Ohio CAN Guide
All things Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) for Ohioans!
Dear Reader,

Welcome to the first official Ohio CAN Guide! This guide provides comprehensive information about Ohio’s Local Food Purchasing Assistance Program (LFPA), also known as Ohio CAN (Community + Agriculture + Nutrition). Here, you’ll not only learn about the program itself but also discover the diverse individuals working behind the scenes to make it successful. Ohio CAN brings together foodbank representatives, aggregators, farmers, producers, and suppliers to ensure local food reaches communities across the state.

Ohio CAN prioritizes suppliers who identify as historically underrepresented, such as women, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, veterans, small and beginner farmers, disabled farmers, and those relying on public assistance.

This guide, like the Ohio CAN program, aims to highlight local foods, celebrate local producers, and showcase the diversity within agriculture. It is designed to inspire anyone interested in farming, gardening, or agriculture and to clarify what “local foods” truly means and its significance to programs like this.

Please note that Ohio CAN includes many incredible farmers and producers, and only a small fraction of them were interviewed for this guide.

We extend our gratitude to all our partners for making this program what it is today and for providing nutritious, wholesome, and local foods to communities in need. Continue reading to learn more about Ohio CAN, its impact, agriculture in Ohio, and much more!
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What is Ohio CAN?

Ohio CAN is designed to purchase in-demand products from local, historically underrepresented food suppliers and distribute those products to underserved, food insecure communities. It is funded through the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service and implemented in partnership with the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and the Ohio Department of Agriculture. The Ohio Department of Agriculture focuses on the marketing, outreach, support and onboarding to new suppliers. They also provide ongoing technical assistance, training, and supportive services for suppliers. The Ohio Association of Foodbanks focuses on procurement and contract management, forecasting and distribution with suppliers and foodbanks.

The USDA defines local as anything wholly sourced, grown, raised and processed within 400 miles of Columbus, Ohio. Through this program, producers are able to sell food to the Ohio Association of Foodbanks at fair market prices and the products are distributed to Ohioans in need through the 12 Feeding America foodbanks and 3,600 member charities across all 88 counties.

Key Terms to Understand

Key understanding of terms that will commonly be found throughout:

**Aggregators** - or food hubs are distributors who are a key component of any local food system. Specifically for small and mid-sized producers to remain profitable, aggregators provide an efficient and economic means to market and deliver to consumers.

**Foodbank Representatives** - were typically foodbank sourcing or operations staff who spoke about their day-to-day experiences in receiving, handling, and distributing LFPA product.

**Farmer, Producer, Supplier, Grower** - will be used throughout interchangeably as they each supply locally produced food products through LFPA.

**Historically Underrepresented** - suppliers who identify as being underrepresented or socially disadvantaged, such as women, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, veterans, and small, emerging, and disabled farmers, as well as those whose income is derived from a public assistance program.

**Organic Farming** - producing foods without the use of laboratory-made fertilizers, growth substances, or pesticides.

**Sustainable Agriculture** - systems that seek to grow crops and livestock while protecting the environment and using resources efficiently.

**Hydroponics** - growing of plants in water containing the essential growth elements. This process is being used in “glass” houses for intensive “off-season” production of vegetables.

**Livestock** - any domestic animal produced or kept primarily for farm, ranch, or market purposes, including beef and dairy cattle, hogs, sheep, goats, and horses.

**Crop** - a plant grown in significant quantities. Crops range from wheat to soybeans to cotton. A crop can be any plant that is harvested as food, used for livestock fodder, or applied to any other economic purpose.

**Fodder** - food for livestock.
Processed or value-added foods - in general, adding value is the process of changing or transforming a product from its original state to a more valuable state i.e. fermenting cabbage for sauerkraut.

Harvest - to gather a crop when it is finished growing.

Commodity - an agricultural good.

Acre - a parcel of land, containing 4,840 square yards or 43,560 square feet.

Agriculture - the utilization of biological processes on farms to produce food and other products useful and necessary to humans. Both a “way of life” and a “means of life” for the people involved in this industry.

High tunnel or Hoop House - a high tunnel system covers high value crops to extend the growing season in an environmentally safe manner. An elongated structure that covers a large area of bare soil. Usually constructed of metal or wood and covered with a greenhouse material usually.

Impact of LFPA

In 2022, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched the Local Food Purchase Assistance Program, or LFPA. The state of Ohio received funds to support LFPA, creating Ohio CAN. The state of Ohio received a total of $26.5 million in LFPA funding over roughly a three-year period. Ohio CAN has created partnerships with 5 statewide aggregators or food hubs in addition to numerous regional collectives and distributed to 12 regional Feeding America Food Banks that serve individuals who fall at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines.

After One Year of Implementation:

Purchased from 164 individual suppliers, farmers, and growers

59.8% of these farmers identify as historically underrepresented

$9,819,086: Value of the food procured

54.3% of food procured comes from these historically underrepresented farmers

A cumulative breakdown of poundage and value of product in each category procured through the Ohio CAN program in the first year of implementation.

- **Breads and Grains:** 11,805 lbs, $175,409.76
- **Dairy and Milk:** 222,631 lbs, $287,315.01
- **Egg**s: 38,683 lbs, $58,010
- **Fish and Seafood:** 647 lbs, $9,900
- **Meat and Poultry:** 450,266 lbs, $2,332,773
- **Nut Seeds and Legumes:** 110,960 lbs, $301,794.94
- **Produce:** 2,563,134 lbs, $3,413,476.01
- **Snacks and Condiments:** 281,542 lbs, $518,866.22
- **Mixed Boxes from Aggregators:** 864,651 lbs, $2,721,523.74

“"When we got the PO's from Ohio CAN, myself and many others were moved to tears just because it was such a clear investment from the state of what we believe and local food and the power of local food,” Anna Shields, She-EO of Snowville Creamery

Purchasing data collected from December 2022 to December 2023.
Foodbanks and Aggregators

The 12 Feeding America Foodbanks

& The Counties They Cover

The Feeding America Network consists of foodbanks, food pantries, local meal programs and the Feeding America national organization. It includes over 200 foodbanks and nearly 60,000 food pantries and meal programs that provide food in nearly every community in all 50 states.

