

2026 OEFFA Candidate Questionnaire

The [Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association](#) (OEFFA), founded in 1979, cultivates a future in which sustainable and organic farmers thrive, local food nourishes our communities, and agricultural practices protect and enhance our environment. Annually, we host a conference, in addition to farm tours, workshops, and webinars, to facilitate learning and connection. We also offer organic certification and organic production transition support, and advocate with farmers to address their needs in food and farm policy. Over the past 10 years, OEFFA's Policy Program has been a leader in advocating for organic and sustainable agriculture.

We invite the candidate to complete this questionnaire based on priorities from the OEFFA community. The following questions have been cultivated with various food and farm advocates and organizations across Ohio. We will share the responses on our [website](#) for members and partners to reference. **Please reach out to policy@oeffa.org with any questions.**

Prior to the survey, we encourage the candidate to review the priorities and definitions section below for context on issues we care about. The questions also include links to the relevant definitions.

OEFFA's member-driven priorities (underlined> and related programs and definitions:

Local and Regional Food Systems: Policy changes that support local and regional food system infrastructure, processing systems, and investments that boost local economies, promote sustainability, and secure a resilient food system

- **Local food infrastructure:** The foundational elements (physical, organizational, and financial) required to produce, process, store, distribute, and sell food within a specific locality or region
- **Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) program:** The federal program that funded Ohio CAN (Community + Agriculture + Nutrition)
 - o Ohio CAN enabled over [191 local producers](#) to partner with the Ohio Association of Foodbanks to distribute products to more than 2 million Ohioans in all 88 counties, allowing producers to expand into new markets while providing communities with access to healthy local foods. The program was cancelled in 2025.
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP):** A nutrition program providing food benefits to low-income individuals and families to support their grocery budgets
- **Produce Perks Midwest Family Fruit & Vegetable Coupon Program:** Supports access to healthy produce for low-income families and is funded through a state allocation of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families funding

Farm and Farmer Viability: Breaking down barriers in farming to ensure accessibility for all, promote farmer resilience, and make certain that agricultural government programs work for everyone by creating a system that is fair, functional, and informed

- **Farm safety net:** A group of federal programs and policies regularly administered by the [Farm Service Agency](#) (FSA), like federal crop insurance, commodity programs, and disaster assistance, that are designed to protect farmers and ranchers from financial crises
 - o From 1995-2025, more than [\\$292 billion](#) in taxpayer dollars went to commodity subsidies, with much of the money flowing to the [largest, wealthiest farms](#).
- **Beginning farmers:** [Defined by the USDA](#) as “an individual or entity who has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years”
 - o Signed into law in 2022, the [Ohio Beginning Farmer Tax Credit Program](#) offers tax credits to beginning farmers who attend a financial management program and to individuals or businesses that sell or rent farmland to beginning farmers.
- **[Farming Opportunities Training and Outreach Program \(FOTO\)](#):** A program established in the 2018 Farm Bill that includes the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP), which provides training, technical assistance, and resources for a new generation of farmers, and the 2501 program, which provides outreach and assistance to historically underserved and veteran farmers and ranchers
- **Specialty crops:** [Defined by the USDA](#) as “fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture)”

Marketplace Fairness: Policies that support market inclusion and success of small and medium farming operations, not just the largest operations

- **Corporate consolidation:** A process by which fewer, larger companies obtain more control over an industry, reduce competition, and reshape supply chains
- **The Packers and Stockyards Act:** A bill enacted in 1921 in response to concerns about meat processing consolidation and anticompetitive practices that had negatively impacted both producers and consumers
 - o Recent rule updates to the Act were introduced to ensure farmers have fair systems and that there are guardrails for large meat companies but have since been delayed.

Climate Change and Environmental Health: Advance climate resiliency and uplift organic and sustainable agriculture as a solution to the climate crisis

- **Healthy soil:** Soil that functions as a vital living ecosystem that regulates water, sustains plant and animal life, filters and buffers pollutants, cycles nutrients, and provides physical stability and support for plants

- [Ohio Soil Health Week](#): Officially signed into law in 2025, this weeklong celebration includes outreach, education opportunities, and events to raise awareness around Ohio's most valuable natural resource: our soil.
- [H2Ohio Program](#): A statewide water quality initiative involving collaboration with Ohio agencies aiming to reduce nutrient runoff, create wetlands, and improve clean water access while supporting sustainable farming practices
- **[Natural Resources Conservation Service \(NRCS\)](#)**: A USDA primary lands conservation agency born out of the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s that now offers one-on-one, personalized advice to producers and communities to find the best solutions to meet their unique conservation and business goals
- **Conservation programs**: The [Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\)](#) and [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#) are popular, proven, voluntary programs that incentivize farmers and landowners for their conservation practices offered through NRCS.
 - These programs are regularly oversubscribed, and in fiscal year 2025, just 24 percent of EQIP applicants and 37 percent of CSP applicants were [awarded contracts](#).
 - Several other conservation programs are administered by NRCS, such as the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), easement programs, and Conservation Innovation Grants.
- **[National Institute for Food and Agriculture](#)**: A branch of the USDA that advances funding for initiatives that support the long-term viability of agriculture such as the [Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education \(SARE\)](#) and the [Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative \(OREI\) Program](#), among others
 - After [35 years of demonstrated success](#) in the SARE program, it has yet to receive its fully authorized funding amount of \$60 billion.
 - For every dollar invested in agricultural research, [\\$20 in economic activity is generated](#).

