

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: Vanessa Enoch

District or office you are running for: US House of Representatives, OH-8

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?

My household shops at West Chester and Hamilton local food markets. We also support locally owned restaurants and grocers that source from Ohio producers. Those dollars stay in our community. They keep family farms viable, keep small businesses open, and keep our neighbors employed.

My nonprofit, Vision Works, Inc. is spearheading Nourishing Futures, a collaborative of 33 partner organizations built to address food insecurity as a root contributor to violence in Cincinnati's most impacted neighborhoods. At its heart is a community-driven food system that will connect local growers directly with the families who need fresh food most. The plan links five urban community gardens with more than 20 acres of partner farmland and a warehouse that supplies a network of food pantries. The plan is to build aggregation partnerships with regional growers and local producers to create a reliable, affordable, local supply chain. It also includes weekend pop-up farmers markets featuring produce grown by community members and small farms.

We designed Nourishing Futures so that local food builds local wealth. Through a Community Supported Agriculture model, families subscribe to a local farm collective at the start of the growing season. Their upfront investment will help growers cover the cost of seeds, labor, and equipment. Justice-impacted young people will operate refrigerated delivery routes and earn training in logistics, customer service, and agriculture, with support toward their commercial driver's licenses and business licenses. The long-term vision is member-owned neighborhood food cooperatives, where profits are reinvested in the community rather than extracted from it. My own church, New Prospect Baptist Church, will serve as a garden site and farmers market host.

As an entrepreneur, I also understand the business side of food. Through Tiny Tummies Gourmet, I have worked through the realities of sourcing, quality, pricing, and reaching customers that every small food business faces. Through Cultural Impact, my consulting firm of more than 25 years, I have helped small businesses and nonprofits access capital, strengthen operations, and adopt technology. That is exactly what local producers need to compete with much larger operations.

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)?

A resilient food system depends on connecting local farmers with the families down the road, yet in Ohio's 8th District too many families live miles from fresh food while farmers struggle to find buyers, processors, and distribution routes. Because every community's challenges are different, I will push for federal grants that fund community-led food assessments and local food policy councils, so each county and city can target its own gaps. Washington should provide the tools and funding, and communities should lead the design.

For transportation, I will expand funding for mobile markets, refrigerated delivery, and home delivery for seniors and residents with disabilities, and I will make SNAP online purchasing work for small farms and local grocers, backed by affordable rural broadband. On zoning, I will expand USDA urban agriculture programs that give communities technical assistance and model guidance to open land for gardens, farm stands, markets, and shared-use kitchens. To close the processing gap, I will invest in regional food hubs, cold storage, and small and mid-sized meat and poultry processing, with priority for farmer-owned and cooperative enterprises.

To make local food accessible to every family, I will protect SNAP and WIC and expand nutrition incentives like the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program, which help families stretch their benefits on fruits and vegetables while supporting local growers. I will strengthen support for schools, food banks, and institutions that buy directly from local farms, and I will invest in beginning farmers and food-sector workforce pathways. I will measure success by more local food in our schools and food banks, more SNAP and WIC dollars spent with local growers, new processing capacity in our district, shorter distances between families and fresh food, and more family farms passing their land to the next generation.

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 will work to write a permanent local and regional food purchasing program into the Farm Bill with mandatory, multi-year funding, so that it is protected from year-to-year political decisions.

Funding should flow through multi-year cooperative agreements with states, tribes, and local partners, because they know their own growers and communities best. I will push to expand the USDA Farm to School Grant Program and to make it easier for schools to buy local by raising purchasing thresholds and simplifying paperwork. I will also work to strengthen the Farm to Food Bank program and increase the share of federal emergency food purchases sourced from local and regional growers. For hospitals, I will support making local purchasing part of federal food-is-medicine and produce prescription efforts, and I will encourage federal facilities, including VA hospitals, to buy from farms in their own regions.

