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)
    - 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
    - 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"
    - 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
    - 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 **N**RCS.
    - 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: Bill Redpath

District or office you are running for: United States Senator

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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?

No.

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)?

I don't see why the Federal government should be involved in this.

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?

I don't see why the Federal government should be involved in this.

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?

No.

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?

I favor deregulation of childcare and a repeal of Certificate of Need laws for medical services.

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?

None.

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?

I favor repeal of all farm subsidies from the Federal government.

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 don't think the Federal government should be involved in that.

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 don't think the Federal government should take any action here.

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?

I have no current plans for this.

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?

This should not be a priority for Federal funding.

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?

None.