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USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, Congressional Offices Tour Urban and Family Farms and Foodbank, Discuss Farm Bill Priorities

Partners from state and local agencies, Ohio foodbanks, and Ohio farmers highlight early success of Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) program in Ohio, value of public-private partnerships

COLUMBUS, OHIO – Representatives from USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), which has provided three-year pilot funding for an initiative called the [Local Food Purchase Assistance \(LFPA\) program](#), toured several locations this week to see the program in action in Ohio. The program, which has been branded [Ohio CAN](#) in Ohio, seeks to procure foods raised, grown, produced, sourced, and processed all within a 400-mile radius of the city of Columbus from historically underrepresented and socially disadvantaged suppliers, and distribute those foods to food insecure Ohio households.

As part of the two-day tour, federal, state, and local agencies and elected officials joined foodbank representatives and farmers for visits to: [Johnson Produce Company](#) in Toledo; [Shared Legacy Farms](#) in Elmore, part of the [Oberlin Food Hub](#); [Solidarity Urban Farms](#) in Lorain; [Rid-All Green Partnership](#) in Cleveland; and the Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio, where a load of locally raised beef was delivered by [Ellington Farms](#) from Louisville, Ohio.

Congressional offices also joined for legs of the tour in their districts, including Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, who serves as a member of the U.S. House Appropriations Committee, including its subcommittee with jurisdiction over Agriculture.

“By focusing on programs that connect our local farmers and producers with even more of their neighbors, we will ensure those in need have a meal at the dinner table while uplifting the growers who feed us all,” said Congresswoman Kaptur. “Addressing issues related to food security, which is foundational to both national and economic security, should be a cornerstone of our national food policy. Our upcoming Farm Bill legislation must provide robust funding, and work to address these needs to better serve all Americans.”

From April to June this year, in the wake of the end of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Emergency Allotments, more than 3.8 million people sought help with food from the Ohio Association of Foodbanks statewide hunger relief network – the most in any one quarter in the network’s 32-year-history. Representatives from the association, Second Harvest, and the Greater Cleveland Food Bank spoke with federal and state officials, including the offices of Senator JD Vance, Congresswoman Shontel Brown, and Congressman Bob Latta, about the urgent need for a bipartisan Farm Bill rooted in food security.

“The Ohio CAN program exemplifies the incredible power of an interconnected food supply chain that supports local farmers and feeds every family,” said Joree Novotny, executive director of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks. “That is the lens we’re urging Congress to use as it chooses how to invest in our food systems in the Farm Bill. We need strong public investments to protect access to an affordable, wholesome food supply, not only to prevent hunger today, but to promote a resilient supply chain from field to consumer for the long-term. We need farmers to be able to grow the food and we need families to be able to access and afford the food – that’s what a food secure Farm Bill means.”

Farmers participating in the Ohio CAN program shared their perspectives about how it has helped them invest in their operations, afford their inputs and plan for their future as local farmers.

“This program not only helps our bottom line today, but has helped us be key supporters in our community’s agricultural economy,” said Casey Ellington, co-owner of Ellington Farms. “From purchasing a refrigerated trailer from an Ohio-based company to transport our beef to new customers, to providing consistent business to our local processor, this program has changed our lives as first-generation family farmers.”

Guests also toured the warehouse at Second Harvest in Lorain, where they saw a cooler with cabbage, corn, peppers, and more sourced through Ohio CAN as well as products available through The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). Hundreds of emergency boxes of food were prepped in a staging area for an upcoming mobile distribution.

“We are serving significantly more community members now than we did before the pandemic”, said Julie Chase-Morefield, president and CEO of the Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio. “We need the additional foods provided through programs like TEFAP and Ohio CAN, especially after the loss of pandemic-era SNAP benefits. That’s why we’re urging Congress to protect and strengthen SNAP, TEFAP, and other innovative programs like LFPA in the Farm Bill. Investments in food and nutrition security have an incredible economic and social impact. Farmers, foodbanks and families need and deserve stability.”

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About the Ohio Association of Foodbanks

The Ohio Association of Foodbanks is Ohio’s largest charitable response to hunger, representing Ohio’s 12 Feeding America foodbanks and 3,600 member charities including food pantries, soup kitchens and shelters who serve all 88 counties in Ohio. Follow the association on [Twitter](#), stay connected on [Facebook](#) and visit them on the web at www.ohiofoodbanks.org.

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Pictured left: Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur speaks with David Johnson of Johnson Produce Company about his operations, revenue streams, and partnership with Ohio CAN.

Pictured right: Casey Ellington of Ellington Farms talks about the quality of her locally raised beef while delivering to the Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio. View more photos [here](#).