Procurement dollars only help farmers who can meet institutional requirements for volume, packaging, and food safety. That is why I will pair permanent purchasing programs with investment in regional food hubs, cold storage, and aggregation networks that let small farms pool their harvests to serve large buyers. I will support cost-share assistance for food safety certification and technical assistance that helps farmers navigate contracts, and I will insist on prompt-payment protections so family farms are not left waiting months for their money. Priority should go to small, beginning, and historically underserved producers, who have the most to gain and the least cushion when programs disappear.

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?

My first priority is protecting SNAP itself. Recent federal changes have cut benefits, tightened eligibility, and begun shifting costs onto states. Those changes put pressure on Ohio's budget and on the grocers, markets, and farmers who depend on SNAP dollars moving through our communities. I will oppose further cuts and cost shifts, because every SNAP dollar spent locally recirculates through our economy, supporting jobs and Main Street businesses from Butler County to the farm communities across our district.

I will also work to make sure those dollars reach local farmers. I will champion permanent, fully funded support for the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program, which powers "double-up" programs like Produce Perks here in Ohio. These programs match SNAP dollars spent on fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers markets, so families stretch their benefits and local growers gain loyal customers. I will push for federal investment in wireless EBT equipment, transaction fees, and technical support so that every farmers market, farm stand, mobile market, and CSA in our district can accept SNAP without the paperwork and costs that keep small producers out. I will also press USDA to open online SNAP purchasing to small farms and food hubs, not just large national retailers.

Beyond SNAP, I will work to restore and strengthen programs that let schools, food banks, and senior and WIC farmers market programs buy directly from local and socially disadvantaged farmers. Those partnerships were working before federal support was pulled back, and our communities felt the loss. I will advocate for infrastructure grants for local food hubs, cold storage, aggregation, and processing, because small farmers need more than customers. They need a reliable path to market.

This work is personal to me. Through Vision Works, Inc., I have helped lead community collaboratives fighting food insecurity, and as a small business owner I know how much a fair shot at the market matters. I will seek a seat on the House Agriculture Committee, where the Farm Bill is written, so that Ohio's families and farmers have a strong voice at the table.

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?

My first priority is protecting the coverage rural families already rely on. Medicaid keeps rural hospitals' doors open and covers many farmworkers, children, and older Ohioans in small towns. I will fight further cuts that would push those hospitals closer to closing. Many farm families also buy coverage on their own, and I will work to restore and make permanent the enhanced premium tax credits that brought marketplace insurance within reach for self-employed farmers. No family should have to take an off-farm job just to keep health insurance, or risk losing the farm over a medical bill.

Next, I will focus on bringing care closer to home. I will support rural hospitals, critical access hospitals, and community health centers with stable funding. I will make telehealth flexibilities permanent and pair them with the broadband investment that makes telehealth possible. I will also advocate for loan repayment, rural residency programs, and community health worker initiatives that bring doctors, nurses, and mental health professionals to rural communities and keep them there. Farming is among the most stressful occupations in America, so I will champion farmer-focused mental health and stress assistance services, delivered by people who understand rural life and offered without stigma.

On childcare, rural families face both a shortage of providers and schedules that don't fit the typical nine-to-five model. During planting and harvest, parents may work from before dawn until after dark. I will push for stronger investment in the Child Care and Development Block Grant, with flexibility for extended-hour, seasonal, and home-based family childcare. I will advocate for USDA Rural Development funding to build and renovate childcare facilities in small towns, and for start-up grants and business support for rural childcare providers. I will also work to raise childcare workforce pay so providers can stay in the field. I will support a stronger, fully refundable Child Tax Credit, because farm incomes rise and fall with weather and markets, and families need support that holds steady in a hard year.

Through my career in workforce development and nonprofit leadership, I have seen that families thrive when care, work, and opportunity connect. That is the approach I will bring to the House Agriculture Committee and every rural policy discussion.

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?

