



**Ohio
Smart
Agriculture**
SOLUTIONS FROM THE LAND

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Fred Yoder (614) 530-4510
fredyoder4510@gmail.com

Lisa Hamler-Fugitt (614) 271-4803
Lisa@ohiofoodbanks.org

Farm and Food Stakeholders Offer Unique Action Plan to Address Mega Challenges Facing Ohio

COLUMBUS (April 2, 2019) – A landmark, comprehensive action plan that offers pragmatic, proven and innovative solutions to challenges confronting Ohio over the next several decades is now available for policy makers, planners and farm and food system advocates.

["Ohio Smart Agriculture: Solutions from the Land \(OSA: SfL\), A Call to Action for Ohio's Food System and Agricultural Economy"](#) outlines pathways and priority action steps needed to enable Ohio's farmers, ranchers and woodland managers to further improve quality of life through multiple solutions they can sustainably deliver from the land.

The action plan calls for boosting the public policy profile of agriculture through an interagency task force of state food, health, and agricultural programs; increasing local food markets and production by determining the value of local food demand by school districts, universities, hospitals and other institutions, and building the processing and distribution infrastructure to meet the demand; and developing and implementing a new state water quality strategy that builds upon current public and private sector initiatives.

Led by farmers – with participation from experts in agribusiness, health, nutrition policy, ecology and conservation – the action plan is the unique result of an exploration of ways to place farming at the forefront of resolving the extensive challenges facing Ohio today: hunger, poor health, degraded environments, broken economies, trade, tariffs and limited inclusion in global economies.

"This action plan is unique," said Ohio Smart Agriculture (OSA) Steering Committee Co-Chair Fred Yoder, a fourth-generation Ohio farmer and chairman of [Solutions from the Land](#). "We considered food, agriculture, the environment, and rural and urban communities as a system rather than separate challenges. This effort is about creating new options and opportunities for farmers, agriculture, and consumers that together benefit all."

Solutions from the Land, a national organization dedicated to advancing land-based solutions to global challenges, and The Ohio State University's (OSU) Initiative for Food and AgriCultural Transformation (InFACT) teamed up to support and facilitate OSA: SfL. Through extensive dialogue and collaboration with a wide cross section of stakeholders, participants formulated a mid-century vision for Ohio's food system and agricultural economy.

"With input and guidance from these partners, we have also created a roadmap to achieve the vision for delivering a wider range of goods and services from the land," said OSA Steering Committee Co-Chair Lisa Hamler-Fugitt, executive director of the [Ohio Association of Foodbanks](#).

The work was enabled by a generous grant from the [W.K. Kellogg Foundation](#) (WKKF), which was founded in 1930 by breakfast cereal pioneer Will Keith Kellogg and today is among the largest philanthropic foundations in the United States. Guided by the belief that all children should have an equal opportunity to thrive, the WKKF works with communities to create conditions for vulnerable children so they can realize their full potential in school, work and life.

Through four workgroups, the steering committee delved into climate, ecosystems, market opportunities and hunger, and identified three primary pathways for achieving these solutions from the land:

- **Reduce hunger and improve nutrition** by supporting the production of fruits, vegetables, animal proteins, and food-grade grains for human consumption.
- **Create jobs and generate economic growth** by diversifying and sustainably intensifying production and processing of food, feed, fiber, and renewable energy.
- Augment ecosystems services to **improve the environment, enhance the resilience** of agricultural and forested landscapes and **improve the farmer's bottom line**.

The steering committee then identified the following four major initiatives and offered related, "shovel-ready" recommendations under each that could be implemented in the very near future:

- **Make Ohio agriculture and the food system a public policy priority.**
 - Form and properly resource a Farm, Food, and Health Partners Alliance.
 - Create an interagency task force to align state agencies toward effective and coordinated food, health, and agricultural programs.
 - Restore the Ohio state government's role as a marketer and champion, as well as a regulator, of agricultural goods and services.
- **Diversify and sustainably intensify the production of food, feed, fiber and fuel.**
 - Discern and promote ways to integrate commodity production with diversified, identity-preserved, or value-added production in ways that enhance ecosystem services, farm and forest profitability, and public support for Ohio agriculture.
 - Build human capital in the form of workforce development and community resources, including access to land for rapidly changing rural and urban agriculture.
 - Create a strategic forestry roadmap to strengthen value-added woodland supply chains, and create new markets for residual forestry products.
- **Develop infrastructure and use institutional purchasing power to quantify and increase markets for Ohio smart food.**
 - Jump-start infrastructure development by quantifying current demand for local food and encouraging commitments of hospitals, schools, government agencies, and other public other institutions to buy locally.
 - Work with public, private, and university-based partners to develop an independent "food-system finance authority" that can attract and manage financing and work with market outlets to build new infrastructure.
 - Develop and fund a pilot project for small-scale, mobile meat processing.
 - Reinforce the value of Ohio agriculture by regularly evaluating the food needs and preferences of Ohioans.

- **Implement landscape-scale, climate-smart, agriculture strategies to ensure sustainability and abate agricultural runoff.**
 - The state of Ohio and all stakeholders should, by 2020, formulate and oversee the implementation of a new state water quality strategy that includes current public and private sector response initiatives.
 - Develop and implement a climate-smart action plan for Ohio agriculture to help farmers adapt, improve resilience, and deliver products and services that mitigate climate-change impacts.
 - Track and publish statewide progress data in order to assure and celebrate continuous improvement.

The action plan offers a total of [50 recommendations](#) to meet OSA:SfL's mid-century vision and help Ohio farmers and woodland managers further improve the state's quality of life through the solutions they can sustainably deliver from the land.

Steering committee leaders stress that the taxonomy of pathways, goals, and initiatives in the action plan should not in any way be considered a form of prioritization, asserting that all steps are of equal importance and should be pursued in concert with one another.

"This call to action emphasizes that Ohio Smart Agriculture is a long-term, comprehensive initiative that requires sowing seeds along all three pathways at once," Yoder said. "Agriculture is a system, and all the recommendations together are priorities that will enable the transformation we envision."

"In advancing these findings and recommendations, we know that our work is far from complete," Hamler-Fugitt said. "For our vision and mid-century goals to be realized, this call to action must be implemented. This can only happen if those who share a common vision engage all communities of interest in a shared clarion call to action."

In a statement, she and Yoder extended an invitation to all farmers; philanthropic, business, community, and non-governmental organizations; academic and government partners; and advocacy groups that work at the intersection of land, food, health, and the environment to join them "in the steps we've described that will help reduce hunger and improve nutrition; create jobs and generate economic growth; improve the environment; and enhance the resilience of agricultural and forested landscapes."

To learn more, contact SfL President Ernie Shea at (410) 952-0123 or Eshea@SfLDialogue.net; OSU Initiative for Food and Agricultural Transformation Executive Director Brian Snyder at (614) 292-9211 or snyder.1534@osu.edu; or OSU Director of Extension Roger Rennekamp at (614) 292-1842 or rennekamp.3@osu.edu.

Statements of support for the OSA: SfL Call to Action Plan from Ohio farm, nutrition, health and environmental organizations can be viewed [HERE](#).

For an executive summary of the plan, click [HERE](#).