



# The Ohio Agriculture and Rural Communities Action Plan

## 2022 Priority Issues

*The agriculture sector faces an ever-increasing volatile economy. Crop prices were solid in 2021, but gains will be mitigated for many farmers as input prices have skyrocketed entering the 2022 growing season. Consumers continue to pay higher prices for food, but poultry and livestock farmgate prices remain marginal. While dealing with the lingering effects of the pandemic, including inflation and other economic uncertainties, Ohio Farm Bureau calls on policymakers to implement this action plan to help bolster Ohio agriculture and our rural communities.*

### **STRENGTHEN THE FOOD SUPPLY CHAIN AND FOCUS ON THE ECONOMY**

From bottlenecks at livestock processing facilities, to increasing feed prices, to limited availability of important crop inputs like fertilizer and herbicides, farmers have been impacted by supply chain issues in the wake of the pandemic.

#### **Farm Bureau will:**

- Promote policies and programs to increase meat and poultry processing capacity in Ohio to make the food system more resilient for farmers and consumers.
- Secure resources to rebuild, repair or modernize transportation infrastructure, including rural roads and bridges, ports and inland waterway locks and dams.
- Advocate for fiscal policies and regulatory reforms to incentivize business sustainability that recognizes 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 meet their labor needs.

### **PROTECT LANDOWNER RIGHTS**

Once land is developed, it's gone forever. Ohio lags behind most states in protections for landowners. 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, streamlined judicial procedures and agricultural easement program enforcement.
- 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.

### **SUPPORT THE NEXT GENERATION OF FARMERS**

Agriculture in Ohio is at a generational crossroads. Strategies must be deployed to ensure the next generation of producers is well positioned to continue Ohio's strong position as a top agricultural production state.

#### **Farm Bureau will:**

- Work to support young and beginning farmers as they face significant challenges in this current economic environment.
- Advocate for career technical education to encourage the growth of agricultural education programs.
- Promote the growth of critical workforce development programs like TechCred and industry credentialing.

### **CONNECT RURAL 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 Ohio communities. Now that broadband has received historic levels of funding, it is crucial that reliable broadband infrastructure is delivered throughout rural parts of Ohio.



MORE

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### *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.

### **INVEST IN FARMERS' RESPONSIBLE LAND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

How farmers operate and the tools they use to raise their products continue to come under attack. Additionally, important funding has been allocated to partner with farmers in the Maumee River Watershed and 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:*

- Actively engage with regulators and industry partners to ensure sound science and workable regulations are used for the approval of crop protectants, pest controls and other technologies needed to have a sustainable farm.
- 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 the Blanchard River Demonstration Farms Network.

- Participate in and promote the Ohio Agricultural Conservation Initiative and help farmers participate in a fully-funded H2Ohio program.
- Continue to work with our conservation and commodity organization partners to promote ongoing conservation programs that enhance Ohio's water quality.
- 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.

### **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 and members accommodating wind and solar energy.

### **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 for members and reduces stigma.
- 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.



Ohio Farm Bureau Federation | 280 N. High Street | Columbus, OH 43215

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