



News, ideas & practical knowledge for stronger local food systems



From the AFI field archive: grower knowledge, shared learning and productive land.

THE AFI IDEA

First, you need the farmers.

Strong local food systems begin with farmers who can actually succeed.

Communities across Ohio want more fresh, local food, and farmers want to provide it. Buyers, educators, and funders are ready to support a stronger local food system. But a successful food system starts with economically viable farmers.

Farmers need access to market information, fair pricing, reliable distribution, and opportunities to sell their products.

AFI connects farmers, buyers, training, distribution, and supporting institutions to build coordinated regional food systems across urban, suburban, and rural communities.

When farmers succeed, communities gain food security, economic opportunity, and resilience. That is where our work begins.

AROUND OHIO

Growing Connections in Northwest Ohio

Great conversations, interesting perspectives, and wonderful people! The inaugural Northwest Ohio Food & Farm Summit, held September 17, 2026, brought together farmers, community leaders, food system advocates, and policymakers to explore regional opportunities, address challenges, and envision a stronger, more connected local food system.

From engaging speakers and lively discussions to new ideas and meaningful connections, the summit offered plenty of inspiration. A special thank you to everyone who stopped by AFI's Learns table to say hello, exchange ideas, and share their perspectives. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting so many people from across the region and look forward to staying in touch and continuing the conversations that began that day!

FROM KIP

The farmer shouldn't carry the whole system

Farmers should not have to grow, find buyers, coordinate deliveries and absorb every market risk alone. AFI asks what the system around the farmer must do well. Buyers, aggregators, educators and institutions share responsibility for giving growers a fair chance to stay in business.

— Kip Curtis

People building the system

Grower knowledge and education belong in the same conversation.



Growing space and the harvest. Photographs from the AFI field archive.

EDUCATION

Brian Ellis

Connecting young people to the food economy

Our Toledo planning identifies Brian Ellis of Toledo Public Schools as an agricultural education partner. Schools can connect young people with the skills and careers behind a local food economy — from growing and distribution to marketing and enterprise.

GROWER KNOWLEDGE

Thomas Jackson

Bringing the farm's perspective to the table

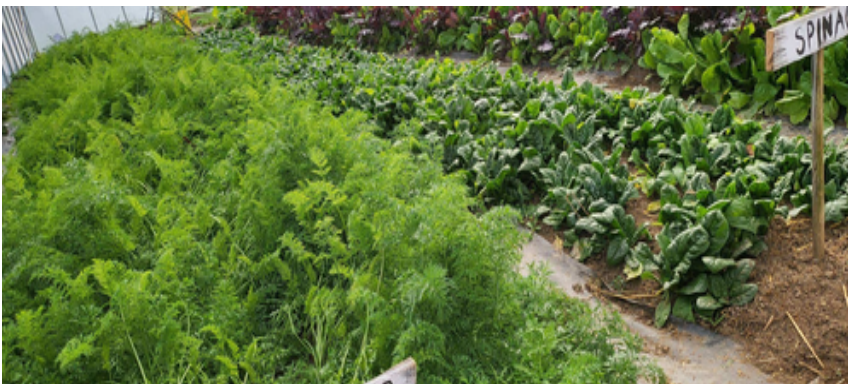
Grower Thomas Jackson is part of the conversation around Toledo site learning and production capacity. Soil, growing conditions, infrastructure and practical farm experience help determine what a local food system can deliver. These questions need to be answered with growers.

SMALL FOOTPRINT / COMMERCIAL PURPOSE

What is a microfarm?

A microfarm is a deliberately designed commercial growing unit, rather than simply a small garden. The original Ohio State model used about 6,000–8,000 square feet of intensive growing space, paired with training, season extension and coordinated marketing.

Multiple farms can plan together and combine harvests to serve buyers that would be difficult to supply individually.



Infrastructure. Care. Productive growing space.

AROUND OHIO

Upcoming Events

Ohio Farmers Market Manager Call

November 2, 2026 | Virtual

Focus: Farmers markets and market development

Antioch College Soil Health Symposium

Friday, November 13, 2026

Arts & Science Building

199 Marshall Street, Yellow Springs, OH 45387

Focus: Food forest, pollinators and community agriculture

Policy and Pints

November 13, 2026 | Eighty-Three Brewery

1201 E Market St., Suite 110, Akron, OH 44305

Focus: Agricultural policy and networking

NOVEMBER FIELD NOTES

Winter is planning season.

Review the harvest. Record what grew, sold and cost too much to handle. Test before amending. If your soil test is out of date, follow your laboratory's sampling instructions before making fertility decisions. Inspect the operation. Check irrigation, tunnels and wash/pack equipment. Talk to buyers. Plan next year's crops around quantity, timing, standards and price.

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