Organic: Safeguard organic integrity through policies grounded in farmer experience and input that support organic market infrastructure, access to technical assistance, and the successful transition to organic production

- **[National Organic Program \(NOP\)](#)**: A federal regulatory program that sets and enforces national standards around growing, handling, and labeling organic products and works to protect the integrity of the USDA Organic seal
 - In 2025, U.S. sales of organic products reached [\\$76.6 billion](#) with an annual growth rate of 6.8 percent—double that of the comparable marketplace, which grew at 3.4 percent. The U.S. remains a net importer of organic goods.
- In 1981, [OEFFA became one of the first organic certification agencies](#) in the country. Today, we certify 1,120 operations, keeping 185,995 acres of land certified organic.

Please provide your name: Samuel Ronan

District or office you are running for: OH - 15

Federal Candidate Questions:

1. Do you personally support local farmers and/or contribute to your local food economy? If so, how? Do you have experience working on health, food, farm, and environmental issues?

In terms of do I do anything personally to support contribute to farmers specifically the answer is no. I do try and shop at mom and pop stores, and dine at mom and pop restaurants whenever possible. That said, I have plenty of policy stances that can and would revitalize our crumbling agricultural industry and restore it to the hands of small, generational farmers instead of Agribusiness and Big Ranchers. If the present has taught us anything it is that selling out the means to feeding our families to other nations, or industries who care more about profits than sustainability is a detriment not just to our society but our security as a people!

Food scarcity is the number one driver of crime, and foreign conflict throughout history!

2. For a truly resilient food system, connecting local producers with local consumers is vital. How would you implement policy initiatives to increase local food access for Ohio communities while acknowledging the unique challenges each community faces (transportation, zoning policies, food processing infrastructure, accessibility)?

Quite frankly the problem gets resolved the more publicly owned the infrastructure becomes. The only thing government is useful for in that endeavor is either: the regulations ensuring compliance and fair play, or subsidizing the costs themselves. Establishing zoning and trade routes for optimal efficiency is something that is easily achieved once the for profit motive is removed.

For instance, there is no centralized location that can handle all of the various agricultural products being grown, or the livestock being raised. If we invested in a central processing center that could accommodate X amount of acreage, and X amount of livestock, and build them central to those areas throughout the state/country we could dramatically improve the efficiency of processing, distribution and transportation.

3. Following cancelled investments in local food procurement, like the [LFPA](#), farmers have felt the impacts on their businesses. How would you shape permanent policy initiatives to support local and regional farms with the economic opportunities that come from procurement for schools, hospitals, and food banks?

Unfortunately the word "permanent" is dependent upon the integrity of those in office, and whether or not the influence of wealthy parties of interest adhere to any such "permanent resolution". Considering LFPA should've been permanent and guaranteed and was gutted by an Administration that cares not for the local food industry at all, claiming something in kind would be a disservice.

What we could do, is restore these programs, strengthen, and enforce clauses that stipulate punitive measures against parties, both private and government that attempt to tamper with them, much like cancelling a contract early incurs penalties, so to could those be built into federal programs!

4. How will you help ensure that nutrition and food assistance funding, like the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#) (SNAP), are invested in local communities and support direct-to-consumer sales with local farmers?

Same as above, we implement provisions that mandate these things to exist. If they are ever tampered with the parties responsible would incur steep penalties that would be prohibitive in their nature. Generally speaking investing in local communities, food assistance and similar programs has been shown to stimulate local economies far more than any other industrial subsidy for business. My views are to expand SNAP to all 18 year olds and older as a similar program to the military BAS.

SNAP that is calculated based on family/dependent size would remain unchanged. By implementing provisions that mandate local food and agricultural support, this can guarantee that the program persists, and supports all citizens, not just the farmers, or those in need!

5. Farmers and rural families often face challenges when accessing childcare and quality healthcare. How would you prioritize solutions to these issues so that farmers have a viable personal safety net for themselves and their families?