Akron-Cantont Regional Foodbank
  - Carroll, Holmes, Medina, Portage, Tuscarawas, Stark, Summit, Wayne counties
The Greater Cleveland Foodbank, Inc.
  - Ashland, Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Richland counties
Freestore Foodbank
  - Adams, Brown, Clermont, Clinton, Hamilton, Highland, Pike, Scioto counties
Mid-Ohio Food Collective
  - Belmont, Coshocton, Delaware, Fairfield, Fayette, Franklin, Guernsey, Harrison, Jefferson, Knox, Licking, Madison, Marion, Morrow, Monroe, Muskingum, Noble, Pickaway, Ross, Union counties
Second Harvest Food Bank of North Central Ohio
  - Crawford, Erie, Huron, Lorain counties
Second Harvest Food Bank of the Mahoning Valley
  - Columbiana, Mahoning, Trumbull counties
Second Harvest Foodbank of Clark, Champaign, and Logan Counties
  - Champaign, Clark, Logan counties
SE Ohio Foodbank & Kitchen
  - Athens, Gallia, Hocking, Jackson, Lawrence, Meigs, Morgan, Perry, Vinton, Washington counties
Shared Harvest Foodbank
  - Butler, Darke, Miami, Warren counties
The Foodbank, Inc.
  - Greene, Montgomery counties
Toledo Northwestern Ohio Food Bank
  - Defiance, Fulton, Henry, Lucas, Ottawa, Sandusky, Williams, Wood counties
West Ohio Food Bank
  - Allen, Auglaize, Hancock, Hardin, Mercer, Paulding, Putnam, Seneca, Shelby, Van Wert, Wyandot counties

Ohio CAN is working with multiple statewide aggregators and distributors for this program: Oberlin Food Hub, Yellowbird Foodshed, DNO, and What Chefs Want. Choosing which partner to work with typically depends on your location and how you would like to participate in the Ohio CAN program. All partners have the ability to pick up from farms across the state and aggregate it into quantities that can be sold to the larger regional foodbanks.

Oberlin Food Hub
  - Regionality - best suited for producers in Northern Ohio/Cleveland area, however not limited to this region.
  - Accepted Products - Produce
What Chefs Want/Creation Gardens
  - Regionality - drop off locations in Cincinnati, Columbus, and Cleveland
  - Accepted Products - All, especially produce, value-added products, grain, and dairy products.
Yellowbird Foodshed
  - Regionality - Central Ohio
  - Accepted Products - All
DNO
  - Regionality - Central Ohio
  - Accepted Products - Produce

“[Ohio CAN's] been really rewarding for us... I've seen it brought up in that area. I've seen folks that have gone and gotten real food at the foodbank that is local,” Jonathan Leal, founder and owner of Milo's WWG
“Whereas in farming, there is no end to what you can learn. There's no one farmer who can do it all,” Jamie Pritchard, farmer and owner of WIT Farm

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, 96% of farms in Ohio are family owned.

Agriculture in Ohio

The state of Ohio has a long history in agriculture and farming. By the early 19th century, Ohio established itself as one of the United States’ leading states in crop production.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture was founded as the Ohio Board of Agriculture in 1846 and is one of the oldest agriculture departments in the nation. It predates the United States Department of Agriculture by 16 years.

As of 2022, Ohio has more than 76,000 farms, about half of these farms also have livestock. There are more than 39,100 new and beginning farmers in Ohio.

Ohio grows and raises more than 200 products; its main cash crops are soybeans and corn. While most people would believe it to be corn, corn comes in second for highest value in production of a commodity crop. Hay and haylage is third, wheat the fourth and pumpkins the fifth. Ohio also leads the United States in Swiss cheese production, producing more than 40% of the country’s Swiss cheese.

Ohio is also one of the top leading producers of livestock.
- There are roughly 2,195 dairy farms in Ohio
- Ohio cattle farmers raise roughly 285,000 beef cows
- Ohio raises more than 2.75 million hogs each year
- Ohio hens lay nearly 12 billion eggs a year, making it one of the largest egg producers in the U.S.
- Ohio has over 4,100 sheep farms with 145,381 sheep and lambs

Fun Facts

“Pigs love walnuts, their jaws can crack through them easily,” Jamie Pritchard, farmer, and owner of WIT Farm

Figs can be grown in the state of Ohio, despite usually only being able to grow in warmer climates such as California, Turkey, Syria and more, according to Anthony Pippin, farmer and owner of Pippin’s Produce.

Radicchio, a cabbage-like, leafy vegetable known for its spicy bitterness, can be brought inside, covered in sand and grown in the dark during the winter. A technique called forcing, according to Kendyl Meadows, farmer, and co-owner of Three Creeks Produce.

Humans and pigs share roughly 98% of genetic similarity. Pigs have almost the same stomachs as humans, and pig heart valves can be used in human transplants. This is why grass-fed pork is not a real thing. “You can’t eat grass and survive, they can’t eat grass and survive,” Jess Stevens, farmer, and owner of Carroll Creek Farms

Food and agriculture is Ohio’s number one industry, contributing $124 billion to the state’s economy and employing one in eight people.

“What works for one person doesn't work for somebody else. There’s a billion different people, and a billion different ways to grow something. Just because it worked for them doesn’t mean it will work for you. So, it's kind of a trial-and-error process,” Anthony Pippin
“A lot of the time people assume that it's just like, old guys that are farming a lot of the time they don't think I'm the actual farmer. They think I'm like the farmer's kid or something. I think sometimes they assume a lot of the time that this was my family's property. And I just inherited it rather than buying it growing it myself and starting all this from scratch,” **Jess Stevens, farmer and owner of Carroll Creek Farms**

For me it's the results of a hard day's work, creating something from nothing and producing a product others can enjoy,” **Matthew Kiesel, farmer and owner of Kiesel Farms**

