



Farm Service Agency
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

USDA selects Ohio State to support new urban agriculture effort

News Release | Ohio | November 20, 2023

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COLUMBUS, OHIO – November 20, 2023 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) recently selected The Ohio State University College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences (CFAES) to support the creation of a new USDA [Urban Service Center](#) designed to further urban agriculture and innovative production in Ohio.

The USDA is opening [17 new Urban Service Centers](#) in 15 states nationwide, including in Ohio. The Cleveland USDA Urban Service Center is a first for Ohio and is supported by Ohio State University Extension, the outreach arm of CFAES. The five-year collaborative partnership will later expand to metropolitan sites across northeast, central, northwest, southwest, and urban Appalachian areas in Ohio.

FSA awarded cooperative agreements to organizations located in the 17 cities where USDA is opening an USDA Urban Service Center or will have an urban county committee, said John Patterson, state executive director for the USDA FSA in Ohio.

“Until now, there has been no vehicle for urban growers to easily access USDA priorities and funding,” Patterson said. “Whether a farm is in a rural area or the middle of a city, the USDA FSA is committed to working with farms of all sizes and in all locations. Urban farming is in every county across Ohio, and agriculture is for everyone.”

“We look forward to our partnership with OSU Extension, as they will help us reach more urban farmers and help us provide education and awareness of USDA programs and resources available to urban growers.”

USDA Urban Service Centers offer farmers and producers a place to connect with FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service staff to discuss their business and conservation goals and learn ways in which the USDA can help their urban operation. The USDA service centers also offer

conservation and climate-smart practices, disaster assistance, farm loans, and risk management programs.

OSU Extension's role in supporting the Cleveland USDA Urban Service Center will include conducting outreach and education and providing technical assistance. OSU Extension will also assist to address local priorities in urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural enterprises, as part of an overall goal to raise awareness and expand equitable access of available USDA programs and resources.

"Urban, indoor, and emerging agricultural enterprises in Ohio's metropolitan areas play a vital role in Ohio's agricultural community," said Cathann A. Kress, Ohio State vice president for agricultural administration and dean of CFAES. "Our college recognizes Ohio's rural-urban interface and collaborates with other organizations, such as the USDA, to advance the innovation and success of agricultural entrepreneurs of all ages."

Support for urban agriculture

FSA has also created 17 urban county committees focused exclusively on urban agriculture, including one in Cleveland. This new urban county committee will help make determinations on programs such as disaster assistance and hiring decisions, and they will listen to appeals and conduct outreach to urban and suburban farms and farmers for FSA.

To help strengthen the USDA Urban Service Centers and urban county committees, the USDA is investing \$40 million through American Rescue Plan funds into partnerships with community-based organizations, of which \$1.5 million will be invested in Ohio. OSU Extension is one of the 17 organizations selected for this effort.

Part of the reason is because OSU Extension's long-standing presence in all of Ohio's 88 counties provides a foundation for advancing existing and emerging urban agricultural opportunities, said Julie Fox, director of OSU Extension strategic initiatives and urban engagement.

"The CFAES urban agriculture team of faculty, staff, and students recognizes significant momentum as they engage with people from the public and private sectors who are advancing urban agriculture in communities across the state," Fox said. "This cooperative project with Ohio's USDA FSA team builds on local, state, and national initiatives, as well as on CFAES investments in additional urban ag expertise."

"Together, we can make Ohio one of the most outstanding examples of people coming together in support of the urban contribution to the state's diverse agricultural community."

Visit farmers.gov/urban for more information on programs and services for urban producers.

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