SPEAK OUT

August 2009

Ohio's Food Policy Council

Introduction
The Ohio Food Policy Council was established through executive order by Gov. Ted Strickland in August 2007. Executive Order 2007 – 27S detailed environmental, social and economic benefits that Ohio's food and farming system contributes to the state, as well as the importance of retaining and growing that industry to further expand those benefits. While Ohio's food and agricultural industry contributes approximately $98 billion to the state's economy, also of importance is helping Ohioans who do not have access to healthy and fresh foods.

So what is a Food Policy Council?
Food policy councils focus on food systems as an economic development strategy that links farm production, conservation and farm viability with public health, food security and community well-being. Food systems incorporate food production, processing, distribution, and consumption. They may also incorporate waste disposal and recovery systems. The system can be local, small neighborhoods or international food systems.

While the purpose and function of food policy councils can vary based on state and local objectives, they do share certain characteristics. They are officially sanctioned and include representation from various affected groups, including farmers, agricultural stakeholders, consumers, chefs, food processors, distributors, grocers, academics, wholesalers, school system representatives, hunger advocates, government and nongovernmental organization representatives. The representatives take a comprehensive approach to examining and improving the food system and planning for the underlying agricultural system on which the food system depends.

Traditionally, agriculture related issues were considered to be the purview of the federal farm bill programs. Today, consumers are asking for more socially responsible food products. As a result there is an increased emphasis on direct-marketed food products, specialized labeling, local farmland protection and other issues that may be outside the realm of federal policy. There is an opportunity to work at the state and local levels to address the limitations of federal farm policy.

Food policy councils may develop legislation, make recommendations to departments of agriculture and other policymakers and support and promote state and regional food marketing programs and education about local food issues. One of the key functions and benefits of these councils is the increased coordination among state agencies. They also provide an avenue of communication among food and agricultural businesses, consumers and policymakers. Examples of council

recommendations include the development and promotion of state and regional branding programs, requiring state institutions to purchase local food, seeking out new marketing opportunities for farmers within the state, promoting food entrepreneurship, developing agricultural processing renaissance zones, reducing low-income residents' barriers for access to local foods, assistance and support to farmers' markets, development of farm-to-school local food directories and many more detailed recommendations.

Task Force Structure
In an effort to meet the objectives spelled out in the governor's executive order, the Ohio Food Policy Council has established four task forces to set goals and address issues. The four task forces include Food System Assessment, Agriculture Viability, Healthy Food Access and Market Connections.

The task forces began meeting in May 2008, and have already developed a set of short-term recommendations. Each task force, its role and focus is outlined below.

Food System Assessment
Collect and analyze information on the production and process of foods in Ohio, as well as the patterns of food consumption.

Focus: Get a baseline of output – what is produced? How much is purchased or consumed in Ohio and by whom? How much is processed, distributed and marketed in the state of Ohio? How do the above aspects compare to the potential in these areas?

Identify the barriers – what limits access to: farming, distribution, processing, local and statewide markets and institutions? Identify and assess cost barriers (i.e. percent of disposable income going to purchase food).

What policy barriers exist and what types of policies can advance access and development of local markets?

Agriculture Viability
Protect Ohio's valuable farmland and water resources by encouraging the growth of food products in Ohio.

Focus: Identification of opportunities for market expansion – diversification, agritourism, niche markets, etc.; catalog innovative local/sustainable agriculture and food system efforts in the state; identify opportunities and resources to support beginning farmers; examine the state's food processing infrastructure needs; evaluate ways to help farmers generate more revenue from value-added activity; assess the impact of the food system on the environment and consider the relationship between farmland preservation efforts and our food system.

Healthy Food Access
Provide those in need with greater access to fresh and nutritious foods.

Focus: Maximize coordination of federal, state and local resources; increase participation rate in food stamp programs; ensure that we receive the maximum allocations for food assistance; full utilization of technology at farmers markets in Ohio; streamline food assistance programs; examine nutrition and healthy food access issues; grow your own food issues; issues related to food and medicine.

Market Connections
Assist Ohio farmers and business in marketing their food products inside and outside of the state.

Develop strategies to link producers and consumers in local food systems.

Focus: This task force focuses on issues that link producers to consumers, grocers, restaurants, and institutions; support for regional, state and external markets; identification of barriers; promotion of Ohio Proud; look for economic development opportunities in Ohio's food system; distribution infrastructure; educating young consumers about how their food gets to them.

Local Food Policy Councils
Ohio currently has 10 existing or emerging food policy councils. These single and multi-county councils include an Athens County council, a Cleveland-Cuyahoga area council, a Hamilton, Butler and Clermont counties council, a Lake County council, a Lucas, Ottawa and Erie counties council, a Miami and Montgomery counties council, a Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission council, a Summit County council and a Trumbull, Mahoning and Columbiana counties council. The map gives a visual indication of where the local food policy councils are located in the state.

