



OHIO ECOLOGICAL
FOOD AND FARM
ASSOCIATION



2016-2020

STRATEGIC PLAN

WHO WE ARE

grain growers
homesteaders
CSA farmers
organic farmers
backyard gardeners
mindful eaters
sustainable farmers
policymakers
dairy farmers
researchers
food processors
students
concerned citizens
beef producers
restauranters
poultry farmers . . .

OEFFA members use all these words and more to describe themselves.

WHY WE DO IT

We come together with a common vision to build a healthy food system that brings prosperity to family farmers, safeguards the environment, and provides safe, local, food.

WHAT WE DO

EDUCATE



Educate growers, consumers, retailers, and public officials

CERTIFY



Certify organic farms and processors

ADVOCATE



Advocate for public policies that support sustainable farming practices, protect public health, and restore healthy ecosystems

SUSTAIN



Sustain our work for the long haul by building a strong, vibrant organization

We dream of a world in which agricultural practices protect and enhance natural resources, farm families prosper, and healthy food is accessible to all members of our communities.

WHY WE MEASURE

Lord Kelvin stated “If you cannot measure it, you cannot improve it.”

We aspire to a high standard, to act with confidence
that we will be an impactful organization.

Even with confidence, we know we need a yardstick to chart our progress,
and so in the plan presented here, our goals and strategies have benchmarks associated with them.

Despite our insistence on holding ourselves accountable
by measuring our progress, some goals express aspirations whose progress
is not easily measured. Even where a direct metric is not possible,
we have included these essential goals nonetheless.



OUR TOOLBOX INCLUDES

Certifying organic farms and handlers

Hosting Ohio’s largest and oldest sustainable farm and food conference

Offering informative webinars with experts in their field

Organizing educational and hands-on workshops

Sharing the finest examples of Ohio’s organic
and sustainable farms at summer tours

Meeting with policymakers and their staff to talk about
issues that matter to sustainable and family farmers

Mobilizing our members and others to call, write, and sign petitions to policymakers

Providing direct technical support to farmers with production and marketing needs



Farmers and growers will have the knowledge and skills they need to produce food using organic practices for their own consumption and to manage profitable farm businesses.

STRATEGIES

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Offer high quality farm tours throughout the state focusing on innovative food production practices	●	●	●	●	●
Collaborate with OSU to define the organic research agenda and develop a farmer participatory research network	●	●	●	●	●
Generate farm-focused, practical publications		●	●	●	●
Provide on-farm training for beginning farmers			●	●	●
Offer educational programming for experienced farmers with tailored production and business resources	●	●	●	●	●
Offer technical assistance and educational resources to backyard gardeners and homesteaders	●	●	●	●	●
Collaborate with partners across the state to link beginning farmers with land		●	●	●	●
Retain a Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Technical Service Provider on staff to work with OEFFA members to write NRCS conservation plans		●	●	●	●

BENCHMARKS

1. Draw 750 farmers and growers annually to farm tours
2. Provide meaningful hands-on education to 40 beginning farmers each year
3. Dedicate 1-2 conference tracks, 1-2 farm tours, and 2-3 webinars to advanced farming topics annually
4. Grow the Farmer To Farmer Information Network to 50 farmers
5. In partnership with OSU, recruit 80 farmers to the Organic Farming Research Network
6. Establish 20 mentoring pairs of advanced and beginning farmers
7. Five hundred people will access production focused publications
8. At least one staff member will have NRCS Technical Service Provider certification
9. Help 10 farmers each year to access NRCS conservation programs



Consumers will be knowledgeable about the environmental, economic, health, and social consequences of food production.

STRATEGIES

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Educate consumers about: conventional and organic farming; the certification process and standards; and the environmental, social, health, and economic benefits of organics	●	●	●	●	●
Develop the capacity of farmers to be the primary educators of consumers	●	●	●		
Offer consumers on-farm experiences to learn how their food is grown	●	●	●	●	●
Develop strategic partnerships with the health care community to extend our collective understanding of the relationship between organic food and health			●	●	●

BENCHMARKS

1. Develop and distribute to at least 500 users brief educational pieces on:
 - Organic production practices
 - Organic certification
 - Benefits of organic
 - Organic is non-GMO and much more
2. Draw 1,000 consumers annually to farm tours geared specifically for them
3. Provide OEFFA member farmers with three blog entries per year to use on their own websites
4. Train staff to discuss our work in terms of economic development, job creation, health, and social justice



Organic certification will be accessible, affordable, and utilize standards that preserve the integrity of organic products.

STRATEGIES

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Support transitioning farmers in learning the requirements for certification	●	●	●	●	●
Simplify paperwork	●	●			
Provide great customer service	●	●	●	●	●
Actively involve our client members in setting OEFFA certification policy			●	●	●
Recruit and retain highly knowledgeable and skilled certification staff and inspectors	●	●	●	●	●
Relentlessly examine our internal processes to capture greater efficiency		●	●		
Uphold sound standards that protect organic integrity while applying them in a sensible manner reflective of our clients' farming realities	●	●	●	●	●

BENCHMARKS

1. Serve 1,000 clients, increasing by 10% per year
2. Fifty percent of new clients are newly transitioned to organics
3. Fifty percent of newly transitioned clients report that OEFFA assisted them in understanding organic standards, including documentation requirements
4. Issue certificates in a timely manner:
 - a. For new applicants, issue certificates in 90 days
 - b. Complete 75% of producer pre-inspection reviews by July 1, 95% by October 15
 - c. Issue 65% of producer certificates by October 15, 95% by December 31
 - d. Complete 95% of handler pre-inspection reviews by June 15 (Group A) and December 15 (Group B)
 - e. Issue 95% of handler certificates by September 1 (Group A) and March 31 (Group B)
5. Score an average of 4.5 (out of 5) from our clients at least 90% of the time
6. Be ranked among the 25% lowest cost certifiers in the U.S.
7. Regularly participate and represent our members at National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meetings



State and federal policies will support a just food system and create the conditions for organic farmers to succeed.

