



THE OHIO AGRICULTURE AND RURAL COMMUNITIES ACTION PLAN

2021 Priority Issues

Over the last eight years, Ohio farmers have suffered declining farm income, devastating crop damage, eroding markets and now the effects of a global pandemic. Rural communities are hanging on as their small businesses close, students attempt to learn from home and economic opportunities dry up. In 2021, Ohio Farm Bureau is calling on policymakers to work with us to implement an agenda to help revitalize Ohio agriculture and our rural communities.

Invest in COVID Recovery

Farm Bureau is calling for a concentrated investment in COVID recovery, including vaccinations for farm and food processing workers and to open small businesses that have been devastated by the pandemic. Small businesses such as restaurants and others who produce value-added agricultural products in our small communities need additional support to survive.

Farm Bureau will:

- Advocate for fiscal policies and regulatory reforms to incentivize business sustainability that recognize the diversity and unpredictability of the agricultural industry.
- Support the development of businesses that produce value-added products from locally grown agricultural commodities.
- Promote enactment of legislation that helps farmers and ranchers meet their labor needs.

Strengthen the Food Supply Chain

The challenges of 2020 also put a strain on America's food supply system, particularly meat processing facilities. The recent setbacks also make it more difficult for the next generation to get started and to maintain the health and growth of our communities.

Farm Bureau will:

- Promote our county fairs returning once again as a centerpiece in our communities, providing marketing outlets for our youth and an economic driver for our state.
- Work to advance Young and Beginning Farmers as they face significant challenges in this current economic environment.
- Promote policies to increase meat and poultry processing capacity in Ohio to make our food system more resilient for farmers and consumers.
- Advocate for career technical education to encourage the growth of agricultural education programs.
- Support the FFA and 4-H programs, particularly toward student access to excellent facilities.

Connect Rural Ohio

The coronavirus pandemic made ever more clear the growing need for reliable broadband connectivity throughout rural parts of Ohio. Running a business, precision agriculture platforms, virtual learning opportunities and telehealth all require reliable connectivity. Broadband development is crucial to the economic viability of our communities.

Farm Bureau will:

- Support legislation and initiatives that bring proper infrastructure, affordable broadband and high-speed internet access to unserved and underserved parts of the state.

- Engage in all discussions surrounding the state's comprehensive broadband plan, as the largest landowner organization in Ohio.
- Secure resources to rebuild, repair or modernize transportation infrastructure, including rural roads and bridges, ports and inland waterway locks and dams.

Promote Efficient Budgeting and Regulatory Reform

Continuing progress toward regulatory reform and properly resourcing the key agencies that impact the agriculture and food system is vital.

Farm Bureau will:

- Seek funding for the Ohio Department of Agriculture that allows it to effectively carry out its core mission and other responsibilities.
- Ensure that institutions vital to agriculture's success, particularly those with research facilities and agricultural education programs, are fully funded.
- Continue to work for a regulatory environment that enables farmers to be productive as well as environmentally and economically sustainable.

MORE

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Invest in Farmers' Responsible Land Management Practices

Important funding has been allocated to partner with farmers in the Maumee River Watershed to continue expanding best practices focused on proactive solutions to address the state's water quality. Steps need to be taken to increase the reach of programs like H2Ohio to invest in these practices in every corner of the state.

Farm Bureau will:

- Advance research and real-world examples of the best land management practices and share those results with farmers and consumers, which will continue to be the focus of our Blanchard River Demonstration Farms Network.
- Participate in and promote the Ohio Agricultural Conservation Initiative, and help farmers participate in a fully-funded H2Ohio program.
- Provide voluntary, incentive-based tools and technical assistance for farmers, ranchers and foresters to maximize carbon sequestration and the reduction of other greenhouse gas emissions.

Protect Landowner Rights

Once land is developed, it's gone forever. Ohio lags behind most states in protections for landowners. For example, Ohio is the only state that does not provide a protection known as inverse condemnation, a simple concept that allows landowners to challenge

the taking of property without compensation. Landowners should be afforded the ability to adequately challenge the necessity of takings by eminent domain, and landowners should receive attorney's fees when they have to take the government to court to protect their property rights.

Farm Bureau will:

- Lead efforts for additional landowner protections, including eminent domain reform and streamlined judicial procedures.
- Seek stronger requirements for local government use of private land for projects that impact agricultural land such as rails to trails projects.
- Continue to engage in ballot initiatives, judicial challenges and nuisance lawsuits so farmers can freely and responsibly operate their farms for generations to come.

Develop Energy Solutions

Agriculture is being called upon to provide feedstocks to help produce energy, as well as accommodate generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure on farmland.

Farm Bureau will:

- Promote a strong Renewable Fuels Standard.
- Engage in all legislation and discussions surrounding the state's energy portfolio.
- Advocate for greater transparency and education for royalty holders.

Help Farmers Cope with Farm Stress

The challenges of farming have been mounting for years creating a strain on families and employers.

Farm Bureau will:

- Focus on grassroots initiatives that engage a wide range of stakeholders to offer prevention strategies for men, women and youth at risk in agriculture.
- Promote a culture that recognizes mental health as a key component of overall health.
- Support policies and legislation to provide stress assistance programs to farmers, to help increase awareness and reduce stigma for rural mental health issues.

Promote Expanded Trade Markets

Access to foreign markets helps boost farm profitability and sustain the agricultural industry for generations to come. Expanding access can be accomplished both through new trade agreements and enforcement of existing trade commitments.

Farm Bureau will:

- Promote the expansion of trade opportunities for U.S. agriculture, including with members of the Comprehensive & Progressive Trans Pacific Partnership agreement, U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, China via the Phase 1 Agreement, as well as other nations.



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