My first step would be to significantly expand the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, at least doubling its funding, and make it easier for community organizations, extension offices, and land-grant universities to compete for those grants. Ohio is home to Ohio State University Extension and Central State University, one of our nation's historically Black 1890 land-grant institutions. I want both to have the resources to train, mentor, and support new farmers through hands-on education and apprenticeships, including veterans and farmers from communities that have historically been shut out of agriculture.

The biggest barriers are land and capital, and I will work to lower both. I will push to expand USDA Farm Service Agency microloans, down payment loans, and loan limits so they reflect today's land and equipment costs. I will also work to speed up loan processing so new farmers don't miss a season while waiting on paperwork. I will support a federal tax credit for landowners who sell or rent land to beginning farmers, building on the model Ohio has already used. I will also advocate for strengthening the Conservation Reserve Program's transition incentives, which help retiring landowners pass land to new producers. I will support farmland preservation tools that keep land affordable for working farmers rather than letting it be priced out by development. I also want to help families resolve heirs' property issues so land can stay in production and in the family.

Getting started is only half the challenge. Staying in farming requires a viable career. I will champion student loan relief for farmers who commit to agriculture, risk management and crop insurance options that fit diversified and small operations, and expanded access to local markets, food hubs, and institutional buyers like schools and hospitals. I will also support succession planning and business training so retiring farmers can pass their operations on rather than selling out. And because new farmers are also young families, the healthcare, childcare, and broadband investments I have championed are part of this solution too.

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?

My first priority is making crop insurance work for diversified and specialty producers. Whole-Farm Revenue Protection and the newer Micro Farm policy can be lifelines for farms that grow many crops or sell directly to customers, but the paperwork and recordkeeping often discourage the very farmers they are meant to serve. I will push USDA to simplify these policies, and improve premium support for small and diversified operations. I will also work to make sure crop insurance agents are fairly compensated for writing smaller policies, so these farmers are not turned away. For crops that still lack insurance coverage, I will work to strengthen and modernize the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program, with more affordable coverage levels and simpler paperwork.

Second, I will work to make disaster assistance fair and fast. Too often, emergency aid formulas reward acreage and production history, leaving smaller and specialty growers with a fraction of the help or none at all. I will advocate for disaster programs with fair minimum payments, eligibility that covers specialty crops and livestock, and timelines that get help to farmers in weeks, not years.

Third, I will support reasonable payment limits and stronger rules to make sure support goes to people who are actually farming, rather than further expanding loopholes that let large operations multiply payments through complex business structures. Those savings can be reinvested in programs that serve the majority of farms, which are small and midsize family operations.

Fourth, I will treat conservation as risk management. Practices like cover crops, soil health, water management, and crop diversification make farms more resilient to drought and floods. I will work to fully fund and streamline the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Conservation Stewardship Program so small and midsize farmers can access them without hiring consultants to navigate the system.

Finally, access matters as much as policy. I will fight to adequately staff our county Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service offices, expand technical assistance through extension and community partners, and strengthen outreach to beginning, veteran, and historically underserved farmers. I will also push for transparent public reporting on who receives federal farm support, so Congress can see where the gaps remain.

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?

My first priority is restoring fair competition by enforcing and modernizing the Packers and Stockyards Act. I will support rules that make clear farmers can challenge unfair, deceptive, or retaliatory practices without proving harm to an entire industry. I will also push for stronger protections and contract transparency for poultry and livestock growers. I will support legislation to strengthen cash market trading and price transparency in cattle markets so ranchers can see fair prices, and I will push to reauthorize and strengthen mandatory price reporting. I will press for closer antitrust scrutiny of agricultural mergers by the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission, including in seed, fertilizer, and equipment markets, where input costs are squeezing farm margins. I will also champion the right to repair, so farmers can fix their own equipment without waiting weeks on a dealer during planting or harvest.

