



# OHIO SMART AGRICULTURE

SOLUTIONS FROM THE LAND

## PROGRESS IN THE PROCESS

The Ohio Smart Agriculture: Solutions from the Land is getting ready for primetime! In the past month, we've increased public outreach and focused on groups eager to learn more. We are building an educated following, extending past our supportive stakeholders and into engaging media outlets.

"I think the biggest challenge is bringing together a very diverse group of folks whose paths may never have crossed before, and we all are really interconnected through the work that we do," Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, OSA Steering Committee Co-Chair, told listeners in a recent interview. "And again, a shared focus of really looking at what does a 21st century strategy look like to ensure that we've got a strong and vibrant farm economy, that we have an equally strong workforce, and assuring that we have a healthy population. How we do that is through access to healthy, wholesome food to engender an active healthy life; that we have an environment, that we're able to preserve the air, the land, the water quality -- and not just now, but into the future, for our future generations."

Hamler-Fugitt and fellow co-chair Fred Yoder spoke with Pete Emmons of WQTT Radio in a 55-minute interview on the show "Ag Today" (<https://wqttradio.com/ag-today/>) to discuss the project. They also led an OSA breakout session at the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission's annual Summit on Sustainability (<https://www.planning.org/events/activity/9161127/>). These efforts are reaching wide and we believe that more touchpoints like this will help lead these efforts at the local level.

We are now in the drafting stage for the initiative, with the goal of finalizing our draft by year end and releasing it in early 2019. Keep a close watch on social media and this e-newsletter for more updates!

## 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.*

***Please join us and share your thoughts on how Ohio agriculture become more sustainable and***

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## ALIGNED INNOVATION

### *Diversity for the Turkey*

With Thanksgiving around the corner, many families are planning their festivities. Who's hosting? What TV channel will be on? Who will bring desserts? What are we going to celebrate with gratitude? And the big item on everyone's Thanksgiving list: Who will carve the turkey?

Sometimes, we get so focused on the end result -- the turkey on the table --that we fail to acknowledge the steps it took to get it there. Ohio is one of the top five turkey-producing states. And the types of turkey farms are very diverse! This diversity helps farms thrive, especially with rising regulations and a challenging food market. Here are two farms that showcase Ohio's diversity and innovation in many of ways.

#### **Pastured Providence Farmstead**

Nestled in the southern Ohio hills near Chillicothe, Pastured Providence Farmstead is a first-generation, sustainable, diversified, veteran-owned, pasture-based farm. Paul and Heather Dorrance raise heritage-breed animals without growth hormones, chemicals, or routine antibiotics.



Their turkeys have open-bottomed pens, allowing them access to grasses and broad-leafed greens. These pens are moved every day to fresh grass, which keeps their "floor" clean and keeps the birds healthy. The moveable pens have overhead room, roosts, and a covered portion, providing fresh air, protection from both weather and predators, and the ability for the turkeys to express all of their natural behaviors. In addition to their daily helping of fresh greens, Paul supplements the birds with a non-GMO feed mix sourced from a local farmer just 45 minutes away. It is not an easy production method, but it's been fruitful for his family and his customers.

"I consider myself a partner with creation as I focus on producing healthy, natural food for my family and others," said Paul, an Air Force veteran and current reservist. "My emphasis is on natural and synergistic processes, as I seek to mimic nature and minimize external inputs. I am striving to heal the land and improve it for future generations, as well as share my values, methods and lessons learned with others in an attempt to both educate and encourage."

Paul believes his business is rooted in honesty, integrity and transparency when producing food in an ethical, humane, ecologically sound manner. He seeks to inspire other farms and agriculturalists to understand farming diversity and production practices that will work together for long-term sustainability at the local and state level.

#### **Cooper Farms**

Cooper Farms is a diversified farm and food company based in Northwest and West Central Ohio, an area rich in agricultural tradition. It began as a turkey farm and hatchery started by Virgil Cooper in 1938. This year is Cooper Farms' 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Cooper family is honored to reach this milestone and has been able to do so with the help of their more than 2,200 team members, many of whom have seen the company through decades of business. The team's contributions have really spurred growth and taken Cooper Farms to where it is today. Today, Virgil's children are leading a larger business, which includes



not just raising turkeys but also turkey processing, raising hogs and chicken layers, egg packaging and egg breaking.

Through vertical integration, Cooper Farms is taking a hands-on approach to overseeing the day-to-day care of its animals. This includes the ownership of four mills, which produce the feed that keeps their animals healthy and strong. The turkeys are raised in barns, provided a sanitary, clean environment and provided fresh-milled feed.

