



OHIO SMART AGRICULTURE

SOLUTIONS FROM THE LAND

PROGRESS IN THE PROCESS

Let the chiseling and fine tuning begin for the *Ohio Smart Agriculture: Solutions from the Land* steering committee and staff team. On December 12th, the committee met in Delaware, Ohio to hear updates from committee members on the latest work by land grant universities and a, food sustainability panel, and to review the latest report draft.

The projected timeline has been extended from the fourth quarter of 2018 to first quarter 2019. This allows flexibility with the holidays, as well as confirming direction, gathering partners and sending a “last call” for stakeholder comments before releasing the complete report. A subgroup of committee members will be vetting the report once it is in final draft stages to ensure tone and flow fulfill the committee needs.

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 can become more sustainable and relevant, creating solutions to 21st century challenges!”

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ALIGNED INNOVATION

Ohio Forestry closing gap with farmer's national recognition

Do you ever drive down that township road and barely notice a little wooded patch? Does your farm have a woodlot at the far side of your property that you visit only during hunting season? Ohio's forests and woodlands are a resource we often don't appreciate enough. Two Ohio foresters recognized on a national scale can heighten our awareness of the importance of those trees.

[Randy and Koral Clum](#) in east central Ohio received the 2018 National Outstanding Tree Farmer of the Year from the American Tree Farm Systems. Randy and Koral both had extensive careers in the forestry industry before acquiring their own woods in 1993. They now manage 152 acres of certified forestland in southwest Harrison County, consult with local foresters, and share their expertise at public speaking events.

Forestry education is a core value for Koral. She and Randy are very active around the state with various organizations, but they feel most impactful at the local level.

“As foresters, one of our downfalls is we like to be in the woods and be quiet,” Koral says. “Like a triangle, forest land owners, foresters, and loggers must work together. The more educated each branch is and the more communication that happens, the more healthy forests we can have for the future.”



Forestry often ends up as a forgotten stepchild in the agriculture family, but most farms have a woodlot, it might help a farmer add more “acreage to their numbers” for business benefits; it might be separated most of the time or just added in later. Most of the time, good forestry management is a “moving target”

and must meet a land owner's objectives and be sustainable in the future. Koral said these different objectives are creating the "legacy of the land" for these agriculturalists.

Brad Perkins, executive director for the Ohio Forestry Association and OSA Steering Committee member, shared his enthusiasm for the Clums' recognition and achievements for the state. He is confident that their leadership and other foresters around the state can help connect agriculturalists with foresters.

"The forest products industry in Ohio would like to see traditional agriculturalists approach the management of their forested acreage with the same zest for knowledge that they exhibit in the management of their traditional farm acreage," Brad says. "Using this obtained knowledge to properly manage their forests will result in a win-win-win situation."

The total annual economic value in Ohio from forestry was \$26.3 billion, according to the latest report from The Ohio State University Forest Economist on Ohio's Forest Economy. This can be enhanced through continued partnership and awareness in the ag sector.

"More and higher-valued, sustainable products for the forest products industry; increased income on a more frequent basis for the landowner; and enhanced ecosystem services such as better wildlife habitat, improved water quality, and increased soil protection," Perkins says, are all possible as we close the forest and farm gap.

NEW DEVELOPMENT

New Farm Bill affects Ohio

December marked a milestone for agriculture: the U.S. Congress passed the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, commonly referred to as the Farm Bill. There are three primary areas with changes affecting Ohio: SNAP assistance, energy and risk management. Some passionate members on our Steering Committee weighed in on these developments and what we can expect going into 2019.

Steering Committee Co-Chair Lisa Hamler-Fugitt feels strongly that Ohioans aligned with interest in the OSA mission must "work to educate and advocate with the incoming DeWine Administration and leadership in the Ohio General Assembly."

"[We must] embrace these new opportunities and provide significant new investment in the area of agriculture to ensure that we have programs and systems in place that can help farms become profitable, while also addressing the climate- and the hunger- and health-related social issues," Hamler-Fugitt says.

SNAP Assistance

The latest Farm Bill protects the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) from potential funding cuts and structure changes. There has been an increase for The Emergency Foodbank Assistance Program (TEFAP) by \$206 million over the next 10 years. There will also be an additional \$20 million per year for subsequent years to the Thrifty Food Plan. Of those funds, the bill requires \$4 million per year for FY2019 through FY2023 for Farm to Food Bank programs that connect excess agricultural commodities with food banks and communities in need.

