

Connecting with Candidates

A toolkit to help you get to know your
candidates on food and farm policy
matters



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The Policy Program

of the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association

Formed in 1979, the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA) cultivates a future in which sustainable and organic farmers thrive, local food nourishes our communities, and agricultural practices protect and enhance our environment.

To realize that vision, changes in state and federal policy are needed so small- and mid-sized farmers can thrive in fair and transparent markets and access the land they need to grow products that sustain community resilience.

OEFFA's policy program empowers our members to enact that change.



“Our current food system is designed to make it as hard as possible for farms growing food in harmony with nature to have a successful business. For the farmers we serve to thrive, regardless of their scale or what they raise, we need to change that system, which means changing policies at the federal, state, and local levels to support farmers who feed their communities.”

Milo Petruziello
OEFFA Policy Director

How to Use This Toolkit

02

This election season, we invite you to rally for food and farm issues. Food production and access issues concern us all. Political candidates need to understand the barriers Ohioans face in accessing healthy food and the challenges that impact local producers and the resilience of our local food systems.



Finding out how candidates approach issues that matter to you can help you make educated decisions about which candidates to support. Further, public discourse about these issues can increase awareness and help to hold elected officials accountable to their campaign pledges.

Use this toolkit to discuss food and farm issues at public debates, town hall meetings, and any time you have an opportunity to interact with a candidate for public office. Ask any—or all—of the questions and personalize them to suit your needs. We've provided some topics to help you with this.

We have compiled 10 questions in the areas of:



Climate Change



Land Access



Food Access



Conservation



Farmer Viability



Local Food Systems



Workforce Development



Consolidation

Finding Your Candidates

03



1 Ballotpedia

After entering the address where you are registered to vote, Ballotpedia's sample ballot lookup tool displays all of the positions that need to be filled and the potential candidates for each.

ballotpedia.org/Sample_Ballot_Lookup

2 The Ohio Secretary of State

Visit this website to find your district, register to vote, request an absentee ballot, and find your voting location.

ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/

3 OEFFA's Legislator Lookup

Use this resource to find and contact your incumbent federal members of Congress and state legislators. *Note: The results may not show candidates for the upcoming election, but will show you what district you're in.

action.oeffa.com/legislator-lookup/

Contacting Your Candidates

04

1

Online Submission Form

Many candidates have websites with comment submission forms. OEFFA member Deb Knapke shares how to use these submission forms in this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9-ICQPWydxk>

2

Phone Call

Calls to candidates are easy and effective. Former OEFFA Policy Director Amalie explains the process in this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FdhdzXitvwM>

3

Social Media

Many candidates have existing social media accounts, or create them during their campaign. You can reach out by sending a message or tagging them in a post/story with your question. OEFFA Grassroots Policy Organizer Nicole explains the process in this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uCuDdH6iXk>



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In Person

Consider posing these questions at public debates, town halls, farm tours, or any time you have an opportunity to interact with a candidate. You can find these events on a candidate's social media, website, or email lists. **It is always best to ask questions in public so that others have an opportunity to learn about the issues.**

Candidate Questionnaire

05



1. What will you do to mitigate the ongoing effects of the changing climate on our food system, support those most impacted by these changes, and shift our agricultural sector toward greater resilience?

Considerations for personalization:

- Heat effects on farm workers
- Drought
- Flooding
- Heat island effect
- Pest and disease increase/changes
- Changes in growing zones
- Climate migration
- Changes in what crops are available to meet demand
- Emergency planning
- Funding for drought-resistant/flood-tolerant crops



Climate Change



Conservation

Candidate Questionnaire

06



2. The resilience of our future food system depends on the health of our environment to grow food. What would you do to support farmers in caring for their land and the environment to grow healthy food?

Considerations for personalization:

- Soil health
- Water quality
- Air quality
- Industrial impacts
- Runoff
- Weather extremes
- PFAS contamination
- Conservation programs (EQIP, CSP, etc.)
- Organic agriculture



Climate Change



Conservation

Candidate Questionnaire

07



3. The median age of farmers is 58 and rising. To foster a resilient food system, we must make entering and succeeding in the agricultural sector more feasible. What would you propose to improve access to successful farming and food system careers and support workers' long-term resiliency in these fields?