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Created with information from **Rural Action**, a nonprofit organization that increases access to healthy local produce by partnering with retailers, hospitals, and schools in food-insecure communities.
“Having access to like real food, healthy food and nutritional food, is essential. When you're hungry, you can't do anything. You can't go to school, you can't go to work, you can't function. Nothing in your life works if you're not eating the food you need to be. This really is a foundation for enabling people to be more successful in their lives” Jonathan Leal, founder and owner of Milo’s WWG

“I know the best food is homegrown. And now there is phenomenal chefs like, I delivered yesterday, and they made mortadella with my pork, and it was phenomenal,” Jamie Pritchard, farmer and owner of WIT Farm

“I think the name of the game of being outside and being in the sunshine and working with soil is really restorative just as a human being,” Jenna Smith, farmer at Solidarity Urban Farms

“What I enjoy most about being a farmer is the way that it really brings together a lot of things that I value, ecology and the environment has always been really important to me since I was a really little kid. I've also always been interested in entrepreneurship. So, the small business aspect of it is really important and valuable to me,” Kendyl Meadows, farmer and co-owner of Three Creeks Produce

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Plentiful | Available | Sparse
Collard Greens

Recipe Ingredients
- 12 hickory-smoked bacon slices
- 2 medium-size sweet onions
- 3/4 lb. smoked ham
- 6 garlic cloves
- 3 (32-oz.) containers chicken broth
- 3 (1-lb.) packages fresh collard greens
- 1/3 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1 tbsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. table salt
- 3/4 tsp. pepper

1. **Cook the bacon and reserve the drippings in the stockpot.**
2. **Add the chopped onion to the bacon drippings. Sauté until just tender. Add the garlic and ham.**
3. **Stir in the remaining ingredients—broth, collard greens, apple cider vinegar, sugar, salt, and pepper. Reduce the heat, and simmer on low for about 2 hours, or until the collard greens are as tender as you prefer.**

Jacket Sweet Potatoes

Recipe Ingredients
- 4 large sweet potatoes,
- salt and pepper
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 1/2 bunch scallions, finely chopped
- A recipe called Jacket Sweet Potatoes from the book *Good and Cheap* by Leanne Brown

1. **Heat the oven to 400 degrees. Scrub sweet potatoes and stab with fork a few times. Lay on baking sheet. Bake for 60 to 75 minutes. Check an hour after by cutting them with a long knife, if it doesn’t go through easy, they’re not ready yet.**
2. **Once done let cool for 15 minutes. Make a long cut along the top of each sweet potato and open gently.**
3. **Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Let each individual add sour cream and scallions (or more salt and pepper) based on their preference. Enjoy!**
Harvest Tips

Produce Wash

Keep produce unwashed and uncut until ready to use.

- Start the process with clean hands using proper handwashing techniques (i.e. Wash your hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds)
- When washing, avoid soap and bleach as they can cause sickness.
- You can use a vinegar wash solution; it’s one of the best things to wash produce with.
  - It kills mold spores, bacteria and small bugs.
  - White vinegar is commonly recommended, apple cider vinegar might leave an after taste.
  - Create a solution of 3 parts water to 1 part vinegar, soak produce in solution for 5 to 10 minutes before rinsing under cold water and drying it with a lint-free towel
  - For vegetables with crevices such as broccoli, add baking soda to your solution. Just a teaspoon or two.

Produce Storage

There are different ways to store produce, all with the goal of minimizing food waste. Understanding ethylene, a plant hormone that makes seeds/buds sprout, and ripens fruit, is key to storing and extending shelf life of produce.

- Plants release ethylene, a gas, but the production of or sensitivity to ethylene is not identical from plant to plant.
- Store fruits and vegetables separate. Most fruits release ethylene and most vegetables are sensitive to it. Store ethylene sensitive items and ethylene producers separate.
- To help accelerate the process of ripening fruits or tomatoes, put them in brown paper bags.

For more recipes and information on what you can make at home with the produce that is grown in Ohio, click this link, or scan the QR Code!
Food production is impacted greatly by changing weather patterns, weather extremes, and climate change-triggered droughts. These are the key drivers of food insecurity. Father Alex Barton, farmer at Solidarity Urban Farms said one of the biggest issues they've faced while farming has been the seasons and the weather that are always out of their control. 

“Most true homeless people don't really have a way to cut up fruits and vegetables to prepare for it. So, they didn't necessarily want the stuff that I was bringing. You know, I take stuff there have it out on the tables, a couple of people would take it, and most people wouldn't,” Anthony Pippin

**Issues in Agriculture Today**

First line suggested change: Certain methods of our world’s food production, such as monocropping and intensive tilling, have degraded over roughly 1/3 of the world’s productive topsoil. Simultaneously failing to provide the agricultural yields (measurement of the amount of a crop or product produced per unit area of land) necessary to sustain the growing population.

**Climate Change**

Food production is impacted greatly by changing weather patterns, weather extremes, and climate change-triggered droughts. These are the key drivers of food insecurity. **Father Alex Barton, farmer at Solidarity Urban Farms said** one of the biggest issues they've faced while farming has been the seasons and the weather that are always out of their control.

**Insufficient Agricultural Land**

Since 1961, over 1/3 of the 1.38 billion hectares of arable land available worldwide has been compromised due to extensive land conversion and agricultural methods like monocropping and intensive tilling. Land conversion has led to soil erosion (when water displaces soil on the ground), desertification (reduction of biological productivity of drylands) and salinization (the accumulation of salt in soil).

**Land Access**

Jamie Pritchard described how she could afford a farm closer to Columbus, Oh. “Number one is land access. I know that's a big thing for everybody. You know, I was leasing four acres, and that's almost nothing for a livestock farmer. And because of land prices, and what we had to have, we, you know, my husband has an hour and a half one-way trip to work. He's spending 15 hours a week in a truck just to work because he does not farm, I'm the only one who farms. You know, that's pretty rough.”

**Biodiversity Loss**

Biologists call the extensive loss of biological diversity in agriculture genetic erosion. **This process is the loss of an entire species.** Without biodiversity, there wouldn’t be any healthy ecosystems to provide the food we eat or air we breathe. In Gambia, large losses of wild foods have pushed communities to turn to industrially processed foods.

