

On biogas: "We can create jobs, reduce our dependence on foreign oil and improve the environment."
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Mobile poultry processor could help small farms
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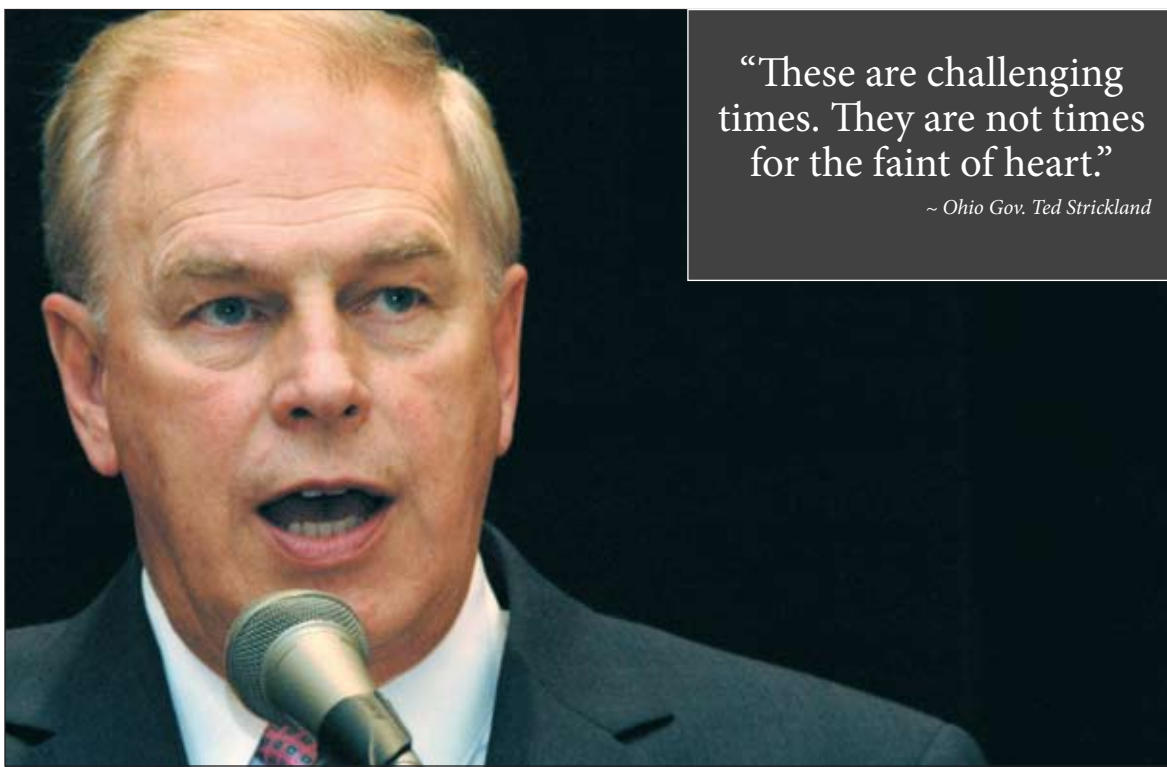
BUCKEYE FARM NEWS

OHIO'S LARGEST AGRICULTURAL NEWSPAPER

FEBRUARY 26, 2009 | VOLUME 8 | ISSUE 10

Bold Proposal

In tough economy, Strickland gives farmers his vision for budget, education



"These are challenging times. They are not times for the faint of heart."
~ Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland

Lawmakers will sort through the governor's plans over the coming months.

Agriculture among sectors to see cuts, fee hikes in budget plan

BY SETH TETER

On the heels of his proposal to prevent a more than \$7 billion budget shortfall, Gov. Ted Strickland recently told Ohio Farm Bureau Federation (OFBF) members that it's time for the state to toughen up and make wise decisions.

The poor economy led to decreased tax revenue while demand for services increased, Strickland said.

"We're trying to deal with these harsh realities and it's forcing us to become a little more creative and a little more focused in how we use the resources available to us," he said.

Ohio already had to cut nearly \$2 billion from the

current budget, said OFBF Director of State Policy Beth Vanderkooi, and the economic fallout demands further reductions in 2010-2011. Ohio's constitution requires lawmakers to pass a balanced budget.

"(Policymakers) realized that if we flat fund Ohio's budget, there was still going to be a \$7.3 billion hole," Vanderkooi said. "In a \$52 billion budget, that's a big hole."

Despite the need for cuts, the new budget proposal would boost state spending to \$54.7 billion in the next biennium.

Strickland has vowed not to raise taxes, although some argue that his plan to increase 120 state fees amounts to
See AGRICULTURE, pg 6

CRUNCHING NUMBERS

\$52,000,000,000 in the existing state budget

- a \$7,300,000,000 funding shortfall

+ \$54,700,000,000 in the next budget

= program cuts, fee increases, but not higher taxes...yet.

DOWN

Funding for Ohio State Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center



UP

120 state fees including 24 at the Department of Agriculture



Ag Day at the Capitol

More than 300 county Farm Bureau leaders recently gathered in Columbus to meet with state lawmakers on Ohio's budget, education funding and other issues affecting agriculture and rural life.