Considerations for personalization:

- Green infrastructure
- Food systems job creation/education
- Urban development
- H-2A workers
- The Beginning Farmer Tax Credit program and similar policies
- Business support
- Farm management support



Workforce Development

Candidate Questionnaire

08



4. We are consistently losing farmland in Ohio and across the country at an alarming rate. How do you feel about this reality, and what policies do you feel are important to increase land access for beginning farmers, preserve farmland, and protect our future food security?

Considerations for personalization:

- Cost of land
- Programs like Mow to Own
- Zoning changes to support urban production
- Insurance issues with adding infrastructure, diversifying an operation, etc.
- Development pressures



Land Access

Candidate Questionnaire

09



5. While there are some programs that enable farmers to make a living wage, much more can be done to support them. How do you see policy playing a role to support the health, success, and viabilities of farmers and their farm businesses?

Considerations for personalization:

- Setting a livable wage that adjusts to the market
- Childcare costs
- Healthcare and access
- Mental health resources
- Access to loan and insurance programs



Farmer Viability

Candidate Questionnaire

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6. How will you support building out the infrastructure needed to allow farmers, farmers' markets, and small retailers to more easily integrate online SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) orders so they can better compete with large retailers and support local farmers?

Considerations for personalization:

- Technical and broadband access in areas with need
- Boundaries for farmers' market acceptance of food assistance programs
- Awareness of/access to programs
- Multilingual materials
- Guaranteed funding and increased ease of access
- Reduced boundaries to access grants/funding (i.e., requirements for matching funds)



Food Access

Candidate Questionnaire



7. Food processing infrastructure bolsters the resilience of our food system, creates jobs, and builds wealth in local communities. Yet, we sorely lack enough meat processing and vegetable packaging facilities in Ohio. How would you approach building out the network of Ohio's food processing facilities?

Considerations for personalization:

- Workforce development and training
- Job creation
- Consolidation of the industry
- Building out an on-ramp to GAP and other certifications
- Supporting programs like Ohio CAN



Local Food Systems

Candidate Questionnaire

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8. Due to consolidation of the food industry, market access for local farmers is consistently at risk. How would you support local farmers feeding their communities, level the playing field, and combat the increasing corporate control of our food and agricultural systems?

Considerations for personalization:

- State and federal checkoff programs
- Access to federal crop insurance
- Anti-trust measures
- Packers and Stockyards Act
- Land prices and farming costs



Consolidation

Candidate Questionnaire

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9. In many areas of Ohio and across the country, zoning policies increase the distance between where food is grown and where it is consumed. How can policy shape better local food scaling options for producers and consumers to support local economies?

Considerations for personalization:

- Incentivizing institutions using food as medicine, community cultivation, and education
- Food processing infrastructure
- Local procurement of the government
- Support for programs like Ohio CAN



Local Food Systems

Candidate Questionnaire

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10. How do you personally support local farmers and contribute to your local food economy?

Considerations for personalization:

- Trips to the farmers' market
- Participation in a CSA
- Direct relationships with producers
- Backyard garden



Local Food Systems

Sharing Candidates' Responses

We encourage you to share what you learn from your candidates! Not everyone will have the time to reach out to their candidates, nor will all candidates respond to questions. By sharing what we hear from our candidates, we can paint a picture of what the upcoming election might mean for our food and farming systems.



Don't forget to tag us!



@oeffapolicy



Share on Social Media

Create a post, story, or reel on your favorite social media platform to amplify the response you got from a candidate.

PRO-TIP: Don't edit their response.



Reach out to OEFFA

We'd love to hear about your experience!

Send an email to policy@oeffa.org, letting us know who you reached out to and what they said.



Social Media Resources

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To customize and download a graphic you can use on social media to share your advocacy work:

1. Open the Canva templates for **Instagram** and **Facebook**. Select 'Use template for new design.'
2. Customize the pages as needed.
Download and share one or all of them!
3. Customize the below caption or write your own (be sure to tag or mention the candidate).
4. Tag @oeffapolicy so we can share and amplify the candidate's response.