Aside from the Medicare for All programs that have been discussed in Washington, or even a True Universal healthcare Program, that wouldn't resolve accessibility. The investment in rural health care centers, or traveling doctors is what is needed the most in those circumstances. Depending on the scale of the farm, or ranch it may even be suitable to provide services on site as a permanent fixture. From there it would be a matter of ensuring that even locally assigned personnel and facilities are still open to the public, especially in need.

6. While the [median age of farmers is 58](#) and rising, only a small amount (\$50 million) of federal funding is invested in the [Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program](#) (BFRDP) each year. What policy implementations would you propose to lower barriers for farmers entering the sector and support the long-term viability of their careers?

Unfortunately, this comes back down to the primary issue of monied interests corrupting officials with bribes known as Lobbying and campaign contributions, Super PACs, and more. I can state, and fully desire to increase these funds by billions to reinvigorate new farmers, restore family lands to their rightful persons, and dismantle Big Agriculture and Big Ranch, but the question of permeability is the problem.

These programs need to be enforceable at the level in which they are used, and not easily be stripped or ended by powers that be due to an election cycle. My intent would be to make extremely prohibitive provisions within these programs such that if any elected official, or private interest tries to manipulate or undermine them they suffer severe penalties, including prison time.

7. [Federal farm payments continue to grow](#), and large-scale conventional farms receive the lion's share of government spending through [farm safety net](#), disaster, and crop insurance programs. How will you support *all* producers, including small and midsize farms (approximately under 2,000 acres) and those growing diversified or [specialty crops](#), in accessing a farm safety net to support their businesses?

Not seem repetitive, or complacent, but it all comes back down to adding the fine print that enforces, and reinforces the protections that are already in place. The only other steps that remain would be educating the affected farmers and owners of their rights, and precisely how to fight for them! In that sense, creating distribution materials, training materials, and education materials would be the next big step to ensuring our farms remain in the hands of the people who cared for them across generations!

8. Four corporations control [80-85 percent of the U.S. beef market](#), with similar levels of consolidation across other sectors of the food industry (inputs, retail, equipment, etc.). How would you prioritize policy initiatives (like the [Packers and Stockyards Act](#)) and investments in local food infrastructure (i.e., meat processing and vegetable packaging facilities) in a way that optimizes local food system resilience and job creation?

I would focus on enforcing the anti monopoly laws, breaking apart these mega corporations, and implementing severe penalties to those who try and circumvent them. Government, enforcement, and laws are all choices we as a society make in agreement. If we agree to let others handle things with little to know input or knowledge of what is being done, this is what happens.

The only way to safeguard American Farmers and Ranchers is for them and the average citizen to take a stand in our Democratic processes, exercise our rights, and enforce them! My job as Congressman will be to make that process as easy and accessible as possible!

9. Corporate consolidation continues to control our food system by [raising prices for consumers and decreasing farmers' incomes](#). Meanwhile, [farmland acres continue to decrease in Ohio](#) and [across the country](#), which has led to higher land prices and the loss of independent farms. What would you champion in office to combat the increasing corporate control of our food systems and ensure that farmers feeding their communities have fair access to markets and land?

I will say it as many times as it takes: Break up the monopolies, enforce severe penalties for lawmakers and private entities that try and undermine the laws, and educate those affected on their rights and pathways forward!

10. Our food system depends on the health of our environment and soil. What would you do to support and expand programs and practices that build on-farm resilience, such as improving access to [USDA conservation programs](#)?

Aside from the expansion, we need to further embrace the concept of crop rotation, and growing crops that enrich the soil, instead of adding more and more nitrogen based fertilizers that absorb all of the nutrients and return nothing. Some may consider this next statement foolish and filled with superstition, but there is a reason why Indigenous populations thrived in these lands for millenia. It is high time to learn from the lessons of the past considering the technology of agriculture is among the oldest in human history!

11. On-farm research facilitated by farmers in coordination with organizations and education professionals has been vital for producers as they adapt to extreme weather events and economic obstacles. Agricultural research funding continues to be in demand. Do you see this as a priority for federal funding? If so, how do you plan to make this more of a priority for Congress?

I would advocate for the full abolishment of ICE funding, and the restoration of DoD funding to 2020 levels, and allocate all or a significant portion of those funds to the following:

Agricultural investment
Clean Energy Infrastructure Development
High Speed Rail Systems
Centralized Distribution Centers and Processing Centers

There is nearly half a trillion dollars in the above suggested budget reallocation that would 100% improve our society with every single penny spent upon it, including Agriculture, and coping with the rising Climate Crisis

12. The USDA Organic label [continues to be the most recognized and trusted label](#) amongst consumers. What policy initiatives would you advance or introduce to help organic producers meet growing consumer demand for organic goods?

Ensure that the panels, experts, and professionals involved in the USDA have an actual vested interest in providing safe food, and proper health information to the public, and have zero ties to any of the aforementioned for profit entities, private interests, or other bodies that care more for personal gain than public good!