**Supporting the Small Farmer**

Agriculture is a source of raw materials, but also a source of employment and a source of food supply for the entire world. Farmers, particularly our small family farms need support. It takes a lot of capital commitment to operate and sustain a farm. Farming can also have unpredictable markets, low profit margins, and a long wait until farmers get a return on investment.
“It's really hard to get started in farming. It's very capital intensive. There's a lot of risk. You have to keep the day job and work it at the same time. It's not always going to cash flow, and you are 10 years in and still not profitable. And then just the ups and downs of farming, you can't be in control of everything... being able to have the fortitude and grittiness to ride those waves get up and do it every day”

Jess Stevens

“Financial resources are tricky, you know, we're not farming to get rich... But also we need to really support our employees and our family to keep going so, you know, that's also a tricky one”

Kendyl Meadows

“I'm very lucky to have the lease that I have. But I also understand this isn't my property... But I love what I'm doing, and I always want to continue what I am doing, but the finances have to be there too. I gave up a career seven years ago to do this.”

Anthony Pippin
The Farm Bill is a major piece of legislation in the United States which shapes our food and agriculture systems. It is passed roughly once every 5 years and is a package of legislation that has a tremendous impact on food access, farming livelihoods, how food is grown, and what kinds of foods are grown.

The first Farm Bill was created in the 1930's, as a part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal Legislation. It primarily focused on commodity price support and relief for farmers coming out the Dust Bowl and Great Depression. Since the first, there have been 18 farm bills, which have been greatly expanded to include things like nutrition assistance programs, agriculture conservation, farm credit, bioenergy, rural development, foreign food assistance, and more. Farm bill passage and implementation has a timeline with serious consequences if lawmakers fail to adhere to it. Its five-year lifespan provides lawmakers the opportunity to update programs so they are relevant to current economic conditions.

A Few Programs in the 2018 Farm Bill:

Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network: Intends to deal with the rising levels of stress and mental health concerns in farm country. Was authorized for the 2014 Farm Bill, but never received the funding it needed. The 2018 Farm Bill makes improvements to the program- explicitly providing access to tribal communities and more.

Whole Farm Revenue Protection: A crop insurance program that allows coverage for farmers who run more diversified operations that previously could not access safety net programs.

Local Food Policy: The 2018 Farm Bill directs USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA) to create a new Local Food Policy, helping farmers and ranchers who are in local and regional food systems to have better access to insurance programs for their operations.

Data from the 2018 Farm Bill, from 2019 to 2023

Nutrition 76%
Commodities 7%
Crop Insurance 9%
Conservation Other 1%
“People learning as much as they can plants the seed of then taking action. You know, if our state legislators, for example, have a really thorough understanding of agriculture, then those legislators will go on to hopefully, form better agricultural policy. And then we get programs like Ohio CAN that are really benefiting people, really benefiting farms, really benefiting small businesses. And I don't think those programs would have been approved and put into motion if it hadn't been for advocacy. That is, was started by people learning about and caring about how food is grown,” Kendyl Meadows
Advancements in Farming

By 2050, the demand for food will surge 70%. In order to feed the rapidly growing population while fighting the climate crisis, speed and accuracy that new advancements in technology and agricultural practices can provide will be required. Already, new innovations in agriculture show that technology can help build more sustainable food systems and improve food security all over the world.

Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA)

Also known as “indoor farming” or “vertical farming,” this is a method of cultivating plants in a fully regulated environment. All the plants needs are met by artificially providing them with water, nutrients, and light using hydroponic, aquaponic and aeroponic techniques. This has been found to reduce water consumption and protects plants from adverse weather conditions while maximizing the use of space for cultivation.

Hydroponics, Aquaponics and Aeroponics

- **Hydroponics** - A type of agricultural method that doesn’t use soil. Uses science and engineering to mimic the vital elements of a plant’s environment, still delivering all of its vital nutrients.
- **Aquaponics** - The integration of hydroponics and aquaculture. The process of reusing wastewater as a natural fertilizer for the hydroponic plant system in a continuous recirculating system.
- **Aeroponics** - Nourishes plants with nothing more than nutrient-laden mist. Seeds are planted in pieces of foam stuffed into tiny pots, which are exposed to light on one end and nutrient mist on the other. Grown in soil-less medium.

Diversifying

Not only are farmers doing the hard work when it comes to raising livestock or growing produce, but they are also put in positions to be a business professional, or an accountant, or a salesman, and so on. They’re forced to diversify their business models to expand their businesses and farms. For example, Evan’s Family Ranch not only raises livestock and sells meat, but they also have a storefront. They sell to local restaurants and they have an agritourism business with four Airbnb’s, according to Chad Watkins.

Regenerative Agriculture

**Regenerative Agriculture** is the focus on improving the health of soil, which has been degraded by the use of heavy machinery, fertilizer, and pesticides in intensive farming. Regenerative agriculture is not only good for the environment, because it does not harm the climate, but it can also improve farmers’ incomes as well by cutting emissions and boosting soil health. Regenerative farming methods include minimizing the ploughing of land, keeping CO2 in the soil, which improves water absorbency and leaves vital fungi communities in the earth undisturbed. Rotating crops and their varieties improves biodiversity, and using compost and animal manure can return nutrients to soil. Also, rotating pastures animals graze on is a regenerative method of farming.

Farming Techniques

There are hundreds of different farming techniques and methods that are used worldwide. One specific technique that an Ohio CAN farmer, Steve Willis from Just Farmin’ puts to use is the **Florida weaving technique**. The idea with the Florida weave technique is that your plants will be intertwined between lengths of twine. It involves creating a system of stakes and weaving twine or string between them, providing structure and support. This is a popular method for supporting tomato plants as they grow.
"If you can't come out here and eat it [the produce] and pick it without washing it, I don't want to grow it"
Steve Willis

“Everything that we grow, we do in a regenerative style of sustainable farming. So, we're using only organic materials. So, no chemical pesticides, or chemical fertilizers, things like that. And then we're also looking to build soil health,” Jenna Smith, farmer from Solidarity Urban Farms said, “We want to make sure that if we're working with kids, and we're like harvesting snap peas that they're able to pluck one right off the vine and taste it.”