STRATEGIES

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Educate and advocate for policies that support the high integrity of organic production and handling	●	●	●	●	●
Defend federal appropriations that support the organic industry	●	●	●	●	●
Protect fair and competitive markets	●	●	●	●	●
Support labeling of genetically engineered foods	●	●	●	●	●
Promote use of Farm Bill Programs that support sustainable and organic farmers	●	●	●	●	●
Support advocates for farmland preservation			●	●	●
Work for risk-based food safety regulations that make sense for all farms	●	●	●		

BENCHMARKS

1. Recruit one member of the Ohio congressional delegation to the Organic Caucus
2. Meet annually with the Ohio delegates who serve on relevant committees to advance OEFFA's policy position on GE labeling and GE coexistence, agricultural appropriations, organic integrity, and crop insurance reform
3. Increase usage of Farm Bill programs by sustainable and organic farmers in Ohio by 10% each year
4. Organize a policy track for each annual conference
5. Increase the number of interactions with decision-makers each year, and increase the number of OEFFA members involved in those interactions
6. Represent our members in monthly and semi-annual advocacy work with the National Organic Coalition (NOC) and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition
7. Comment on all open biotechnology dockets



OEFFA will be a financially sound and sustainable organization, with a growing base of members and other supporters.

STRATEGIES

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Ensure that our membership reflects the diversity of Ohio farmers and other food producers	●	●	●	●	●
Recruit and retain skilled and talented staff	●	●	●	●	●
Recruit for open board seats based on gap analysis of needs		●	●	●	●
Maintain a diverse revenue stream that provides financial stability	●	●	●	●	●
Redefine chapter structure to encourage interest groups		●	●		
Develop a major donor program		●	●		
Deploy field organizers outside of Central Ohio			●	●	●
Strengthen the OEFFA brand by imparting OEFFA's mission and vision to the public	●	●	●	●	●

BENCHMARKS

1. Increase membership by 5% per year to reach 4,000 members by 2020
2. Retain 75% of members Year 1 to Year 2; 85% after that
3. Wages and benefits are high average compared to similar organizations
4. Maintain a cash reserve of 6 months operating funds
5. Establish a building reserve of \$40,000
6. Forty percent of OEFFA members interact with chapters (or interest groups) at least once a year
7. One hundred percent of Board members donate to OEFFA in an amount significant to them
8. Board members participate in securing 50% of donation dollars
9. By 2019, OEFFA has a development director

LOCAL, ORGANIC, SUSTAINABLE: WHAT'S IN A WORD?

“Local,” “Organic,” “Sustainable,” are like our three children, each built from the same pool of goodness, each different, all cherished. We don’t have to value one child at the expense of the others. Each has a place in the OEFFA family.

- OEFFA members strongly prefer to support their local farmers, but some question how we arrive at an operational definition of “local.”
- Some members consider the certified organic label as the gold standard for food production with ecological integrity and environmental responsibility; others worry that the standard has been weakened and do not trust the verification process.
- Among OEFFA members, some feel that sustainable production is a more inclusive term and the goal towards which we should be striving, while others fear that the term has been co-opted by corporations who don’t share our values and use it as green-wash.

These differences in perspective are a strength of OEFFA. The diverse views of our membership and respect for healthy discourse means we continually engage in the self-reflection that is part of effective organizations.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

act with integrity
help farmers
demonstrate respect
work hard
solve problems
insist on excellence
collaborate
stay flexible
seek truth
value the ecosystem
appreciate farmer knowledge
advocate
raise the grassroots
meet people where they are
search for common ground
be impactful

HOW WE CREATED THIS PLAN

Our planning process included several steps, with support from Andy Robinson of the Institute for Conservation Leadership.

- We organized initial meetings with the planning committee and the full staff in November 2014.
- In-depth phone interviews were conducted with 20 funders, government agency staff, members, donors, peer nonprofits, and thought leaders.
- A questionnaire was sent to 4,300 people, both electronically and through the mail. More than 850 people provided their ideas about OEFFA, an amazing 20% response rate.
- Feedback sessions were held with staff to gather detailed input on vision, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- At a retreat, the planning team met to analyze the results of the surveys and interviews, affirm a vision of success, identify specific goals and strategies, and create benchmarks.
- Draft goals were presented at the OEFFA conference to three focus groups and the membership.
- After further refinement, the goals, strategies, and benchmarks were circulated in draft form to the planning committee and staff.
- The OEFFA board reviewed and approved this strategic plan in May 2015.

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Sincere thanks to those individuals who gave their time and good energy to this planning process:

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