



**Testimony of Angela Huffman
Co-Founder and Vice President of Farm Action**

Delivered at a House Agriculture Committee Field Hearing

August 22, 2022

Hello, my name is Angela Huffman and I'm a co-founder of Farm Action. We advocate for a food and agriculture system that works for everyone, not just a handful of corporations. I've recently taken on my family's sixth generation farm in Wyandot County.

I look around our state and it's corn and soybeans. Farmland as far as the eye can see, but not a lot of food. COVID was a wake up call, but what about the next crisis? Food security is national security, and we have neither.

The majority of this corn and soybeans becomes cheap industrial livestock feed that ultimately benefits the meatpacking monopoly, or becomes unhealthy processed junk food. The government nutritional guidelines recommend 50% of our plate is filled with fruits and vegetables yet only 2% of farm supports go to their production. This is backwards. The only thing our food system guarantees is that the CEOs of China's Smithfield, Brazil's JBS, and the American Cargill family get richer.

To grow all this corn and soybeans we depend on synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. Glyphosate is in our water, air, rain, and our bodies. The integrity of the soil is nearly gone. Experts say we have 60 years of farming left if this degradation continues. And for what? So Germany's Bayer-Monsanto can sell more seeds and chemicals, and then turn around and get rich off our chemo treatments.

Our farm policies serve a handful of multinational corporations, when they need to serve the people of Ohio, our farmers, and our country. Farm Action has developed a Fair Farm Bill handbook for the next two farm bill cycles.

To start, we need more investment in Food, Not Feed. We must expand crop insurance options to support more diversified operations that grow food for people. Provide government assistance for organic transition programs. And let's reform the commodity checkoff programs which support large corporations rather than the farmers who fund them.

Let's Build Local to Eat Local. According to the Buckeye Quality Beef Association, in the 1960s there were 17 federally inspected slaughter plants in Columbus, Ohio alone. By the early 2000s, there were none left in the entire state that could process a truck load of cattle. Ohio has also lost 80% of its feedlots.

During the pandemic, empty shelves highlighted the vulnerability of our concentrated food system. Yellowbird Foodshed, a community supported agriculture program out of Mt. Vernon, consistently provided me with great local foods.

By investing in our local and regional food systems, we can make sure Ohio's farmers have reliable market opportunities. The LAMP Program should be expanded in the upcoming Farm Bill. USDA should also use its purchasing power to support the one billion dollar investment in local and regional meat and poultry processing.

Finally, let's take better care of our natural resources. Recipients of subsidized programs should be required to commit to conservation practices. Cover cropping can help farmers ease their dependence on the corrupt and concentrated fertilizer industry. The COVER Act includes a premium discount on federal crop insurance plans and should be written into the 2023 Farm Bill.

We didn't get where we are overnight, and we're not going to fix it in one farm bill. But we have to begin to shift for the sake of our farmers and all of us who eat.

Thank you for this opportunity and for organizing this listening session today.