The Cooper Farms business model is based on adding value to their products. By taking ownership of each step of the production process from farm to fork, they are able to ensure quality and provide their customers with a product they can depend on. Adding value means creating further processed items like turkey roasts, turkey burgers and liquid egg products for private-label retail and food-service customers. The Cooper Farms goal is to literally own each step: from hatchery to growout farm to harvest and distribution of those products.

### **Diversity feeds families**

With these and other examples of turkey production, we know that consumers have many options when they choose where and how their turkeys were raised across the state. This diversity will continue as new market opportunities evolve and general consumers experience shifts in their interests and budgets.

“Ohio is truly a land of diversity in so many ways, including agriculture,” Paul says. “With different approaches, world views, and methods can come friction, misunderstandings, and closed minds. However, it can also be a source of incredible strength, with Ohio Smart Agriculture as a prime example. The benefit of diversity is a time-honored truth in agriculture that we have been lured away from in

recent decades, and it is an honor to be a part of the conversation around embracing agricultural diversity again.”

Diversity and innovation have allowed Cooper Farms to invest in the latest available technology and have provided a work environment where team members themselves are responsible for inventions and ideas that move their company forward. From wind turbines to solar energy, the methods used to raise animals on their farms are diversified.

“Past inventions include advances in food safety and animal handling,” communications manager Cassie Jo Arend says. “Through collaboration with outside vendors we implement the latest technology as we build new farms. We are always investing in new equipment in our plants to be more efficient.”

Cooper Farms and Pastured Providence Farmstead participate in educational outreach and research development activities across the state. They are creating diversified sustainability with their experiences and are creating a promising future for all.

“Sustainable Agriculture’ is one of the most rapidly growing segments of agriculture overall, but I believe we still fit perfectly within the larger picture of Ohio’s largest industry,” Paul tells OSA. “Let’s continue to embrace opportunities for collaboration, commonality, and inclusion as we all look towards a brighter agricultural future!”

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## **NEW DEVELOPMENT**

***"Weather" you like it or not, we can better manage climate and nutrients with technology like the new FARM App***

For the past 10 years, Ohioans and others across the country have experienced intense, extreme weather patterns and climate shifts. Whether we like it or not, we need to prepare for and adjust to it.

This not only affects our attitudes, but also hits us at the ground level. How can farmers plan financially for variables like applying nutrients to their crops? Introducing: the FARM App.

The Field Application Resource Monitor (FARM) uses advanced weather forecasting to advise farmers when to apply fertilizers and pesticides so that they aren't washed away by rain. FARM is a web-based, mobile friendly tool that provides:

- Real-time, high-resolution precipitation forecasts to field(s) of interest (up to five locations)
- Historical precipitation forecasts (back through July 2017)
- Daily email notifications if desired (text alerts coming soon)

The app was originally designed in response to Senate Bill 1 regulations for the Western Lake Erie Basin, but FARM can help farmers throughout Ohio follow best management practices in alignment with precipitation forecasts.

Ohio water quality has been a hot topic the past few years. FARM combines the need to keep our waters clean with farmers' needs to apply fertilizer and nutrients during appropriate weather conditions. Accessible from computer or mobile device, the app allows the user to input real-time data on nutrient application, reflect on historical forecasts and prepare for future forecasts.

Dr. Aaron Wilson, Senior Research Associate at The Ohio State University and one of the leaders of this project, said that even though the app experienced challenges in the beginning, the development, design and testing phases allowed modifications to create the most optimal app for the current issues in nutrient management.

"It is imperative to make sound decisions with regard to nutrient application," Wilson said. "We hope FARM can help those making the decisions be more confident by providing the necessary information in a timely fashion. FARM represents a tool that can be used to build resilience to small piece of the climate threat, and one that can help improve water quality throughout Ohio."

In the current economy, farmers are not only protecting the land and environment, but are also protecting their finances. This tool warns about precipitation that exceeds good management practices. Farmers can avoid misusing fertilizer and pesticides bound to be washed away, saving both time and money.

The app is just the beginning for new technology that will spearhead sustainability efforts across the state and country. Various partners joined in its development, including an OSU Connect and Collaborate Grant through The Ohio State University, OSU Extension, Office of Energy and Environment, and Office of Outreach and Engagement. External partner Wes Haines and his team with weatherUSA, LLC also contributed to the technical development of FARM.

For more information about FARM, visit <https://farm.bpcrc.osu.edu/>.

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## **LEADER SPOTLIGHT**

### ***Teresa Long, Special Advisor - Community Engagement & Partnership, The Ohio State University, and form Columbus Health Commissioner***

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.