In addition, Gov. Ted Strickland, Senate President Pro Tempore Tom Niehaus and House Speaker Armond Budish addressed the group. Included in this *Buckeye Farm News* are highlights from those meetings.

"We want to make sure that we're not setting ourselves up for a massive tax increase."

~ Republican Sen. Tom Niehaus



Governor calls for education overhaul

BY SETH TETER

Gov. Ted Strickland hopes a sweeping education plan will increase accountability and performance standards while reworking school funding.

"We're looking at the evidence as to what really works and we want to develop a system that is built upon that evidence," the governor told farmers this month.

The plan aligns with several Farm Bureau priorities, including the expanded use of distance learn-

ing programs, celebrating academic achievement at the same level as athletic achievement, improving the teacher evaluation process and reforming teacher tenure practices. Farm Bureau also advocates for fair taxation of agricultural property owners and better integrating agricultural education into curricula.

When fully implemented in 10 years, Strickland's proposal would extend the school year by 20 days, bringing Ohio in line with the international average, he said. It would
See EDUCATION, pg 6

Farmers meet with state lawmakers

BY DAN TOLAND

Ohio farmers met face to face with their lawmakers during Farm Bureau's AgDay at the Capitol.

"It's kind of a one-day blitz to get out our agricultural message," said Ohio Farm Bureau Federation (OFBF) Senior Director of Legislative and Regulatory Policy Adam Sharp. "OFBF staff can only do as much as elected officials can relate back to their districts. Farm Bureau members put a face on the issues. Legislators need to hear the stories to make it real to them."

"We're here as a sounding board

if you need us," Mahoning County Farm Bureau member Douglas Martig told a legislator from his district who in turn asked Martig to draft a letter of Farm Bureau members' concerns.

It was Martig's first time participating in Ag Day, and it was an experience he found valuable.

"It's good to meet with (legislators); they want to hear our concerns. Farm Bureau and its members are respected, and it's especially critical to be here now (during the current economic state)."

Mahoning County Farm Bureau
See FARMERS, pg 2



Rep. Jim Zehringer, center, talks with Farm Bureau members from his district.

Photo by Seth Teter

Photo by Seth Teter

PUBLIC POLICY

NEWS *briefs***New administration reverses funds for COOL**

USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack, under a directive from the White House, recently put a hold on all regulations that the Agriculture Department issued in the Bush administration's final days, promising to "conduct a thorough review." This included country-of-origin labeling (COOL) rules. Vilsack later announced USDA would reverse a Bush administration plan to move \$3.2 million from the Specialty Block Grant Program to enforce country-of-origin labeling (COOL). Former Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer planned to transfer the \$3.2 million from the block grant program to pay for enforcement and education activities for COOL.

Equine bill re-introduced

In January, Rep. John Conyers, D-MI, re-introduced the Prevention of Equine Cruelty Act of 2009 (H.R.503). With 60 sponsors, the bill would criminalize the possession, transport, sale, delivery or receiving in interstate or foreign commerce of a horse or horse meat with the intent that it be used for human consumption. It would thus apply to the transport and sale of horses for slaughter in the United States or to a foreign country. Penalties would include fines and/or one year imprisonment for a first offense or one involving five or fewer horses. Offenses involving more than five horses or repeat offenders would face increased fines and/or up to three years imprisonment. The bill was introduced in the last Congress as well, but this time a provision was removed that required the attorney general to "provide for the humane placement or other humane disposition of any horse seized in connection with an offense."

**Register for Trends and Issues Conference**

The future of farm policy and climate change will be up for discussion at OFBF's 2009 Trends and Issues Conference on March 26 at the Fawcett Center in Columbus. Speakers include Ohio State University Agricultural Economist Carl Zulauf and Garth Boyd of Camco Global, a carbon credit aggregation firm. Reservations are required and are due March 9. Visit www.ofbf.org or call 614-246-8288 for details.

Senate bill aims to incentivize biogas

A bill introduced in the U.S. Senate last month promotes the development of biogas through tax incentives.

Ohio Sen. Sherrod Brown, D, joined a bipartisan group of seven senators in introducing the bill, which seeks to reduce billions of gallons of fossil fuels through renewable energy sources produced from animal waste.

"Farm Bureau is very supportive of developing and building new renewable energy systems that take advantage of agricultural sources. Biogas is one of those important areas of new renewable energy development," said Adam Sharp, OFBF's senior director of legislative and regulatory policy.

Brown, the first Ohioan to serve on the Senate Agriculture Committee in more than 40 years, said the bill puts existing byproducts to productive use. Biogas is produced through technologies such as anaerobic digestion, which can convert animal wastes and other agricultural or organic wastes into at least 50 percent methane. Biogas can be used as is on the farm or as a renewable substitute for natural gas, propane or other fossil fuels.

"Ohio's strength in agriculture along with its growing renewable energy industry positions us to be a leader in the production of renewable natural gas," Brown said. "By encouraging its production, we can create jobs, reduce our dependence on foreign oil and improve the environment."

The bill would encourage greater production of biogas for energy purposes by providing biogas producers with a tax credit of \$4.27 for every million British thermal units (mmBtu) of biogas produced.