“Some people have health issues that they need, you know, the healthy food, and some people just like the idea of having something fresh because they can't grow it themselves. And so whatever you know, their journey is people come to me and like oh, you know, you've helped with my diabetes or you've helped with my weight loss journey or, I was having you know, reactions from pesticides that were on food and now that I'm not consuming as much as that you know, I'm not having you know, flare ups or you know, issues just really having a small impact, food is grown all over the world and it's available to everyone and not everybody can have good quality food, not everyone can afford good quality food so that's one reason I like [Ohio CAN].” Anthony Pippin
**Benefits to Farming**

“It’s a dream, it’s a passion, but just like any other job it has its benefits, and it has its rewards,” Anthony Pippin said.

**Restorative**

“There are a lot of things I love about it [farming]. I think the name of the game of being outside and being in the sunshine and working with soil is really restorative just as a human being. I love the nature of those things, and being able to work with plants and vegetables. But also the community aspects of being able to meet new folks in the neighborhood simply by being present. And I think that’s the kind of relationship building that really can only happen if you like, show up,” Jenna Smith said.

**Creating Community**

“One of our mission statements per se is about bringing the community together and, and being able to do things as a family,” Chad Watkins, from Evan’s Family Ranch said.

“Being able to talk to my customers see the impact the food has on them. Seeing the impact the quality of the food has on them. A lot of our customers have been our customers for seven years now. So I’ve got to watch their families grow up with my family,” Anthony Pippin said.

**Learned Skills**

As a farmer you learn to wear many different hats and develop a wide range of skills, from business skills to education and teaching skills, to financial skills and so on. An example of this would be the many different skills that Jeanine Seabrook, owner of Glass Rooster Cannery, has. Seabrook is a farmer, a caterer, a mother, a wedding planner, a cooking class instructor, she owns a canned food business, and she gets to work with other farmers.

**Creating Legacy**

“I feel like this is kind of most first-gen farmers like, journey. You do it for friends and family. And then somebody convinces you to go to a farmers’ market. And oh, my gosh, you sold something. And that’s so addictive. And now it's my whole life,” Jamie Pritchard said.

Jeanine Seabrook described how she is building a legacy for her children, and their children, and so on through her business Glass Rooster Cannery.

**Healthier for the Environment & You**

Anna Shields described how she started at Snowville as a dairy farmer, after she gave birth to her daughter, she wanted to change things up. From that moment on Victoria, the owner of Snowville, helped her switch paths. “A common theme is that we realize that people bring their best selves when they’re thought of as a whole person. And so that’s something that kind of transcends throughout the way that we do everything,” Shields said.

“We’re using only organic materials. So no chemical pesticides, or chemical fertilizers, things like that. And then we’re also looking to build soil health. So putting intentional nutrients back in spraying fertilizers that are organic, and will build soil matter and all those kinds of things too,” Jenna Smith said.
How to Become Your Own Farmer

While it takes hard work, anyone who puts their mind to it can become a farmer, have their own personal garden, or participate in community farming or gardening spaces. There are all different types of farmers, producers and suppliers. From individuals who work strictly on a farm to those who are in the canning or milling business. Here’s a look into the many different ways to become a producer of your own goods.

Urban vs Rural Farming

Urban farming is defined as the practice of cultivating crops, livestock or types of food in an urban environment, typically a smaller space. Rural farming would be the cultivation of crops, livestock or types of food in a rural environment, something more open with more space. Urban areas are defined as more densely populate areas, whereas rural environments comprise of open country settlements. Urban farming is on the rise as it uses fewer water resources, fewer food miles, more sustainable packaging, and emits less green-house gases.

Community Gardens

A community garden is land that is gardened and cultivated by a group of people collectively or individually. Community gardens can beautify the landscape of a community, make fresh produce accessible for a community, promote a healthier lifestyle for an entire community, help clean up the environment for a neighborhood, and creates stronger communities that have more opportunities to learn and relieve stress by increasing wellness. One option is using a Land Bank Program, if interested in renting land check out the Franklin County Land Reutilization Corporation or Land Bank.

Milling Business

A mill is a device, often a structure, machine, or kitchen appliance that breaks solid materials into smaller pieces by grinding, crushing, or cutting. There are many different types of mills and many types of materials processed in them. For example, Shagbark Seed & Mill, owned by Michelle Ajamian, is a mill. There they process things like bran, corn, and more to make products like their famous cornmeal mini chips.

Canning Business

Canning is a method of food preservation where food is processed and sealed in an airtight container. Canning provides a shelf life that typically ranges from one to five years, although under certain conditions, it can be longer. There are two types of canning, water bath canning and pressure canning. Canning is an excellent way to increase consumption of local foods. Canning allows you to capture the bounty of any particular crop in season and extend its availability throughout the year.

Creating Your Own Garden

Creating your own garden starts with picking out your garden type and understanding what type of space you have and how much. The first step is picking a spot based on what you want to grow. Next, test your soil in the fall time to make amendments before growing season. Before you plant, you’ll want to make a plan of what you want to grow and where. You can either buy transplant or start from seed.

Becoming a Business Owner

From conducting research, to writing a business plan, to funding the business, to picking a location, a name, and registering your business, it can be hard to get started. However, there are resources out there. Check with your local extension office or look into a business class at a community college.
“What works for one person doesn't work for somebody else. There's a billion different people, and a billion different ways to grow something. Just because it worked for them doesn't mean it will work for you. So, it's kind of a trial and error process,” Anthony Pippin said.

“The main thing would be you have to understand you're choosing a lifestyle not a job. Very important to understand that going in and then set goals that are achievable. You know, the price of land and input cost and everything it may not be realistic for a beginning farmer to farm 2,000 acres or whatever, but maybe you can have 10 or 20 that you can do different things with and make it sustainable to a point,” Bryan Jackson, farmer from Evan’s Family Ranch said.

“The most impact you can have as a farmer is to be one. And to keep being one, and to do that, you really need to pay attention, you need to treat the farm as a business and take that part of it very seriously,” Kendyl Meadows said.