According to the State & Local Food Policy Councils Web site there are currently14 state food policy councils around the nation. There are also many more local councils identified as well.

Ohio's Emerging Local Food Policy Councils

CENTER FOR FARMLAND POLICY INNOVATION
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS

Looking toward the Future
Ohio's Food Policy Council has established 15 recommendations for the state's policymakers. These recommendations are broad in scope but all relate to the mission of the Food Policy Council. To view the full list of recommendations, visit the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Web site (www.agri.ohio.gov) and click on Promotional Programs.

Questions:

1. Are food policy councils a good idea or is this just another example of government intrusion into the agriculture industry?
2. Does a food policy council exist in your area? If yes, are you or members of your council involved? If no, has there been discussion regarding forming a council?

3. What should be the focus of a food policy council? How should councils prioritize their goals?

September Topic: Restoring Prosperity to Ohio

Information Sources:

Amalie Lipstreu, senior program manager for sustainable agriculture, Ohio Department of Agriculture

Ohio Department of Agriculture - http://www.agri.ohio.gov/divs/FoodCouncil/foodcouncil.aspx

State & Local Food Policy Councils - http://www.statefoodpolicy.org

CONNECTIONS

COMPARE YOUR RESPONSES

The following is a representative sample of the responses to the June Speakout Guide on the issue of the *Creating Animal Agriculture Activists*.

1. **Are you comfortable calling yourself an animal activist? If yes, what does it mean to you?**

- Yes. We feel that it is going to be a necessity. We must be assertive not passive and educate with science-based agriculture.
- Yes & No. Animals should be treated well but we can't afford to treat them like pets.
- No. Don't like the word "activist."
- Yes, we have to defend our livelihood. We need to educate the public more.
- Yes. All of us are animal agriculture activists.
- We agreed that the term "activist" is unappealing and sounds like an extremist group. We prefer to be referred to as supporters of scientifically based theory on animal production.
- No. We would like to be called animal caretakers. We think "activist" sounds combative and has a negative connotation.

- Our council likes the term animal advocates; it sounds more positive.

2. **What rights, if any, do you believe animals possess? What are our obligations as food animal caretakers? Are those obligations different than for companion animals?**

- It is the owner's responsibility to provide shelter, food and water. Animals should not be abused.
- Genesis 9:3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be food for you.
- Humane Treatement=water & food
- To be treated without violence and abuse
- They have the right to water, nutritious food, clean/dry place to get in from the weather and veterinary medical attention when necessary.
- Animals have no rights. In farmer's language, we provide a quality, disease-free product at an affordable price for the consumer.
- Our obligations as food animal caretakers are to treat them compassionately and "nicely" but not lovingly.
- The animals used for consumption need respect from the farmer who we feel does an excellent job of caring for them.

3. **If a ballot initiative similar to California's Proposition 2 comes to Ohio, how do you think Ohio voters would respond and why?**

- We feel they would vote on emotions, not common sense.
- It would pass. We don't think there is much we can do.
- It will likely depend on how Ohioans have been educated regarding the issue.
- We would hope there are enough people in Ohio who would vote it down.
- We feel the majority of voters would respond the same as the California voters.
- Our feeling is that the vote would be close, even with considerable "educational effort" by Farm Bureau and others in agriculture.

PUBLIC POLICY

See You at Leadership Conference
Public Policy Action Team leaders and others will have the opportunity to gain valuable information and network with other counties at this year's OFBF Leadership Conference. Talk to your organization director if you have an interest in getting involved.

COMMUNICATIONS

Discover Your Social Web
Still confused about social media? Learn more about what it is and how to use it by accessing *Ohio Farm Bureau's Guide to Social Media* at www.ofbf.org/media-and-publications/social-media/. The guide is easy to understand and use for both beginners and experienced users.

From Field to Table Festival – Sept. 12-13
OFBF and Franklin County Farm Bureau are teaming up with Franklin Park Conservatory in Columbus for a new fall family fun event. OFBF members get all sorts of discounts, including half off admission tickets. Learn from educational programs focusing on green living, eating locally and seasonally, harvest and fall family activities, and gardening. Sample Ohio foods and products an much more! Visit fpconservatory.org for more information.

ORGANIZATION

Ohio Farm Bureau Platinum Credit Card
Farm Bureau membership offers dozens of discounts and savings through member benefit providers, including the *Ohio Farm Bureau Platinum Visa Credit Card* from Nationwide Bank. The card features a 2 percent cash-back reward on purchases from select OFBF membership benefit providers including Grainger, Staples, Sherwin Williams and others, as well as 1 percent cash-back on all other purchases. Members can enjoy a 0% annual percentage rate (APR) for 12 billing cycles on automotive repairs from date of purchase, too.

To find out more about applying for the program, a listing of member benefit service providers and others services provided by Nationwide Bank, visit the OFBF Web site at www.ofbf.org.

HONEYBAKED WINNER

3A Advisory Council
Stark County

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