lisa Hamler-Fugitt and Fred Yoder and InFACT Executive Director Brian Snyder, shared current progress and insights from the initiative and received perspectives on local needs from the participants. As process becomes progress, we can only anticipate the growth of more conversations like these!

Don't forget to share our informative [video](#) about OSA that can start or continue these discussions.

What is OSA:SfL?

"Ohio Smart Agriculture: Solutions from the Land is an initiative to place farming at the forefront of resolving challenges like hunger relief, health and sustainability. Led by farmers as well as agribusiness owners, anti-hunger advocates, conservationists and public health researchers, we are working together to identify shared solutions to some of Ohio's most pressing issues – by leveraging the deep knowledge and vast resources of our state's agriculture community and by learning from each other.

Our purpose is to explore 21st century strategies to retain a strong, vibrant farm economy and workforce; to assure a healthy population with access to nutritious food; and to preserve the land, air and water in our state for future generations.

We will succeed when the direction we set forth engages the broader community in a joint response to these issues and promotes collaboration among Ohioans.

In times of changing climate, markets, and preferences, OSA:SfL's goal is to create and implement an action plan that will:

- *Help farmers adjust to new weather patterns, nurture the land, clean our air and waters, and provide a healthy ecosystem for future generations.*
- *Reconnect consumers with agriculture, improve health, food access and nutrition for Ohioans, and celebrate the importance of strong, vibrant farm communities and farmland.*
- *Build new opportunities and infrastructure for a more diverse and prosperous farm economy in which Ohioans feed Ohioans and the world.*

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ALIGNED INNOVATION

Microfarming to the American Dream

While some consider the "American Dream" many things, an urban microfarm project at The Ohio State University at Mansfield regional campus inspired a plan that has been selected as one of ten finalists for submission to the [Alliance for the American Dream](#). This is an initiative of Schmidt Futures, working with Ohio State and three other universities to build a stronger, sustainable middle class. The initial proposal submissions occurred over the summer, and by end of the year, three projects from Ohio State for potential investment will be announced.



Led by Kent "Kip" Curtis, Ph.D, and a team of six undergraduate students, the microfarm concept started with an average 1/3-acre for each plot, about the same as two city lots. Capable of being farmed by one person, they use season extension technology such as high tunnels and optimized raised beds to produce more than 16,000 lbs. of produce per year.

"In a brainstorming meeting hosted by the Initiative for Food and AgriCultural Transformation (InFACT) in December 2016, it occurred to me that the obstacle to food and income was a design problem: we had trained a lot of urban farmers and inspired them to get to it, but failed to note the crippling lack of scale that small plot growers in cities operated under," Dr. Curtis said. His background in environmental history, and starting an urban agriculture schoolyard gardening program in St. Petersburg, Florida, prepared him to bring a different, whole system approach to the problem of scaling to the marketplace once he arrived at Ohio State.

The concept is already being implemented in Mansfield with funding from Ohio State's InFACT, Office of Outreach and Engagement, and Office of Energy and the Environment. The Mansfield community has committed \$500,000 of cash and in-kind resources to leverage additional funding if a grant request for \$2M from the Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research is successful. But now the idea is being ramped up to include all six communities in which Ohio State has a campus, including Columbus, Newark, Marion, Lima, Wooster and Mansfield, for the sake of the Alliance for the American Dream competition. These local food systems would address food security now, and could shift attitudes and behaviors to skill development, education and outreach, modeling a sustainable system that can expand across the state and the nation.



"We believe it is a strong alignment with the goal and vision of Ohio Smart Agriculture and will secure, diversify and localize the future of Ohio food production," Dr. Curtis said.

We look forward to seeing this grow and develop. Learn more about [The Alliance for the American Dream](#) and the [Ohio State Mansfield Microfarm](#).

NEW DEVELOPMENT

Desire to farm but no access to land? The Black Swamp Food &

Farm Initiative is launching a program to address this barrier

Ohio is looking to grow its next generation of farmers. Unfortunately, many of those who want to become farmers must overcome a major barrier: access to land. Black Swamp Conservancy (The Conservancy) in Northwest Ohio is helping break through this barrier through the Black Swamp Food and Farm Initiative, a new program to improve access to affordable land for beginning and aspiring farmers.

Since 1993, The Conservancy has protected and preserved natural and agricultural lands in 16 northwest Ohio counties. Its efforts to date have preserved more than 17,000 acres of land, including family farms. The Food & Farm Initiative started when staff were specifically brainstorming new ideas increasing the impact of agricultural land conservation. There were a handful of model land-access programs across the U.S. to date, but they were focused on accessibility to affordable leases with options to purchase and start sustainable operations. Chris Collier, Conservation Manager of the Black Swamp Conservancy, spearheads this initiative and believes it will “grow profitable and ecologically sustainable food” for Northwest Ohio.

The Initiative will use long-term lease agreements to provide affordable access to farmland, along with connecting aspiring farmers to the services and partners they'll need to establish sustainable operations. Sustainability for The Conservancy is defined as being profitable for the farm business, while also improving the natural resource conservation and providing healthy food to local communities. Chris shared that this type of program is “an investment into our home, the people who live there, and in our health.” That culmination is sustainability at work.

The Conservancy serves as a catalyst to help rural and urban populations create resilient communities. Through new efforts like Black Swamp Food and Farm Initiative, Ohio is opening doors for a bright future.

LEADER SPOTLIGHT

Terry Wehrkamp, Director of Live Operations at Cooper Farms

OSA's leadership team 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.

Terry Wehrkamp has been a part of the Cooper Farms team since 1985. As the director of live production, he oversees the birth to market production of turkeys and hogs. He also oversees Cooper's Feed and Animal Division in Fort Recovery, Ohio.

Mr. Wehrkamp's voluntary participation in a wide range of organizations is a testament of his leadership and desire to be an active member of his community.



Mr. Wehrkamp serves on the board of directors for the Paulding County Carnegie Library, Paulding County Area Foundation, Ohio Poultry Association, and the Midwest Poultry Consortium. He has also served on The Ohio State University Alumni Board, is active with local 4-H, Farm Bureau, and The Ohio State Extension Advisory Committee. He is also active in several ministries at Divine Mercy Catholic Church in Paulding.

Mr. Wehrkamp received his Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from The Ohio State University in 1982 and went on to receive his Master of Business Administration from Indiana Wesleyan University in 1998. Mr. Wehrkamp was awarded The Ohio State University College of Food and Agricultural Education Distinguished Alumni Award in 2010 and The Ohio State University Ag Hall of Fame in 2016.

He resides in Paulding, Ohio with wife Nancy and has three grown children, Michael, Connie and Laurel.

Why you are a part of OSA?

Terry: Staying on the cutting edge of new technologies that help farmers stay productive was what drew me to this effort. All farmers face new challenges every day and I thought this was one way to connect with many other individuals who shared this common goal.

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

Terry: I co-chair the Climate Smart Ag workgroup with Patty Mann. I'm passionate about continual improvement and new technology. We have had excellent discussions about climate and extreme weather and best management practices that we can improve upon to secure the future of farming. Farmers are a hardy bunch and they will adapt to these challenging conditions we face. We have a lot of progressive, proactive farmers out there who share this vision.



Ohio Ag: Did You Know?

Did you know Ohio is one of the top five states for producing pumpkins? They are a winter squash and part of the same family as cucumbers and melons, technically making them a fruit! They are not only a staple decoration for fall, but are also nutrient-dense. Add some pumpkins to your October recipes for a boost of fiber, potassium, magnesium and iron. Support your local Ohio pumpkin producer this October!

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