“I think it's really important to know your own capacity, and to be honest with yourself about the time I think-this happens, like the community network of asking for volunteers in for support, we can't really do it all by yourself. And we can do twice the work in half the time with two people,” Jenna Smith said.

“I think really a lot of us get into farming, because we love animals or plants doing the farming work. But you can really lose the farm sometimes from the bookwork side of things if you're not on top of it. So, ensuring that you have enough capital to begin and understanding how you're going to achieve your goals financially. It's really important,” Jess Stevens said.

“Start where you're comfortable... Align yourself with people that are like, willing to help you and educate you,” Rachel Jarman, farmer, and owner of Bank Barn Meats said.

“Having access to real food, healthy food, and nutritional food, is essential. When you're hungry, you can't do anything. You can't go to school, you can't go to work, you can't function. Nothing in your life works if you're not eating the food you need to be. This really is a foundation for enabling people to be more successful in their lives,” Jonathan Leal said.

“You have to have a lot of personal discipline, you have to as farmers, you have to manage the program and you have to remember the in's and outs of the operation. There has to be some give and take, baby steps. There will be kinks and things you have to work through to get to do it. But there is a sense of pride that you get from it.

Not because you want to be rich, but because you will have an honest living. That is important to be able to put your head down on a pillow at night with a clear conscience,” Steve Willis, farmer and owner of Just Farmin’ said.

“Keep a sharp pencil, keep good records, and know your numbers and then grow at the speed of cash,” Matthew Kiesel, farmer and co-owner of Kiesel Farms said.
Composting is the controlled, aerobic (meaning oxygen required) biological decomposition of organic materials by microorganisms. Organic materials can include paper and paperboard, yard trimmings, metals, glass, plastics, food, wood, rubber, leather and textiles, and more. Composting is a natural way of recycling and can be one of the most powerful ways to reduce trash in landfills, address climate change, build healthy soil and more.

In 2019, 66.2 million tons of wasted food were generated in food retail, food service and residential sectors in the U.S. Only 5% of that wasted food was composted.

"The disconnect in our food production system, because there’s so much waste from harvesting and transport, especially when it comes to like, conventional agriculture. And a lot of the imperfect produce that is thrown away, even if it’s like perfectly good quality or delicious. And so I think that’s also a really important part is reducing the amount of waste and making sure that they maximize that availability to people. So not only with like, less waste in our composting process, but less waste and like getting it to people, and actually using the things that we grow." Jenna Smith said.

**Composting at Home:**
Composting at home provides many benefits. Those benefits being better soil quality for your garden, creating a smaller carbon footprint when you throw out less trash, and it can save you money due to using less water for your garden and having to buy less fertilizer. Not to mention, you’ll be saving money because you’re growing your own produce!

1. **Find** a space for your compost bin, either indoors or outdoors. If composting outside, you will need about three square feet of space.

2. **Layer** your materials, starting with coarse materials like sticks and twigs, then adding food waste, yard waste, soil, and water. **Never add any meat or dairy products, diseased plants, fats or oils, or animal feces.** It’s also a good idea to **minimize adding too many onions and garlic** as these can repel worms in large amounts, which are important for the composting process. (All food waste technically can be processed in a food digester).

3. **Maintain** your bin by turning it at least once a week. Each time you add materials, make sure to mix them well with the lower layers. This will help it decompose faster. Then you want to monitor the moisture, ideally the bin should be as moist as a wet sponge, if it dries out add more water. If it seems too wet, then add more dry materials.

4. **Harvest** your composted material, when it is ready it will be dark, crumbly and have an earth-like smell. This usually takes a minimum of four to six months from the time you first start. When you’re finished, harvest the compost and use it in your garden!

If composting isn’t within your capabilities, think about a **compost exchange program.** These programs are available for those who are interested in composting but don’t have the means to do it on their own. One example is **The Compost Exchange,** founded in 2012 in Athens, Ohio, it offers residential and commercial food scrap waste collection for composting in Columbus, Ohio. This program has drop-off and curbside pick-up capabilities.
Jeanine Seabrook, farmer and owner of Glass Rooster Cannery

“I was 45 years old when we opened our doors, before that we had a lot of lives,” Seabrook said. Before opening Glass Rooster Cannery in 2010, she worked at a law firm and raised four children. Jeanine enjoys what she does because she gets to do something different each day while giving other farmers and her customers ways to be creative with their products. Seabrook also enjoys creating a legacy for her future generations.

Chad Watkins and Bryan Jackson of Evan’s Family Ranch

Bryan is a third-generation farmer, whose been buying, selling and growing cover crops to graze cattle on ever since he was young. Chad described how Ed [the owner of Evan’s Family Ranch] has been in the business for 30 years, and 15 years in New Carlisle. Evan’s Family Ranch not only raises livestock, but they also have an agritourism business and they grow their own hay, along with other produce.

Anthony Pippin, farmer and owner of Pippin’s Produce

“Being able to have a positive impact on the community, I guess, will probably be the biggest thing. Like I said, I know that I’m never gonna get rich doing this, but it’s kind of the lifestyle, I have the freedom to not necessarily do what I want because I’m here 18 hours a day, year around. But if something happens with the kids, if something happens with the family, you know, I don’t have to go and talk to my boss or request time off or stuff like that,” Pippin said.

Jess Stevens, farmer and owner of Carroll Creek Farms

“I love the animals. That’s why I started this. I mean, I got started with like, one rabbit in 4-H when I was nine, and kind of just that was the gateway drug, I guess,” Stevens said. Jess goes on to describe how she also likes being able to connect with the community because of her farms transparent and open model, “Being able to provide food, but also have a food system that is both ethically raised, but then ethically bought is pretty cool,” Stevens said.

Home | glass-rooster (glassroostercannery.com)
Evans Family Ranch | Pastured Grass-Fed Beef | Locally Grown Seasonal Produce & Flowers (efranch.com)
About - Pippin’s Produce (pippinsproduce.net)
Carroll Creek Farms | Home
“We didn’t come from farming backgrounds, we didn’t have farmland, in our family that was that was going to be passed to us so that we could work on. And we weren’t wealthy, independently wealthy either. So, we kind of were scratching our heads at a way to get involved in, in agricultural production,” Meadows said as she described how her and her husband began farming.

