



OHIO ECOLOGICAL FOOD AND FARM ASSOCIATION 2023 FARM BILL PLATFORM

INCREASING INVESTMENTS IN LOCAL AND REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS

OEFFA members believe that increasing investments in diverse, local and regional food systems in the 2023 Farm Bill is essential for our future.

Access to local, fresh, nutrient-dense food is foundational to community health. When federal programs empower small-scale agriculture and local entities to be good neighbors and community builders, our regional food system becomes healthier, stronger, and more resilient and equitable.



Decades of Disinvestment

Our regional food system includes farms, value-added producers, farmers markets, food hubs, produce auctions, processors, distributors, retailers, organizations, and more.



Increased investment in these community-level assets and local infrastructure for aggregation, processing, and distribution is overdue. **Without support, Ohio’s family farmers and food businesses will continue to disappear from our communities, cutting off an important source of local food.**

More than 34 million Americans are food insecure, but Alex Ball of Old City Acres believes there’s plenty of food to feed everyone. The challenge is distribution—one local producers are uniquely equipped to address.

“I got started farming when I was 18 because I saw a grocery store in my neighborhood close down. I saw the effects of food access directly in my own backyard. I thought, I’ve got to help feed people in my community,” said Ball. **“Small, local farms are community farms. They’re businesses that are built on community, on selling to local folks.”**

His farm has taken steps to “grow the community of people who have access to [his] food” by creating a more inclusive CSA model, but he notes that competition from corporate delivery services and lack of access to capital to grow his business are obstacles.



For 10 years, Alex Ball has farmed year-round on his quarter-acre urban market garden outside Detroit, MI.

OHIO'S LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM



\$80 million in direct-to-consumer sales and \$118 million in retailer and restaurant sales in 2017



15 full-time jobs created per \$1 million in revenue (compared to only 3 jobs for food that leaves the region)



400 farmers markets generate about \$11,000 per market day



Nearly 75 percent of farmers markets accept federal nutrition assistance



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Field-Tested Solutions

Even modest investments in local and regional food systems can yield large returns.

Hamilton County, Ohio-based Green Umbrella received a Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) grant in 2017 to grow two existing regional food hubs. The hubs co-located to share space and common expenses to achieve cost-saving efficiencies, developed new wholesale markets, and received technical assistance to meet food safety requirements and improve warehousing and transportation capabilities.

Annual sales increased from \$21,500 to \$734,843 and the number of new institutional clients grew from 8 to 126.

Streamlining existing programs, ensuring equitable access, and providing more support will lead to better public health outcomes, more food system jobs in the community, preservation of farmland and culture, and better resilience against supply chain disruptions.



Meeting Our Untapped Potential

Many farmers' livelihoods depend 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.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) should increase investments in the farm bill's Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP), which includes LFPP—proven successful by Green Umbrella in Cincinnati—the Farmers Market Food Promotion Program (FMFPP), and Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG).



THE FUTURE IS IN OUR HANDS

The farm bill shapes virtually every aspect of the U.S. food and agricultural system. The 2023 Farm Bill is our single greatest opportunity to realize our vision for a future where sustainable and organic farmers thrive, local food nourishes our communities, and agricultural practices protect and enhance our environment.

Democracy belongs to all of us, and it's up to us to advocate for strong policies that benefit our whole community and the Earth. Your voice is needed to make sure government and public institutions are accountable and exercise their responsibility to protect our health and well-being and support natural ecosystems.

To join us in calling for farmer-focused solutions in the 2023 Farm Bill, including key improvements to the Local Agriculture Market Program, go to action.oeffa.com/farm-bill.

