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Cover photo: McPhail Farm, Knox County



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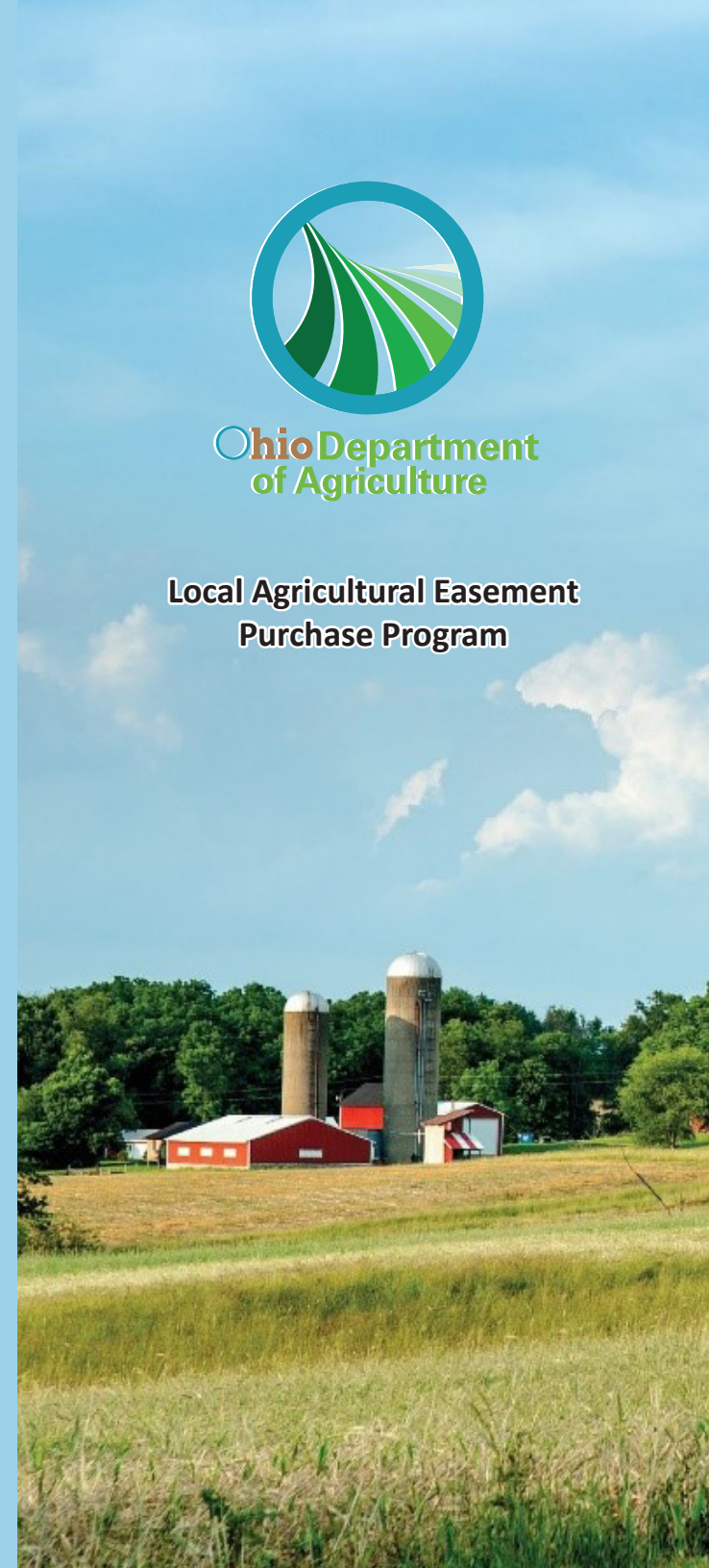
Brian Baldridge, Director

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Ohio Department
of Agriculture

Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program



Program Overview

The Clean Ohio Local Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (LAEPP) provides funding to farmland owners for placing an agricultural easement on their property. Monies are issued for up to 75 percent of the appraised value of a farm's development rights. A payment cap has been set at \$2,000 per acre, with a maximum of \$500,000 per farm. All easement transactions are recorded on the property deed and transfer with the land to successive owners.

Since the beginning of this program in 2002, the Office of Farmland Preservation has received approximately 2,875 applications for the highly competitive LAEPP. Easements have been secured on 374 farms totaling 63,049 acres in 55 counties across Ohio.

Funds from the purchase of these easements are invested in the local economy by the landowners who use them by expanding their farming operations, purchasing new equipment, reducing debt, adding conservation practices, planning for retirement, sending their children to college or for other purposes. When the state purchases a farmland easement, the proceeds are plowed into Ohio's economy.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is an agricultural easement?

A: An agricultural easement is a voluntary and legally-binding restriction placed on a farm. The easement limits the use of the land to predominantly agricultural activity. The land remains under private ownership and management and stays on the tax rolls under Current Agricultural Use Valuation (CAUV). The farmland can be sold or passed along as a gift to others at any time, but the restriction prohibiting non-agricultural development stays with the land.

Q: How does a landowner apply?

A: Landowners must apply for Clean Ohio funds through local governments (such as counties, townships, and municipalities), Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), or a charitable organization. These entities are referred to as "local sponsors," and once they are certified, they have the ability to submit applications on a landowner's behalf to the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) for consideration. Application opportunities are open for a maximum of 90 days. Interested landowners are encouraged to contact a potential local sponsor.



Berry Family, Fairfield County

Q: What are the program requirements?

A: The following requirements must be met by the farmland and owner at the time of application submission:

- The farm must be enrolled in CAUV and the Agricultural District Program through the county auditor's office.

- The farm must be a minimum of 40 acres unless the farm is adjacent to a preserved farm, then it must be a minimum of 25 acres.
- The farmland owner must certify that the property does not contain hazardous substances.
- The farmland owner must have been in compliance with state and federal agricultural laws for the past five years.
- The farmland owner must have possession of the clear title to the applicant property.
- The local sponsor must agree to share monitoring and enforcement responsibilities.
- A minimum of 25 percent of the points-based appraised value of the agricultural easement must be provided either in cash match by the local sponsor, donation by the landowner, or a combination of donation and cash match.

For further details, refer to the application "LAEPP Policies and Guidelines" available at www.agri.ohio.gov/farmland. Click on "Clean Ohio LAEPP."

Q: How is the value of the agricultural easement determined?

A: The agricultural easement's value is determined in the application using a points-based appraisal method. This method uses the county auditor's land valuation to establish a base value modified by the auditor's three-year appraisal and takes into consideration the farm's specific farmland preservation attributes.