While the biogas bill is written as a standalone bill, it could easily be put into an energy bill, said Dale Arnold, Ohio Farm Bureau's director of energy services.

If the United States used half of its waste biomass, biogas could replace about 5 percent of the natural gas currently being used, reducing carbon dioxide emissions by up to 70 million metric tons per year, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

FARMERS from PG 1

President David Kenreich, a two-time veteran of Ag Day agreed. "We (Farm Bureau members) strongly believe in what we do. We don't always get what we want, but when we talk our legislators listen."

The meetings also gave legislators a chance to ask for opportunities to meet and learn back in the districts. Some even set up tours and meetings based upon the face-to-face encounters.

"Even a city boy like me knows the importance of Farm Bureau and people like you to the state of Ohio," said Ohio House Speaker Armond

Budish, addressing Ag Day attendees. "Our farms have been and will continue to be a critical part of creating a strong state."

County leaders attended break-out sessions to help prepare for meetings with their legislators. Topics focused upon the mechanics of ballot issues, private property rights, importance of involvement and energy opportunities in agriculture. According to Sharp, Farm Bureau members met in 80 percent or more of the offices of the entire Ohio House.

Stimulus money has positive impacts for farmers

The \$787 billion economic stimulus package passed by Congress will have benefits for agriculture.

OFBF Senior Director of Legislative and Regulatory Policy Adam Sharp said stimulus package investments in infrastructure, broadband and renewable energy are of particular interest to Ohio farmers.

Gov. Ted Strickland is banking part of his recently proposed state budget on the stimulus package, of which OFBF believes a good portion of funds should be used to address infrastructure, including broadband expansion and development.

"Transportation is a key driver of economic growth, creates jobs and improves prosperity for all citizens," Sharp said. Highways, bridges, railways, locks and dams would all be preserved, maintained and strategically built if Ohio's transportation assets would be integrated into one efficient multi-modal system that gives travelers and shippers multiple options, according to Sharp.

In a letter to Congress, American Farm Bureau Federation President Bob Stallman said America's inland

navigation system plays a critical role in the economy, moving more than 1 billion tons of domestic commerce valued at more than \$300 billion.

Ohio Farm Bureau supports integration, maintenance, upgrades and expansion of the state's highway, water, rail and air systems to support Ohio's agbioresource industry (including bioproducts), which also receives a boost through the stimulus bill.

Tax incentives in the package are aimed to increase electricity produced by biomass and an ever-growing opportunity for wind energy.

OFBF Director of Energy Services Dale Arnold said the plans for the refitting of energy transmission systems and local distribution structure will be the largest overhaul since the 1930s. "We've known for a number of years that we need to rebuild our systems and develop different strategies," he said. "Through the stimulus, what has been a challenge is now becoming an opportunity. We're happy to see advances moving forward."

Bioproducts made of renewable sources instead of petroleum are also growing in popularity, Sharp said, adding that it's a bright spot in a

struggling economy for state leaders to champion.

Other appropriations are geared to expand broadband communication and health information technology across rural America.

"Broadband deployment is important to economic development, especially in rural Ohio," said Sharp. Ohio Farm Bureau supports the work of the Ohio Broadband Council and the Connect Ohio initiative in order to bring seamless broadband technology throughout the state.

"While some of these provisions will help agriculture and rural Ohio, only time will tell the overall success of the package," Sharp said.

Other stimulus provisions supported by Farm Bureau:

- clean renewable energy bonds for state and local governments
- increased tax incentive for alternative refueling (E-85) stations
- one year Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) patch to prevent 26 million families from being hit by the AMT
- extension of bonus depreciation and increased small business expensing for 2009
- one year delay of the 3 percent withholding tax on government payments including many USDA payments
- an increase in the higher education tax credit

"Only time will tell the overall success of the (stimulus) package."

—Adam Sharp, OFBF senior director, legislative and regulatory policy

TAKEN *at their word*

Ear-catching quotes from the past few weeks

Energy Secretary Steven Chu in the *L.A. Times* on the potential impact of global warming on natural water reserves.

"We're looking at a scenario where there's no more agriculture in California."

Environmentalist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. in Congressional testimony when asked if he had ever said hog farmers are a greater threat to America than Osama Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda terrorist network.

"I don't know if that (quotation) is accurate, but I believe it and I support it."

Former FCC economist Michael Katz stating in a National Public Radio report that government shouldn't support rural broadband because rural life is environmentally hostile, energy inefficient and weak in innovation.

"The notion that we should be helping people who live in rural areas avoid the costs that they impose on society ... is misguided."

To see these quotes in context, visit the "Featured Links" section at www.ofbf.org

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PUBLIC POLICY

MILC program helps dairy farmers cope with falling milk prices

Dairy producers are being encouraged to sign up for an old dairy program to help them cope with falling milk prices.

The Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC), which was initially authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill, provides monthly payments to producers when market prices drop below the program's defined trigger price, said Cameron Thraen, a dairy economist with Ohio State University Extension. When the market price drops below the trigger price, the difference between the two is calculated and farmers receive 45 percent of that difference.