Michelle described the making of one of Shagbark’s most famous products, the cornmeal mini corn chips. It began with wanting to make tortilla chips for Costco, and after sending cornmeal they realized it would have to be minimized into Massa; forcing them to start from ground zero. “So, they had several hundred pounds of our cornmeal, and we said we can make something with that.... it was a total accident from the original product,” Ajamian said.

Pritchard is a first-generation farmer and a foodie, “I had grown up working with horses, and I was the kid who was outside more than in and I was, you know, I was sick of being an office lady. So, I wanted to grow my own food, it was more of a I'm a foodie. And I wanted really good food,” Pritchard said.

Steve Willis grew up in Missouri farming, but in the early 80’s farming went downhill, Willis said. “My degree is in agriculture... I got into farming because I have two children with food allergies,” Willis said. “Understanding produce is hard for young kids. Our kids grew up on it, so we just assumed everyone knew,” Willis said.
Rachel Jarman, farmer and owner of Bank Barn Meats

Rachel Jarman described how she grew up on a grain farm and having 4-H projects. But she never had sheep growing up. One day her husband said they should raise sheep, and she thought we have the facilities able to accommodate it, so why not? Jarman said they began with two sheep to now having over 20.

Bank Barn Meats | Port William OH | Facebook

Matthew Kiesel, farmer and co-owner of Kiesel Farms, and Scott Kiesel, farmer and co-owner of Kiesel Farms.

Both Scott and Matthew Kiesel were born and raised on a farm, they said. It was a natural progression to co-own Kiesel Farms together. Scott has a mixed livestock farm and raises chickens and cattle. Whereas Matthew primarily works with chickens and grows hay and straw.

Kiesel Farms

Anna Shields, She-EO of Snowville Creamery

“Snowville has always had what we call a servant’s heart. And so, we’ve always tried to find ways to connect with our community to donate our products. We continuously are donating to the community, we work with several local food banks,” Shields said. Anna began working at Snowville as a dairy farmer, until she decided she needed a change of pace, and is now the She-EO of Snowville.

Snowville Creamery, LLC | United States

Jonathan Leal, founder and owner of Milo’s WWG

“So, we’re in year 20, or 21 this fall. It’s crazy to think it’s been that long already. But we started at ACEnet, which is a nonprofit incubator based down in Athens... I was making some sauce one day and someone said, “you should put that in a jar,” and I said, “well how hard and expensive would that be? You know, that was like the craziest stupidest thing that I ever did not realize how much I lost in my first like five years of learning the business,” Leal said.

Milo’s Whole World Gourmet (miloswholeworld.com)
“The farm is multi, so we grow produce, but we also have a huge component that’s for flowers. And then sort of a subsection of produce, we do a bunch of herbs that we dry to sell as herb mixes and also in our tearoom,” Father Alex Barton said.

“So that’s the fun part is that we’re always being challenged, not only like to create cohesive community spaces, but also in how we can efficiently in a healthy way, grow produce or flowers to the best of our ability,” Jenna Smith said.

Thank you to the handful of farmers, producers, and suppliers who were willing to be interviewed and photographed!

The Ohio CAN/LFPA program has over 160 individual suppliers, farmers, and growers participate; these are just a few! To be featured in future program materials contact us at avanzant@ohiofoodbanks.org
Farm Aid works to build a thriving family-farm centered system of agriculture. They have a program called the Farm Aid Grant Program, which funds organizations serving family farms. In 2023 they distributed $1.3 million in grant funding.

Ohio Farm Bureau is a grassroots membership organization that is committed to supporting Ohio’s farm and food community. Membership is an option, and open to anyone who supports the agriculture community. They also have membership benefits and more.

Founded in 1979, the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association (OEFFA) cultivates a future in which sustainable and organic farmers thrive, local food nourishes communities, and agricultural practices protect and enhance the environment. OEFFA has an annual conference, they do workshops, farm tours, help with organic certification, and more!

MarketLink was established in 2013 by the National Association of Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (NAFMNP). MarketLink develops technology that works for farmers, markets and consumers through the following offerings and services: (1) the “SNAP Equipment” grant, (2) the “SNAP Online” grant, and (3) Electronic payments for eWIC, Farmers Market Nutrition Programs (FMNP), and Incentive Programs.

Farm Generations Cooperative is committed to empowering local farmers while promoting transparency in the food supply chain. They created GrownBy, a farmer owned, and the only cooperatively owned app for farm sales in the entire world. Farmers can now apply to accept SNAP/EBT benefits on GrownBy, and consumers can shop with SNAP/EBT at participating select farms.

USDA offers help to beginning farmers and ranchers. USDA considers anyone who has operated a farm or ranch for less than ten years to be a beginning farmer or rancher. They can help get you started or grow your operation through a variety of programs and services, from farm loans to crop insurance, and conservation programs to disaster assistance.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) administers numerous regulatory, food safety and marketing programs to support Ohio farmers and food processors. Consider reaching out to ODA to learn about licensing requirements, Ohio’s beginning farmer tax credits, and the Ohio Proud program that promotes food and agriculture made, grown, or processed in Ohio.
“[Ohio CAN] allows us to be super productive, it allows us to aim high for volume. And the certainty that we have a place to sell the food that we’re growing, that agreement that we have in place ahead of time, allows us to plan without feeling nervous,” Kendyl Meadows said.

“Before the program started, you know, we didn’t let stuff go to waste. We’d take it to the foodbanks. But you know, it’s beneficial to them you know, it’s beneficial to us as a tax right off. And so now with the CAN program it justifies the cost, justifies the ideals, it gets the food out into the communities, and gets the food to people that don’t have access to it before,” Anthony Pippin said.

“Ohio CAN made it possible for us to carry on getting this superior form of nutrition into local communities in a way that allowed us to continue to extend the work that we were doing of donating on our own,” Anna Shields said.

“‘Working outside working with my hands, being physical, and the variety of things that we’re able to do from day to day...I love food, I love the way it nourishes us, I love the way it brings people together. I love the way it helps. It's often the first way you can get someone interested in a new culture or a new something unfamiliar to them,” Kendyl Meadows

“Being able to have another place to sell our products, share the products with others within Ohio... try to provide wholesome source of food for other people—it’s always rewarding,” Bryan Jackson said.