Dr. Teresa C. Long became the first female Health Commissioner for Columbus in 2002. She was appointed to the post by Mayor Michael B. Coleman and the Columbus Board of Health. Prior to this appointment, she served as Medical Director and Assistant Health Commissioner for the Columbus Health Department from 1986 until 2002. Before coming to Columbus, Dr. Long served on the front lines of the emerging AIDS epidemic as a physician specialist with the San Francisco Department of Public Health. She conducted her preventive medicine residency with the California Department of Health Services where she developed perinatal AIDS guidelines in addition to other duties. Upon her arrival in Columbus, Dr. Long was instrumental in organizing both the department's and the community's response to HIV/AIDS. Her commitment and attention to this disease have been unwavering. In addition to serving on numerous boards and committees, locally, statewide and nationally, Dr. Long is a Clinical Associate Professor at the Ohio State University College of Medicine and Public Health. She was the first recipient of the Elizabeth Blackwell Award for Pioneering Efforts to Improve Women's and Community Health. She holds a Doctor of Medicine Degree from the University of California – San Francisco and a Master of Public Health from the University of California – Berkeley.



### *Why you are a part of OSA?*

**Teresa:** Health for All is what drives me, I am a public health physician committed to preventive medicine, the art and science of keeping people healthy. As a public health practitioner and health commissioner in Columbus for many years, I knew first hand that creating the conditions in which people can be healthy involves going up stream in multiple ways and takes all sectors of our society working together--business, education, health, social services and yes, private, not-for-profit and governmental sectors. Good health is directly dependent on good, healthy food and food availability, so to achieve good health for residents in all neighborhoods in Columbus and all across Ohio we must have healthy foods, sufficient quantity and the ability for people to get it and consume it! Sadly, we have many hungry people in Central Ohio and throughout our State. One in five people in Ohio are food insecure and don't know where their next meal may come from (according to the Health Policy Institute of Ohio, 1/4 children and 1/5 seniors are food insecure, ranking Ohio 45th of all states for food insecurity)!

I am proud to have been involved in some of the very first community gardens in Columbus over 20 years ago which were a win in every way, they brought together neighbors both older and younger, who met, worked and learned to trust each other, they grew healthy foods and then they had this food to eat and to share, plus they made their neighborhoods safer and got some great physical activity too). In some cases the food was sold to local restaurateurs, so there was a positive feedback loop! Those early gardens have grown to more than 250 gardens currently active in Columbus and Franklin County. Additionally, we now have so many successful farmers markets in multiple locations plus urban farms too! All of which grow community AND healthy food options and savvy consumers. This led to the creation of the Columbus and Franklin Local Food Action Plan, a two-year effort, involving more than 1000 residents, that created a comprehensive plan to unify all local entities and residents with a vision of a fair and sustainable food system that benefits our economy, our environment and all people. The Plan has been embraced, has key champions, and is being implemented in multiple ways including enhancing coordination and communication, improving access and education about healthy affordable and local food, increasing the role of food in economic development and preventing food related waste. I also have a deep commitment to the health of our land, and have been concerned to watch the increase in harmful algal blooms impacting our state's waterways and drinking water supply. To me, we must determine smart ways to protect our farm production while at the same time protect our drinking and recreational waters. Our land and water are critical assets in protecting and promoting the conditions in which people and all life can thrive. Suffice it to say, healthy food is critical to healthy life.

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

**Teresa:** "Healthy Food for Healthy Ohioans", and "Ohio feeds Ohioans" are two new phrases that I use a lot these days. It seems as if we could, working together across multiple sectors, that we just could feed Ohio! And improve our physical, mental, social, and economic well being too! What I am most passionate about is improving health and well being of all Ohioans through Food, Nutrition and Social Determinants of Health. The Nutrition and Health efforts have had a strong focus on policy which is critical in creating understanding, commitment, and change. Building alliances and a commitment to policy changes will be the first steps in changing our related systems and ultimately the broad environment in which we all live, work, recreate and thrive. We will only achieve Health for All if we learn more about each other, further appreciate other sectors commitments and challenges, are willing to consider what, why and how our practices could improve and commit to work thoughtfully together. I am honored to serve as a member of the OSA steering committee. I have met such remarkable, thoughtful, smart and committed people, and have learned so much. I feel fortunate yet I also hope that we are poised to move forward together in this exciting and challenging time.



# Ohio Ag: Did You Know?

Did you know turkey production is responsible for the creation of 2,879 jobs annually and \$101 million in earnings in Ohio! November is an important time as many families celebrate Thanksgiving with a turkey (or two) on the table.

Ohio Smart Agriculture: Solutions from the Land | [info@sfdialogue.net](mailto:info@sfdialogue.net)

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