Alternatively, use these links to directly download a design. Customize the caption to include which candidate you talked to and what their response was.



[Instagram graphic](#)

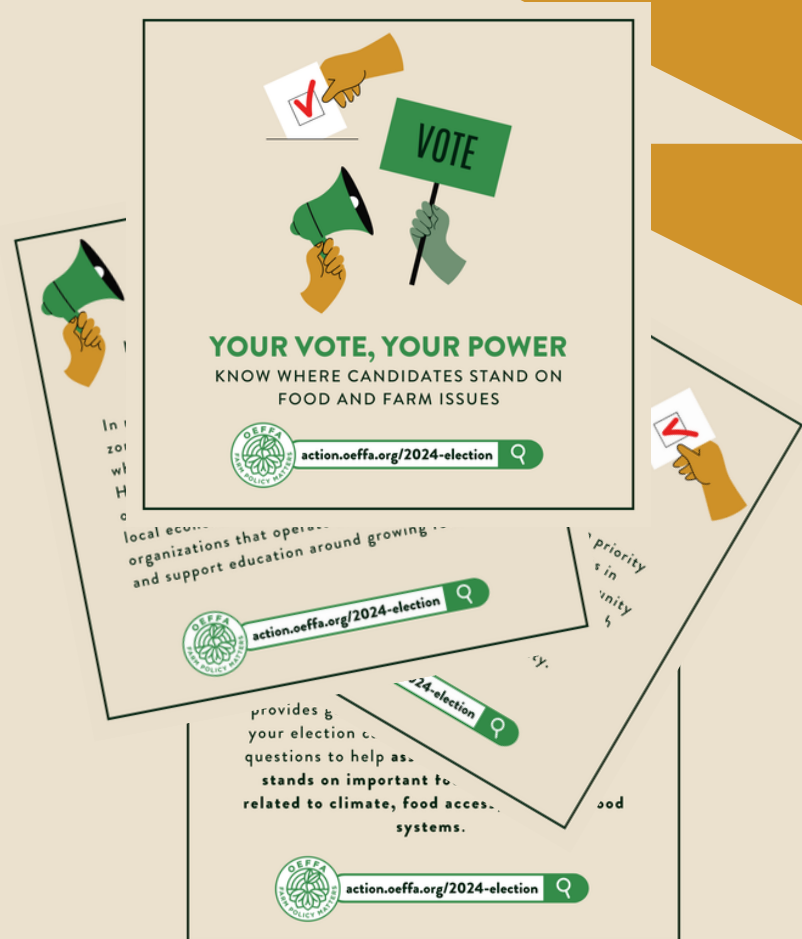


[Facebook graphic](#)

Sample Caption

I'm holding my candidates accountable in 2024. That's why I reached out to @candidate (insert your candidate's page) about the food and farm issues that are important to me. I heard from them... (share their answer(s) to your question(s))

The @oeffapolicy candidate questionnaire includes 10 questions about a range of issues—from conservation to food access. It includes helpful considerations to personalize the questions and resources to help find and contact candidates. Check it out at action.oeffa.org/2024-election.



Frequently Asked Questions

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1. Do I need to ask the candidate all 10 questions?

No, we recommend picking a few questions that are most relevant to you and your work.

2. There are a lot of candidates. Which one(s) should I reach out to?

We'd suggest sending your questions to candidates for the **Federal** Senate and House of Representatives along with state candidates. Don't know your district? Find it [here](#).

3. What do I do if I never hear back from the candidate?

Give them some time. It could take weeks or longer to hear back from the candidate. You can always try to reach them in multiple ways (through an online submission form, by email, by phone, at a town hall, through social media).

4. A candidate responded to me! Now what?

We'd love to know who you reached out to, and what they shared! We encourage you to forward any responses to us at policy@oeffa.org, and share them with your networks through social media. Tell your friends and family about what you learned!

5. What does OEFFA think about the upcoming election?

As a registered 501(c)3, OEFFA cannot endorse or oppose any candidate for public office. A candidate's fitness for office should be judged for a variety of qualifications that go far beyond the questions contained in this toolkit.



Contact Information

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Contact Us



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