



## OHIO ECOLOGICAL FOOD AND FARM ASSOCIATION **2023 FARM BILL PLATFORM**

OEFFA members share a vision of a future where sustainable and organic farmers thrive, local food nourishes our communities, and agricultural practices protect and enhance our environment.

To realize that vision, we must change state and federal policy so family farmers using sustainable practices can thrive in fair and transparent markets. We work to ensure farmers can access the land they need to grow diverse products that sustain the health of people, soil, and the environment and for policies that promote community resilience.

Toward that end, OEFFA's policy program empowers our members to enact public policy change. Over the coming year we will focus on the 2023 Farm Bill, a major piece of legislation that will shape our food and agriculture for years to come.

To learn more about our members' vision for the Farm Bill, OEFFA conducted a survey and held six listening sessions. That input shapes our goals for the coming year.

We held in-person listening sessions in Yellow Springs, Newark, and Wooster, and also conducted three

virtual sessions, including one focused on the Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) community, who have historically been excluded from federal agricultural programs.

Farmers and engaged citizens shared their vision for a just and sustainable food system and celebrated their successes.



Questions such as "What more could you do if you had support and resources?" and "Based on your vision and experiences, what would you like to see in the 2023 Farm Bill?" formed the discussion, and along with our online survey, revealed five major areas which comprise OEFFA's 2023 Farm Bill Platform.

**PLEASE SEE THE REVERSE SIDE. →**



## **MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD**

**The power to change our food and farms lies with each of us.**

OEFFA is forming small groups of farmers and food advocates for each of the issues mentioned in this platform. Possible actions include:

- Writing letters to the editor;
- Creating video interviews to highlight the needs of sustainable farmers and local communities, and
- Organizing farm tours or in-district meetings for Members of Congress to hear from their constituents.

Find out how to become involved as well as to better understand the specific policies that can help us achieve these broad goals, by contacting us at [policy@oeffa.org](mailto:policy@oeffa.org).



## OHIO ECOLOGICAL FOOD AND FARM ASSOCIATION

# 2023 FARM BILL GOALS

### 1. Promote soil health and climate resilience through conservation policy

Farmers have seen the effect of a changing climate, resulting in wetter fields in the spring and greater heat stress on crops and livestock in the summer. They know healthy soil helps them better withstand these stresses, and that good soil practices help draw down carbon. To achieve this, our members seek conservation programs that incentivize covered cropland and encourage longer-term and diverse crop rotations. Farmers want to “cut the red tape” and receive resources for soil testing to show that they are on track. They support federal conservation programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Reaching our goals for clean water, beneficial habitat for wildlife, increased soil health and carbon sequestration will require significant investments in technical assistance for USDA conservation programming.

### 2. Increase investments in local and regional food systems

For many farmers, their livelihood depends on strong local and regional food systems, including support for cooperative development; urban agriculture; supply chain investments; more regional facilities for flash-freezing and meat processing; and programs such as Produce Perks, which make healthy, local foods more accessible. For food advocates, local and regional food systems directly link to better public health outcomes, more food system jobs and less worry around supply chain disruptions. These investments need to include resources for community leadership in designing education and outreach strategies.

### 3. Address consolidation in the food and agriculture system

Our members emphasized that small farms can and do feed the world and that consolidation in the food and agriculture system does not benefit the economic or environmental health of their communities. They want to support an agriculture system that includes farms with diverse operations and scales that make it possible to care for—instead of exploit—the land. A frequent example cited is the concentration in meat processing and the inability to get livestock processed without traveling hours and, often, having to book your processing time more than a year in advance. It’s impossible for many organic farmers to find a certified organic processing facility for their livestock and poultry. Addressing consolidation in the industry will make investments in local and regional food production, processing, aggregation, and distribution viable.

### 4. Invest in organic and sustainable research

Our members expressed a need for long-term, agroecological research on cover crops, organic no-till, and natural sources of fertility. Farmers that use holistic, synergistic suites of agroecological practices should see a fair share of federal research dollars directed toward their practices, research that helps them farm in the most responsible manner and illustrates the benefits of this approach. They want farm policy based on science that shows relationships between food and disease as well as the benefits of nutrient-dense foods. Furthermore, the results of these studies need to be widely disseminated in a way that is accessible to farmers.

### 5. Provide more support for beginning and BIPOC farmers

OEFFA has worked to address land access for beginning farmers at the state level, often hearing more needs to be done to make it easier for people to get into farming, including disadvantaged farmers and farmers seeking to transition to organic production. When it comes to farm credit issues, we heard “bankers don’t like new ideas.” We need to increase access to credit and support for beginning and underserved producers, including those not fitting the corn and soybean biculture mold. Farmers growing food to feed people and using ecological practices should be prioritized for support.