“Just knowing that there’s like a support network of people who are interested, and advocate for small farmers, like really supporting the distribution of local foods and like connecting people who are in need of food with food that is readily available,” Jenna Smith said about the Ohio CAN Program.
What is Ohio CAN?
- LFPA Executive Summary - Ohio | Agricultural Marketing Service (usda.gov)
- Ohio CAN Program | Ohio Department of Agriculture
- LFPA Plus | Agricultural Marketing Service (usda.gov)
- Ohio CAN (LFPA) - OAF Vendors
- OH CAN Delivery Expectations Farm to Foodbank.docx (oafvendors.org)

Key Terms to Understand
- Agriculture Terms & Definitions - CropForLife Agriculture
- 100 Farm Terms to Help You Understand Farming Better (forfarmersmovement.com)
- Farming Terminology Guide - Tallowood Farms

Impact of LFPA
- Information taken from OAF’s one year impact study.
- Ohio CAN Food Program Reaches Under-Resourced Ohioans - Farm Flavor

Agriculture in Ohio & Fun Facts
- About Ohio Agriculture | Ohio Livestock Coalition
- olc_jul_2018_comcard.pdf (ohiolivestock.org)
- USDA - National Agricultural Statistics Service - Ohio - County Estimates
  - cpd39000.pdf (usda.gov)
  - aao2312.pdf (usda.gov)
- USDA - National Agricultural Statistics Service - Ohio - Ag Across Ohio

Foodbanks & Aggregators
- How Do Food Banks Work? | Feeding America
- The difference between food banks and pantries | Feeding America
- Distribution Basics: Vendors and Aggregators - POV Author Services
- Why would I want to be a food banker? Let us tell you! - Feeding Tampa Bay
- Food Bank 101: Everything You Need to Know About Food Banks – Feeding America West Michigan (feedwm.org)

Ohio Harvest Schedule
- Ohio crop harvest calendar - When fruit and vegetables are normally available and ready to pick in Ohio (pickyourown.org)
- Ohio-Harvest-Calendar-PDF.pdf (fpconservatory.org)
- Ohio Vegetable Planting Calendar (ufseeds.com)
- Produce Availability | Ohio Proud

Issues Facing Agriculture Today
- 5 Challenges the Agricultural Sector Faces in 2023 | Earth.Org
- Top issues impacting agriculture: Regulations and demand (farmprogress.com)
- America’s Farms Are Facing A Serious Labor Shortage: Consider This from NPR : NPR

The Farm Bill
- Beginning & historically underrepresented Farmers - National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
- History of the United States Farm Bill | In Custodia Legis (loc.gov)
- What is the (Food and) Farm Bill and Why Does It Matter? | Market Intel | American Farm Bureau Federation (fb.org)
- The Cost of a Farm Bill: 2023 Dairy Priorities | Dairy Herd
- R45525 (congress.gov)
- Grassroots Guide to Federal Farm and Food Programs - National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
### Advancements in Farming

- Top 13 Innovations in Agriculture/Farming in 2023 (jiva.ag)
- Agriculture Innovation: 10 Tech Trends to Watch in 2023 - MassChallenge
- Farming innovations feed the world and protect the planet | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)
- Hydroponics: How It Works, Benefits & How to Get Started (foodrevolution.org)
- What is Aquaponics? | The Aquaponic Source
- How Does Aeroponics Work? - Modern Farmer
- The Florida Weave Method For Growing Tomatoes: A Comprehensive Guide | Garvillo
- Garden Betty – Gardening made easy, life made simpler.
- Regenerative agriculture can help feed the world. What is it? | World Economic Forum (weforum.org)
- USDA-NRCS High Tunnel Initiative Factsheet

### Benefits to Farming

- 50 Pros and Cons of Agriculture - Luxwisp

### Photo Citations

- All Photos besides those listed below were taken by Chloe Meyers.
- Page 1: Cow Photo: Credits to Snowville Creamery, from Anna Shields
- Page 15: Watermelons: Photo taken at Richland Gro-Op
- Page 16: Photos taken by Audrey Vanzant at Dayton Foodbank composting site
- Page 18: Jamie Pritchard: Taken by Jamie Pritchard
- Page 20: Turkey and Pig Photos: Credits to WIT Farm

### Composting

- Who We Are – The Compost Exchange
- Composting at home Learn the essentials of eco-friendly living (homefortheharvest.com)

### Farmer Website Links

- Carroll Creek Farms | Home
- Local Vegetable Farm in Liberty Township, (just-farmin.com)
- WIT Farm
- Bank Bam Meats | Port William OH | Facebook
- About - Pippin’s Produce (pippinsproduce.net)
- Evans Family Ranch | Pastured Grass-Fed Beef | Locally Grown Seasonal Produce & Flowers (efranch.com)
- Solidarity Urban Farms — church of the redeemer (churchoftheredeemerlorain.com)
- Home | glass-rooster (glassroostercannery.com)
- HOME | Three Creeks Produce
- Shagbark Seed & Mill - Ohio Grown, Ohio Made (shagbarkmill.com)
- A2/A2 Milk | Snowville Creamery, LLC | United States
- Milo’s Whole World Gourmet (miloswholeworld.com)
- Kiesel Farms

### Support for Farmers, Producers, Suppliers

- Beginning Farmers and Ranchers | Farmers.gov
- Home
- About Us - Marketlink (en-US)
- About OEFFA - Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
- Ohio Farm Bureau Membership (ofbf.org)
- Farm Aid Grants — Keeping Family Farmers on the Land
- Farms Under Threat (csp-fut.appspot.com)
- Franklin County Treasurer - Land Bank Program (franklincountyohio.gov)

### How to Become Your Own Farmer

- Community Supported Agriculture - LocalHarvest
- 2024 CSA and Farm Share Guide — Edible Ohio Valley
- Urban agriculture in Ohio | CFAES (osu.edu)
Thank you, Ohio CAN Partners!