My second priority is investing in the local infrastructure that gives farmers more places to sell and gives communities more good jobs. I understand that small and midsize meat processors are often booked months in advance, which limits what local livestock producers can grow and sell. I will fight for sustained funding for meat and poultry processing expansion grants and loans. I will also work to expand opportunities for state-inspected plants, like those in Ohio's inspection program, to sell across state lines while maintaining strong food safety standards. For fruit and vegetable growers, I will support funding for food hubs, cold storage, aggregation, and packing facilities, along with cost-share for food safety certification, so small farms can meet the requirements of grocers, schools, and hospitals. I will also encourage farmer-owned cooperatives, which keep more value and decision-making in local hands.

Infrastructure only works with a skilled workforce. I will push to pair these facility investments with training and apprenticeship programs for butchers, meat cutters, food safety technicians, and logistics workers. These are good, stable jobs that cannot be shipped overseas and can anchor rural and urban communities alike.

Together, these efforts reinforce each other. Fair competition rules protect farmers in today's markets, while local processing and packing capacity give them new markets of their own. That combination keeps more of every food dollar in our district.

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?

Protecting farmland will be one of my highest priorities. I will fight for increased funding for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, which lets farmers voluntarily protect their land from development while keeping it in production. I will also support affordability provisions that keep protected farmland within reach of working farmers. Ohio is attracting major investment in data centers, warehouses, and energy projects, and those investments bring real jobs. As someone who has worked in technology for more than 25 years, I welcome that growth. But it must be planned wisely. I will advocate for federal incentives and planning support that steer large projects toward previously developed sites and away from our most productive farmland. I will also support stronger enforcement of foreign farmland ownership reporting, and greater transparency about private equity and institutional investors purchasing farmland, so we understand who is buying Ohio's land and why.

Second, I will work to ensure farmers have fair access to markets. Building on my commitment to enforce the Packers and Stockyards Act and strengthen antitrust review of agricultural mergers, I will also call for revived enforcement of the Robinson-Patman Act, which prohibits suppliers from giving the largest retailers unfair pricing advantages over independent grocers. When independent grocers can compete, neighborhoods keep their stores, food deserts shrink, and local farmers gain more buyers. I will support investments in farmer-owned cooperatives, food hubs, and local processing so producers can sell on their own terms rather than accept whatever price a single buyer sets.

Third, I will use public purchasing as a tool for local markets. Federal dollars already buy enormous amounts of food for schools, military bases, veterans' hospitals, and food assistance programs. I will push to increase the share of those purchases sourced from local, small, and midsize farms, and to restore programs that connect local farmers with schools and food banks. Steady institutional buyers give farmers the confidence to invest and expand, and give our children and communities fresher food.

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](#)?

My first priority is meeting the demand that already exists. Farmers are lining up for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, the Conservation Stewardship Program, and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, but many applicants are turned away each year for lack of funding. I will fight to protect and grow conservation funding in the Farm Bill so that willing farmers are not left waiting. I will push USDA to simplify applications, speed up contracting, and offer advance payments to beginning, small, and historically underserved farmers who cannot afford to cover costs up front.

Second, I will invest in the people who make conservation work. Farmers rely on trusted local experts, from Natural Resources Conservation Service staff to Ohio's county Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Extension educators. Many of these offices are understaffed. I will advocate for funding to hire and retain conservation planners and technical specialists, and to strengthen partnerships with Ohio State University, Central State University, and farmer-led organizations that provide peer-to-peer learning.

Third, I will connect conservation to the farm safety net. Practices like cover crops, no-till, nutrient management, and buffer strips reduce risk, so they should be recognized in risk management programs. I will support crop insurance premium discounts for farms using proven soil health practices, and I will work to make sure crop insurance rules never penalize farmers for adopting them. I will also support Ohio's voluntary, farmer-centered approach to water quality, including programs like H2Ohio, with federal partnership that helps farmers protect watersheds like the Great Miami River and Lake Erie.

Fourth, I will bring my technology background to this work. Precision agriculture, soil sensors, and data tools can help farmers apply fertilizer and water more efficiently, saving money while protecting land and water. I will push for cost-share and broadband investment so small and midsize farms can access these tools, along with strong protections so farmers own and control their data. Where voluntary carbon and ecosystem service markets emerge, I will insist they are transparent and fair, and that they pay farmers rather than intermediaries.

