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Fairfield County Announces Application for USDA Grant Supporting Regional Food Systems

LANCASTER, OH — Fairfield County is pleased to announce its application submission for the Regional Food System Partnerships Program, a USDA grant through the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP).

Facing ongoing growth and expansion pressures from the Columbus metropolitan region due to continued development throughout the area, Fairfield County is reinforcing its commitment to agriculture and farming as a core aspect of the region's identity. The grant will benefit a network of food producers and distributors spanning Fairfield County and neighboring communities.

"The Regional Planning Committee is excited to announce our application for the Regional Food System Partnerships Program grant, demonstrating Fairfield County's commitment to agriculture amidst ongoing regional growth," said Holly Mattei, Interim Director for the Regional Planning Commission. "This grant will bolster our network of food producers and distributors, benefiting Fairfield County and surrounding communities."

The proposed needs assessment earmarks \$100,000 to identify existing gaps within local food production, including meat and poultry, while addressing issues related to processing, storage, transportation and fresh food delivery. The grant's coverage encompasses 'Scioto to the Muskingum,' with adjacent counties actively participating in steering committees to contribute their expertise in devising planning strategies and solutions. Aligned with the [Fairfield Growing initiative](#), established in 2011 and updated in 2022, Fairfield County invests in available funding opportunities that benefit local farms, families, businesses and institutions."

"Fairfield County is pleased to announce our application for the Regional Food System Partnerships Program grant," said Commissioner Jeff Fix. "This initiative underscores our ongoing commitment to addressing local food production gaps and engaging neighboring counties in steering committees to ensure all voices and opinions are considered. It coincides with our longstanding dedication to agriculture, as outlined in the Fairfield Growing initiative."

The grant provides Fairfield County with a unique opportunity to connect producers and consumers within a 10-county region. The ten counties from the 'Scioto to the Muskingum' include: Athens, Fairfield, Franklin, Hocking, Licking, Morgan, Muskingum, Perry, Pickaway and Ross.

LAMP, created in the 2018 Farm Bill, is an umbrella program supporting direct producer-to-consumer marketing, local food markets, and value-added agricultural products. It aims to connect regional food economies, develop business plans and infrastructure, strengthen community collaboration, create economic opportunities, and streamline program processes.

The current Ohio Farm Bureau Federation policy is to support state government as they work closely with local groups to retain current, and establish new, harvest and meat packing facilities in Ohio communities. This policy was echoed by the unanimous support and response of local farm bureaus.

Founded in 1800 (three years before Ohio became a State), Fairfield County was the 8th county formed in the Northwest Territory. Today, more than 900 employees serve, connect, and protect the more than 158,000 citizens of Fairfield County, providing high quality services and outstanding customer service at exceptional value to taxpayers. Fairfield County fosters economic and fiscal sustainability and works to enhance the County's reputation as a high performing, learning, and caring organization. For more information about the county, its services and employment opportunities, please visit <https://www.co.fairfield.oh.us/>

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