"It was put into place at that time because milk prices were also quite low and pressure on dairy farms was pretty high financially," Thraen said.

He said decreased domestic and global demand has caused milk prices to tumble nearly 35 percent in just a few weeks.

MILC is now in the 2008 dairy title of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act. Thraen said the program has two changes: it now includes a feed cost adjuster and has increases in both the payment rate and production eligibility among small to medium-sized dairy farms.

The production cap to remain eligible has been raised from 2.4 million pounds to 2.985 million pounds annually, Thraen said. Once

a dairy farm's monthly milk shipment reaches the cap, the producer is no longer eligible to receive payments for the current fiscal year.

"That really extends the reach of the program," he said. "I've calculated that in Ohio that moves the program eligibility up from 125 cow herds to up to 165 cow herds."

MILC program sign-ups began Dec. 22. Producers can sign up anytime this year but must do so the month before they want to enter the program. Producers should contact their local Farm Service Agency to sign up for the program. Those who have participated in the previous MILC program need to re-enroll.

With rising feed and fuel costs, dairy producers could have "substantial payments" over the next few months, Thraen said.

"I've calculated out ... that over the year this could average \$1.60 a hundredweight on the eligible milk production. The highest ones look like in February, March and April where a MILC payment could be around \$1.90 to a little over \$2 a hundredweight."

Thraen encouraged producers to sign up for MILC soon.

"Any producer who is not signed up for the program or is not thinking about signing up is missing an excellent opportunity," he said.



Farm Bureau sets legislative priorities

Based on policies developed by its members, OFBF's board of trustees has set seven public policy priority issues for 2009. These issues will help focus OFBF's legislative efforts in the coming year. They are:

1. State budget: Maintain key agricultural programs including the Ohio Department of Agriculture budget (specifically livestock permitting, animal disease control and food safety programs), funding for Ohio State Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center and Soil and Water Conservation District funding.

2. Education reform: Support specific funding reforms, curriculum improvements and maintenance of agricultural education and Edison Centers funding as well as addressing accountability issues.

3. Business climate and taxes: Clarify sales tax on farm equipment including ATVs and removing the CAT tax inequity for privately-owned grain elevators; support accelerated depreciation of farm machinery on the state income tax form. Engage in debates on tax and fee structures and wage and labor issues; guard against mandates on small business, and advocate for regulatory reform and consistency.

4. Livestock: Support organizing the livestock community and establishing a coordinated strategy to proactively engage with ODA, animal care groups and others to protect the economic viability of Ohio's animal agriculture industry. Support proper manure application methods.

5. Transportation and infrastructure: Support integration, maintenance, upgrades and expansion of the state's highway, water, rail and air systems to support Ohio's agbioresource industry. Support expansion of broadband Internet access in rural Ohio. Support modification of axle weight limits for farm trucks and an exemption of farm machinery from the weight law. Support amending the definition of "farmer" to include employees for the Commercial Drivers License exemption. Support increasing force account limits and appropriate distribution of Clean Ohio funds.

6. Property rights and wildlife: Address crop damage from white-tailed deer and other wildlife species. Protect personal property rights by advocating on issues such as ATV trespassing, eminent domain proceedings, wildlife population control, implementation of new laws, mining, drainage, home sewage treatment, scrap metal theft, the Great Lakes Compact and more. OFBF is creating a legal foundation to strengthen its ability to act on these issues.

7. Energy: Ensure that conventional and renewable energy sources keep Ohio's economy moving forward. Support efforts into research and development to bring about increased energy generation. Support sound implementation of Ohio's new energy bill, a uniform siting and permit approval process for utility scale wind farms and updating tax laws to reflect new energy technology needs.

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Our Ohio Telling Agriculture's Story



Photo by Bryan Rinnert

Read about 4-H PetPALS in the next *Our Ohio* magazine.

In the March/April magazine

The March/April issue of *Our Ohio* will feature a story on two produce auctions and how they can be a travel destination to visit or maybe an event to make a purchase. Other stories include the best herbs to grow in Ohio, an overview of the information available to residents at their county courthouse, how the 4-H PetPALS program benefits the elderly and the 4-H youth who participate and an explanation of the deer herd's impact on Ohio farmers.

Our Ohio e-newsletter

The *Our Ohio* e-newsletter was recently redesigned. Each issue highlights timely information from the *Our Ohio* Web site, such as upcoming events, gardening tips and recipes as well as promotion of the *Our Ohio* television series and membership benefits. To receive the e-newsletter, go to the home page of www.OurOhio.org and click on e-letter sign-up. Encourage your friends and neighbors to sign up as well so that they can learn more about Ohio agriculture and Farm Bureau.

COUNTY news

Centenarian shares Farm Bureau history

Mahoning County Farm Bureau member Earla Smith was already 10 years old when the concept of Farm Bureau was born. Smith, now 100 years old, celebrated Ohio Farm Bureau's 90th Birthday Party at Mahoning County Farm Bureau's membership kick-off in January. In the photo to the right, Smith (center) shared a collection of Farm Bureau signs he has collected over the years. Pictured with Smith is Mahoning County Membership Chairman Bob Michael (l) and OFBF District 9 Trustee Frank Burkett.