Finally, I will support research on soil health, drought resilience, and climate-adapted crops so Ohio farmers have practical solutions grounded in local conditions.

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 believe agricultural research is one of the smartest investments our nation can make. Every dollar invested in public agricultural research returns many times its cost through higher productivity, lower costs, safer food, and stronger rural economies. Yet over the past two decades, public agricultural research funding in the United States has declined in real terms while competitors like China have dramatically increased theirs. Farmers are facing more extreme weather, rising input costs, and new pests and diseases, and they need answers grounded in real fields and real conditions. Yes, I see agricultural research as a clear priority for federal funding, and I will work to make it a priority for Congress.

I want to put more research dollars in farmers' hands. Some of the most valuable research happens on working farms, where farmers test new practices alongside Extension educators, universities, and community organizations. Ohio State University's on-farm research efforts and farmer-driven programs like Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education show what this model can do. I will fight to expand funding for farmer-led research grants, the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, the Specialty Crop Research Initiative, and the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative, and to protect the Agricultural Research Service's work in the field. I will also support stable, multi-year funding so research projects can follow results through several growing seasons rather than stopping after one.

I also want to make research funding accessible. As a grant consultant, I have seen how complex applications and long reporting requirements discourage the very farmers and community organizations doing the most practical work. I will push USDA to simplify applications for smaller, farmer-led projects, provide technical assistance to first-time applicants, and fairly compensate farmers for their time, land, and risk when they host research trials. I will also invest in getting research results to farmers. Research only matters if it reaches the field. I will champion strong funding for Cooperative Extension, which connects farmers with trusted, practical knowledge in every Ohio county. I will also push for full and equitable federal and state support for 1890 land-grant institutions like Central State University, so their research and Extension programs can serve Ohio farmers at full strength. That includes holding states to their matching fund commitments.

To make this a priority in Congress, I will seek a seat on the House Agriculture Committee and work with appropriators to protect research funding in each budget cycle. I will frame agricultural research for what it is: a matter of national security, economic competitiveness, and food security, not a line item to cut. I will build bipartisan coalitions with members from farm states, because research benefits every producer regardless of party. And I will bring farmers, researchers, and Extension professionals from our district to Washington, and hold listening sessions at home, so that Congress hears directly from the people whose livelihoods depend on this work.

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?

My first priority is helping farmers through the transition. Farmers must manage their land organically for three years before they can sell certified organic crops. During those years they take on new costs and risks without earning organic prices. I will champion transition assistance that helps farmers bridge that gap, including financial support, crop insurance options that reflect transitional crops, and expanded mentorship programs that pair transitioning farmers with experienced organic producers. I will also fight to strengthen and expand the organic certification cost-share program so certification fees do not keep small and beginning farmers out of the market.

Second, I will protect the integrity of the organic label. Consumers trust the label because it means something, and farmers who follow the rules deserve protection from fraud. I will support strong enforcement of organic standards, especially for imports, and adequate funding and staffing for the National Organic Program so it can investigate violations and keep standards consistent. I will also support fair and timely updates to organic standards developed through an open process that includes farmers, certifiers, and consumers.

Third, I will invest in organic research and data. Organic farmers need research suited to their systems, from weed and pest management to soil fertility and organic seed development. I will advocate for growing the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative and for better market and price data on organic products, so farmers, lenders, and insurers can make informed decisions. Better data also helps crop insurance programs set fair prices that reflect the real value of organic crops.

Fourth, I will help build organic supply chains. I will support grants and loans for organic grain storage, processing, and handling facilities. I will push to connect organic and transitioning farmers with buyers through food hubs, cooperatives, and institutional purchasing. Ohio's farm organizations, certifiers, and land-grant universities are already strong partners in this work, and I want federal policy to build on that foundation.

As a business consultant, I see organic agriculture as a growth market with real potential for Ohio. The opportunity is there. Our farmers need the support to seize it.