There is training focus and work requirements in place to increase the reach for eligible TEFAP recipients. The program could provide a new market opportunity for Ohio farmers, growers and commodity producers of specialty crops and farmer's markets.



This won't come without challenges. Teresa Long, former Columbus Public Health Commissioner and steering committee member, noted that the additional work requirements to receive the SNAP benefits could make it difficult for persons to secure needed aid. Nonetheless, she believes it can be done over time.

"This is about getting food to hungry families and people," Long says.

Risk Management

Fred Yoder, grain farmer and Steering Committee co-chair, is "happy" with the outcome for federal crop insurance to remain part of the farm bill, "with the added flexibility to use cover crops without penalty." These structured protection plans allow farmers some wiggle room to continue growing grains during tough environmental and market conditions. Yoder is hopeful that in coming years, the USDA will grant access to data that allows producers better insights to optimize meaningful, beneficial farming practices that could help support a thriving food future.

Energy and Conservation

It was unclear whether Congress would consider energy an important part of the Farm Bill. Steering Committee members are certainly glad Congress responded. Energy relates to more than just oil and fossil fuels. The Energy Title was retained and mandatory funding was authorized for the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP).

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), was enhanced to address:

- How production practices can impact soil health and resiliency
- How to potentially mitigate GHG emissions
- Demonstrate agriculture's role as a major solution for climate future

Yoder said this could also "aid us in Ohio in terms of water quality and nutrient management."

Takeaways

SNAP assistance, risk management, energy and conservation will continue to evolve under this Farm Bill and we look forward to seeing Ohioans embrace and optimize efforts to feed, farm and provide. Tariffs and trade will remain a top priority to work through for commodity prices in a surplus of exported markets like U.S. soybeans, a top crop for Ohio farmers.

"These state-based initiatives like OSA should be focused on reconnecting Ohioans with food and with agriculture, are a matter of survival," Hamler-Fugitt said, noting that the future of Ohio agriculture is in our hands and the action starts today to choose how we steward and sustain the people and land.

LEADER SPOTLIGHT

Mark Drewes - Farmer and Water Quality Leader

OSA's leadership team comprises 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.

Mark Drewes owns and operates a commercial sixth-generation family farm with his wife, Melody, his son Tyler and his wife, Whitney. They farm 8200 acres of non-GMO corn and corn silage, soybeans, wheat, and alfalfa in Custar, Ohio. Many of their crops are raised for specialty markets. Drewes supplies two large dairies with all their feed and handles 20 million gallons of dairy manure annually.

The farm is in the (Western Lake Erie Basin) and Drewes is very concerned with water quality in the watershed. He is a 1983 graduate of Bowling Green State University with a BSBA in finance and has been a full-time farmer since graduation. His wife and children are all BGSU grads and live and work close to the farm. He currently serves on the board of the Ohio Corn and Wheat Growers Association. Mark has been a board member and/or member of various organizations both currently and in recent years. His current local efforts have focused on improving water quality and serving as a local expert with Lake Erie challenges.



Why you are a part of OSA?

Mark: I had never heard of OSA when I was approached to be part of the team. A responsibility of all commodity producers should be self-awareness of where we fit among our consumers and communities. Oftentimes we really have no grasp of how our end users perceive us or the value they place upon us. Working with the diversity of the OSA team has enlightened me in many ways. It is a very rare opportunity to work with individuals who fill the food space in as many different roles as OSA. I felt I needed to be there to represent commodity crop producers in this endeavor.

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

Mark: The commodity producer team is my obvious choice. I felt a strong obligation to this team as commodity production is an important area of focus for the OSA initiative. I can give a perspective of where a commercial sized family farm can fit in to the big picture of food insecurity and the challenges being faced today in Ohio. I was proud to be able to interact with such a diverse group of nutrition-oriented persons who all have a common goal of improved food security. We must remember that any solutions must be practical, sustainable, and profitable for Ohio's commodity producers.

Ohio Ag: Did You Know?

January is when the tapping begins for Ohio maple syrup. Nationally ranked as the 4th top producing maple syrup state in the United States, Ohio produces approximately 100,000 gallons of maple syrup annually. Demand is currently higher than Ohio can provide and opportunity for the industry growth is high. Pricing for maple syrup is dictated primarily by a Quebec cartel, leading to Vermont pricing that affects the rest of the U.S. Cold weather changes do not affect the sap too much and the experienced producers are preparing for a successful production year.



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