Photo courtesy Mahoning County Farm Bureau

Coats from the Heartland

Seneca County Farm Bureau is collecting new and gently-used coats in all sizes as part of its "Coats from the Heartland" initiative. Collected coats will be distributed to the needy throughout northwest Ohio. OFBF Ambassador Club Member and Seneca County Farm Bureau President Dwight Clary said he used to collect and send coats to *Good Morning America's* coat drive, but thought a Farm Bureau coat drive would be a more direct way of helping local needy families. Coats may be dropped off at the Seneca County Farm Bureau office at the Seneca County Fairgrounds in Tiffin. Office hours are Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., closed Wednesday.



Coming next on Ohio Farm & Country

There was a time when telling your story meant talking to your neighbor across the fence. But today, telling your story has a whole new look. *Ohio Farm and Country* in March will share stories of people telling their stories.

Here's what's on tap: Farm Bureau members from across the state converged on the state capitol to meet face-to-face with their elected officials. Ag Day at the Capitol was designed to allow members to share the story of agriculture and key issues that could impact their farming operations and their communities. OFBF has created the AgriPOWER Institute, an advocacy-training program for members and others in the agriculture industry. This program helps individuals become top-notch spokespersons for the industry. One Wood County farmer took time to share his story and passion for agriculture with a young neighbor, and through his mentoring efforts he has created a very special friendship.

Ohio Farm and Country airs every Sunday at 9:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. as well as Tuesday evenings at 7:30 on ONN (*Ohio News Network*).

Paulding County couple appointed to AFBF young farmer committee

Ryan and Nikki McClure of Grover Hill were recently appointed by AFBF President Bob Stallman to serve on the organization's Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee.

The committee is made up of 16 Young Farmers and Ranchers (YF&R) from state Farm Bureaus across the United States.

The McClures have served as co-chairs of OFBF's Young Farmer Committee (now known as the Young Agricultural Professionals Advisory Team) and have lobbied on behalf of animal agriculture at both the state capitol and in Washington, D.C. Ryan is a fifth-generation farmer, working alongside his father and grandfather, where they raise corn, beans, wheat and cattle and have a contract wean-to-finish hog operation. Ryan is also a participant in OFBF's AgriPOWER Institute, an intensive leadership training program.

The McClures will receive training on leadership qualities, issue briefings and will hone other professional skills.

OFBF also appointed new members to its Young Agricultural Professionals Advisory Team. They represent OFBF's four state regions, and serve a two-year term, in which they are involved in planning programs and events.

Young Agricultural Professionals are OFBF members age 35 or younger who are interested in improving the business of agriculture, learning new ideas and developing important leadership skills.



Ryan and Nikki McClure

Learn more at www.ofbf.org or call 614-246-8277.

Young Agricultural Professionals Advisory Team

OFBF recently appointed four new couples to serve on its Young Agricultural Professionals Advisory Team. New advisory team members include:

- Matt and Rachel Heimerl of Johnstown (Southeast Region)
- Patrick and Mary Neill of Union City (Southwest Region)
- Steve and Sonya Quillin of Stone Creek (Northeast Region)
- Derek and Roshelle Rowe of Bucyrus (Northwest Region)

They join the following returning advisory team members:

- Kyle and Shelby Brammell of Kenton (Northwest Region)
- Chaircouple Jeremy and Michelle Evans of Dover (Northeast Region)
- Dan and Cindy Sturgill of Piqua (Southwest Region)
- Vice Chaircouple Scott and Jamie Metzger of Williamsport (Southeast Region)

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Brian Kalb
Seneca County Pork Producer.



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— ORGANIZATION —

NATIONWIDE NEWS

Two Northeast state Farm Bureaus become sponsors of Nationwide

Connecticut Farm Bureau Association (CFBA) and Vermont Farm Bureau (VTFB) became sponsors of Nationwide on Jan. 1, joining Pennsylvania Farm Bureau (PFB) and five other Farm Bureaus that work with Nationwide to promote insurance member benefits.

Nationwide's new relationships with CFBA and VTFB coincided with the Nationwide Agribusiness premier of its AgriChoice farm policy in New England. As with PFB members, Farm Bureau members in Connecticut and Vermont will have access to discounted member rates and an additional coverages endorsement within the AgriChoice policy.

"It's exciting to be working with a company steeped in Farm Bureau heritage that can deliver enhanced insurance services to our members," said Don Tuller, president of Connecticut Farm Bureau.

Keith Eckel, Nationwide chairman and past president of PFB, said, "We're proud to be associated with Connecticut and Vermont Farm Bureaus, and we're confident our new relationship will deliver a broader range of high quality coverages to members of both organizations."

MAY WE INTRODUCE...

"I think that Farm Bureau's biggest value is the voice we have in the legislature."

~ Doug Hafer, Marion County

Doug Hafer is a seventh generation farmer in Marion County. He works full-time with his father and uncle, raising corn, soybeans and wheat.



Hafer

Hafer has been a Marion County Farm Bureau member since 1994. He has been on the county board since joining Farm Bureau and has been president and secretary. He currently is the communications chair and has been actively involved in the Young Farmers program. In 2002 he was a Discussion Meet finalist.

