

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

- 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: Mike Veloff

District or office you are running for: Ohio's 5th Congress

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?

I shop locally, mostly because I live in a rural area and there are no chain stores except the Dollar General. If the farmer's market in the area were more than a weekend endeavor for the spring and summer months, I would be able to shop more frequently.

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)?

Create zero tax funding or subsidize licensing for small businesses to enter into the marketplace. Provide vacant land to communities for food production like community gardens, or help funding and land acquisition with urban farming initiatives. Relax rules on chicken farming for small scale farmers.

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?

We should support reinvesting in the existing 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?

Create programs for small farmers to accept SNAP without fees.

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?

There should be funding through farm relief that could help farmers with these issues.

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?

We need a radical spending program that would improve spending on developing new farms and end subsidies to corporate farms that are crushing competition.

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?

There should be a prioritization of the lower income and smaller farms to get farm subsidies. Short-term and long term financial reports submitted with applications as well as an end to first-come first serve system of propping up corporate farms.

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?

We need to loosen restrictions on small scale producers so that they can provide more to the communities in which they operate and develop a better economy within the sphere of service. More competition from smaller producers will force the larger producers to provide better products.

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?

Do not create barriers to the smaller businesses that only larger enterprises can or should be responsible for.

All the technerds decided to play with the Farm Bill and this is what is the end result.

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](#)?

Better access to education and resources for all community members as well as farmers would go a long way to improving the health of the environment and soil.

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 redirect a large portion of the military budget to rebuilding our farming systems with regenerative farming, specialty crop farming, and rotating crops alongside subsidizing land acquisition and educational programs to bring older and new farmers up to date with the skills to help them innovate in ways that were not expected.

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?

We need to lower the barrier to smaller and local producers to achieve access to the label and the markets for their goods. A Pre-Organic label for those who are in the process of gaining a full organic label would be a stepping stone and help the producer to gain the funding to continue with organic production.