Hafer and his wife, Shelly, have three daughters, ages 14, 8 and 5. He also is a member of the county port authority board.

"No matter what your operation is, there is always a legislative matter that Farm Bureau touches on that can benefit you. Farm Bureau benefits everybody, whether you're a farmer or associate member," he said.

"The biggest thing Farm Bureau does is helping everybody find ways to stay in the business of agriculture."

~ Allen Gahler, organization director for Lucas, Ottawa, Sandusky and Wood counties.

As an organization director for four northwest Ohio counties, Allen Gahler likes doing what he can to keep agriculture viable in the state.

"I enjoy the public policy side of my work ... anything I can do for the betterment of agriculture," he said. "As a whole, agriculture would be struggling without groups like Farm Bureau. Without a common voice, whether it's counteracting the animal rights or green movement, which doesn't want us using herbicides, we would fall so far behind in agriculture and not be able to get the world fed."



Gahler

Gahler started his current position in September of 2007. Prior to that, he was an Ohio State University Extension agent for agriculture and natural resources in Fairfield County for five years. He has a bachelor's degree in animal science and master's degree in ag education from Ohio State University.

Gahler and his wife Susie live in Ottawa County where he helps run the third-generation family farm with his father, brothers and cousin. They raise grain, hay and registered Angus cattle.

He is a 4-H adviser, superintendent of the Junior Fair Beef Committee and has served on various committees of the Ohio Cattlemen's Association and as secretary of the Ohio Angus Association.

Ohio BWC extends group rating program filing date

The Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation is extending the filing date for group rating programs. As a result, OFBF members may submit AC-3 authorizations for group rating programs until April 1. The new filing date will facilitate proposed changes designed to provide more competitive rates to

both current and prospective Ohio employers. Since 1991, OFBF has sponsored group rating programs to help employers reduce the cost of their workers' compensation premium resulting in more than \$200 million in premium savings. For more information, visit www.gatesmcdonald.com.



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on YOUR behalf

Here are some additional activities in which your support of Farm Bureau helped strengthen agriculture and rural Ohio.

2009 Ohio Farm Bureau Goals

Market Farm Bureau to achieve membership growth

Increase grassroots involvement by creating a volunteer-friendly Farm Bureau

Expand relations with Nationwide and other affinity organizations

Promote the agbioresource industry

Influence trade, labor, tax, education, energy and farm policy

Speak out and stand up for animal agriculture and the food industry

Protect personal property rights

Thieves pilfer lumber without a clear-cut law to punish them ➔ OFBF met with the Ohio Forestry Association to discuss timber theft issues and with Rep. Ross McGregor regarding proposed timber theft legislation.

Members have access to information from experienced Farm Bureau staff ➔ OFBF's public policy team recently met with members on easement and drainage issues; responded to questions about Ohio's new line fence law; and gave a pre-

sentation on legal issues impacting animal agriculture to an Ohio State University Animal Sciences class.

A strong legal team supports farmers ➔ OFBF Assistant Director of Agricultural Law Information David Pennington was recently appointed as secretary to the Ohio State Bar Association's Agricultural Law Committee. The statewide committee is made up of attorneys who practice or have a special interest in the area of agricultural law.

Climate change policies could open new avenues for agriculture ➔ OFBF participated in a meeting hosted by the Environmental Defense Fund to discuss opportunities available to farmers to offset greenhouse gas emissions.

Improved technologies allow rural Ohioans to keep pace with an ever-changing world ➔ OFBF participated in the Ohio Broadband Council's Policy and Outreach Subcommittee meeting.

New issues could impact the long-term sustainability of agriculture ➔ OFBF coordinated a meeting between USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Commodity Group executive directors to discuss Farm Bill Conservation Programs and participated in an Ag Viability Task Force Meeting.

a tax hike. Some fees have not been raised in decades, Strickland said, and Ohio's tipping fee, a charge levied on waste disposal, is significantly lower than surrounding states.

"Why is it financially viable for New York garbage to come to Ohio?" Strickland asked.

Of the proposed fee increases, 24 would occur at the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA).

"That's something that Farm Bureau is going to be monitoring very carefully over the next five months," Vanderkooi said. "We would encourage against excessive fee increases, but at the same time we still need funding to operate our programs, so it's a very nuanced consideration."

Additionally, Strickland outlined the need to cut funds to certain programs and noted that Ohio has more than 3,000 fewer employees than when he took office. His budget also relies heavily on funding from a

AGRICULTURE from PG 1

federal economic stimulus package.

"We've tried to do some things that will enable us to get through the short term problems while building for future prosperity," he said.

A priority for Farm Bureau will be to restore funding that was cut from Ohio State Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, according to Vanderkooi.

"Restoring that money is going to be very vital not just because these are great programs that help us to support agriculture, but they also support education, economic development and job creation," she said.

Farm Bureau also wants to ensure that Department of Agriculture programs related to the health and safety of the general public will continue to be supported by the general revenue fund, she said.

The Ohio House is holding hearings on the budget bill and it

will be sent to the Senate in the coming weeks.

Prior to the language of the bill being released, Sen. Tom Niehaus, R-New Richmond, told farmers there was an initial concern about the reliance on one-time money from the federal government.

"Right now we have a structural deficit. We do not have enough revenue coming into the state of Ohio to pay for all the programs that we fund," he said.

With the help of federal stimulus money, the new budget would represent a 6 percent increase over current spending, Niehaus said. He indicated that may not be sustainable once federal dollars dry up.

"We want to make sure...that we are not setting ourselves up for a massive tax increase in either the CAT tax, the sales tax or the income tax to fund programs that we just cannot afford to pay for," he said.

EDUCATION from PG 1

also establish universal all-day kindergarten.

Teachers would be required to complete a four-year residency with an experienced educator before they earn their license. They would be eligible for tenure after nine years instead of three. School boards would also have more authority to fire bad educators.

"I honor teachers, but not everybody is cut out to be a teacher," Strickland said.

For each school district, the Department of Education would issue an annual fiscal and operational report card to present to the taxpayers.

In addition to many other performance provisions, Strickland said

his plan also takes a more equitable approach to school funding.

The state would eventually see its share of local school budgets increase to 59 percent. It would also deal with complexities in Ohio's property tax law that frequently force schools to put levies on the ballot, Strickland said.

This would be done through a "conversion levy," which would allow certain school districts to tie a portion of local tax revenue to increases in property values. The result is that a base level of local school funding would increase with inflation rather than a vote.

The governor also said his proposal eliminates "phantom revenue,"

which occurs when the current state funding formula assumes school districts have money that doesn't really exist.

As lawmakers delve into the plan's details, questions are being raised as to whether the state can afford to pay for all of Strickland's big ticket items. OFBF believes any educational mandate should be fully funded through the life of the mandate.

"As more details of the governor's proposed education package become public, Ohio Farm Bureau will be working to ensure any education reform reflects our key values and priorities," said Beth Vanderkooi, OFBF director of state policy.

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OPINION

your **LETTERS**

Animal ID column leaves questions unanswered

I was reading a back issue of my *Buckeye Farm News* (March 2008). I have some questions about the OPINION page article "Disease outbreak shows need to track animals," by Bruce Knight, USDA under secretary for marketing and regulatory programs.

In his article, he states that the premises registration is free. However, he did not mention what the cost of "animal identification and tracing" will be. How will this tracing be accomplished?

How will "animal tracing" improve the food I eat? If I get mad cow disease 15 years from now, how will having a tracing system and a premises registration number improve my health?

~ Savery Rorimer, Cuyahoga County

Members should have supported Premise ID policy

The Ohio Farm Bureau Federation held its 90th annual meeting in December. What a great achievement. There was a large turnout of enthusiastic officers, trustees, delegates and visitors plus a number of excellent speakers discussing very timely topics.

One of these speakers was Ohio Department of Agriculture Director Robert J. Boggs. He addressed many things in his presentation, one of which was the national economy and the reduction of federal funding that will be coming back to the states for disease control.

I believe that with this cut in funding, the livestock industry should do whatever it can to help itself. Premise identification is one way to do this.

One of the policy proposals presented at the annual meeting was "In order to be competitive in the world market place and to ensure the safety of our food supply, Ohio Farm Bureau encourages all livestock producers to register their premises." But the proposal was voted down.

I think the two greatest fears livestock farmers face are fire and disease. Think of all the time and money that is spent on trying to prevent fires. Premise ID is a proven way to prevent livestock diseases, and it costs absolutely nothing.

Premise ID and Animal ID has been required in the United Kingdom since 2001. It is also required in all 25 European

Union Countries plus many other foreign countries, including Canada. Michigan has required Premise ID and Animal ID.

The purpose of the program is to be able to trace a disease outbreak as soon as possible. Think how long it took the United States to trace the cow that was discovered with BSE in Washington in 2003 and also think of the drastic effect it had on beef prices and the cattle market in general.

Remember no disease was ever eradicated by voluntary testing.

The ID programs are in place and working well in many countries and within several states. We don't need to reinvent the wheel, we just need to put it into action in Ohio.

This program is not just about beef and slaughtered animals going into the food chain. Today, many large dairies have their heifers raised by custom growers. These custom growers can have heifers from several different herds at one time. Shortly before calving, these heifers will go back to their original herds. Think what a disease outbreak in a facility like this would mean without having traceability of the animals they had been in contact with.

Today, you can go into any drug store or grocery store selling prepackaged items and these items will all have a code that can be traced back to the manufacturer and all stores to which the product went.

We need that same traceability in the livestock industry today. We should take pride in the products we produce and be able to ensure the safety of our food to consumers in the global marketplace. Premise identification is a way to make that happen.

~ Bill McKarns, Columbiana County

BUCKEYE FARM NEWS LETTERS POLICY:

Buckeye Farm News welcomes letters from our readers. Letters 300 words or fewer from OFBF members are preferred and may be edited. Letters should include a name, address and daytime phone number.

Send letters to letters@ofbf.org or by mail to Letter to the Editor/*Buckeye Farm News*, P.O. Box 182383, Columbus, OH, 43218.

Article's intent was educating farmers, creditors

The Nov. 13, 2008, *Buckeye Farm News* contained a story that reported on two recent Ohio Supreme Court decisions that could affect farmers. One court decision involved a farmer and his co-op and determined how much interest the co-op could charge on an open account without a written agreement. The Ohio Supreme Court held that the co-op could charge only the statutory rate of interest unless there was a written agreement with the farmer requiring a higher rate. The court further held that it was illegal to charge interest on interest.

The article was written to provide information and education to farmers and creditors alike. It was not intended to portray the co-op industry in a negative light. It just so happened that the court case involved a farmer and a co-op, but the legal principle applies to anyone extending credit, including lawyers, contractors, feed mills or anyone else the farmer does business with.

Farmers need co-ops. Co-ops provide a needed and valuable service. In these uncertain economic times, with fuel and fertilizer prices fluctuating wildly, the co-ops may find themselves in unique situations. Perhaps the long-time customer who promptly paid his account finds that he now needs credit. If such is the case, farmers should not be surprised when the local co-op requests a new signed agreement. The co-op is merely trying to comply with the law as stated by the Ohio Supreme Court.

~ Larry Gearhardt, OFBF senior director, local affairs

In these uncertain economic times, with fuel and fertilizer prices fluctuating wildly, the co-ops may find themselves in unique situations.

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NOTEWORTHY

Ohio looking into mobile or regional poultry slaughterhouse

Ohio is looking at the feasibility of using mobile or regional slaughtering units for poultry.

Currently, Ohio only has one small poultry processor in the northwestern area of the state, making it inconvenient and expensive for farmers who live far away, said Cindy Kalis, communication director for the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

"It's not feasible for people to do that. We need to have a mobile unit or one more centrally located. We're in the very infant stages of looking at this but we're definitely in support of it," she said.

The Toledo-based Center for Innovative Food Technology has been working on a feasibility study at the request of the agriculture department, Ohio State University, Innovative Farmers of Ohio and other community and agricultural groups. Not having enough poultry processors for small, independent producers prevents them from being able to capitalize on the demand for locally produced food or free range chickens, said Rebecca Singer, associate program director for CIFT.

"A lot of what we've been hearing is that people want to grow chickens but they don't have a place to slaughter them. And those who already raise chickens have to travel a couple of hours to process them. A number of people in the poultry industry have been talking about the need for



A mobile slaughterhouse could serve Ohio farmers interested in raising poultry on a small scale.

processors," Singer said.

CIFT recently visited a mobile poultry processing unit that is managed and located at the Kentucky State University Research and Demonstration Farm in Frankfort, Ky. The 20-foot by 8-foot trailer used to process the poultry was initially completely mobile, moving around the state to farms, but is now transported by truck among a series of docking stations strategically located around the state. Several hundred birds are processed daily in the trailer.

Bringing the trailer to docking stations makes it easier to comply with regulatory issues, Singer said. All processing facilities in Ohio are regulated by the agriculture department.

"Moving the equipment from farm to farm is not a good model because there's the issue of what to do with wastewater and waste from the

poultry," she said, noting that having docking stations eliminates the cost of hauling ice used to chill the birds after they are harvested.

Singer also said that Kentucky changed its process and now has only Extension personnel run the equipment. Initially anybody could harvest the birds, which wasn't very efficient, she said.

CIFT is also looking into the cost of starting up a mobile or regionally located slaughtering unit, including how many birds would have to be processed to pay for it and how much to charge for the use of it.

"It depends a little bit on funding," Singer said. "I'm not sure what will happen with budgets being the way they are right now. We're trying to find other sources of funding. Funding will be a major hurdle in how fast this will happen."



TEACHER'S LOUNGE

Help spread the word about OFBF's new teacher newsletter

OFBF is offering an education resource specifically for teachers. The *Teacher's Lounge* newsletter contains resources from OFBF and related groups to help apply agriculture in lesson plans. Ideas based upon current events, local field trip possibilities, conference and workshop information, up-to-date agriculture statistics and the latest classroom resources are some of the items available.

Relevant to any grade level, *Teacher's Lounge* is sent via e-mail bimonthly, and an abbreviated version appears in *Our Ohio* magazine. PDF versions are at www.OurOhio.org under "Food/Families," then "Teacher's Lounge."

The information is easily accessed, but OFBF is looking for assistance from Farm Bureau members to get the newsletter to as many teachers as possible.

"It's important that Farm Bureau members help us contact teachers who they think would benefit from Ag in the Classroom materials and events," said Judy Roush, OFBF education specialist. "If they can supply us with teachers' names, schools and e-mail addresses, we can start to build relationships with those teachers."

For more information, e-mail Judy Roush at jroush@ofbf.org or call 614-246-2743. Print copies of *Teacher's Lounge* may also be ordered through county Farm Bureau offices.



\$2,500 reward: Vic Fisher (center) of Union County recently received Ohio Farm Bureau's \$2,500 reward for submitting information that led to the conviction of criminals who stole property from Farm Bureau members Gary and JoAnne Rausch. Also pictured with Fisher, from left, are Organization Director Katie Grove, County Farm Bureau President Josiah Robinson, JoAnne Rausch and Deputy Sheriff Christopher Skinner.



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