



For Immediate Release

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Ohio agriculture groups share recommendations for Expo Center site

COLUMBUS – Emphasizing that agriculture is one of the largest and most important economic sectors in Ohio, nine major Ohio agriculture groups released recommendations to modernize the Ohio Expo Center and State Fair. These proposals were sent to Gov. Mike DeWine, the Ohio Expo and State Fair Commission, the State of Ohio, other public sector leaders and influencers, as well as the Ohio Expo 2050 Task Force, which the governor created to develop and recommend a long-term vision for the Ohio Expo Center. The recommendations were shared to ensure that the input, ideas and concerns of the agriculture industry, including preserving the current location and footprint with a strong investment for improvements, are properly incorporated into the state's new Vision Plan.

The groups include the Ohio AgriBusiness Association, Ohio Cattlemen's Association, Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association, Ohio Dairy Producers Association, Ohio Farm Bureau, Ohio Pork Council, Ohio Poultry Association, Ohio Sheep Improvement Association and Ohio Soybean Association. They put forth their objectives in areas such as the mission and vision for the Expo Center; land use and optimization; the overall experience for youth and the general public; and funding, governance and operations.

“Ohio agriculture is one of the biggest supporters of the State Fair,” the groups note in their recommendations. “The industry also contributes to the success of the Expo Center via non-fair related activities. For example, the Ohio FFA Center is located on the fairgrounds. Agricultural groups host many major events at the Expo Center such as the Ohio Beef Expo, Ohio National Poultry Show, Quarter Horse Congress, Spring Dairy Expo, youth events, Home and Garden Shows and others.”

The groups strongly recommend that the Ohio Expo Center and Ohio State Fair's mission continue to honor and celebrate its agrarian heritage and its strong tradition of the development of young people through 4-H and FFA, among other youth activities. They added that creating awareness about the vast opportunities for Ohio's consumers, careers and celebrating the food and agriculture sectors are essential elements of that mission.

The recommendations also include preserving the historical presence of the Ohio State Fair in Columbus and maintaining its easily accessible location. It is well documented that the most dynamic and successful state fairs across the country are located in highly

populated, urban areas, so moving the venue would be detrimental to the mission and to the financial viability of the State Fair.

The agricultural groups' guidelines for facilities and infrastructure call for upgrading the facilities at the Expo Center and State Fair that will allow for maximum earned revenue opportunities. Those recommendations include:

- A new facility to replace the Ohio Building to accommodate increased crowds who want to taste what the state's agriculture has to offer and will provide opportunities to feature additional agricultural food offerings.
- Replacing the dilapidated Donahey Agriculture & Horticulture Building, which currently serves as the fair's flagship agriculture consumer education exhibit.
- A new facility to replace the woefully outdated Cooper Arena and a modernized Dairy Products Building, designed to enhance the fairgoer experience when visiting the World-Famous Butter Cow.
- Leveraging and preserving use of the viaduct, which is an important feature of the fairgrounds that needs repair and maintenance as it is used during many events to house cattle when there is not enough barn space available.
- Redesigned parking throughout the fairgrounds, including new parking garages, to meet the needs of the fair and the numerous other agricultural and non-ag events at the Expo Center.
- Conducting an evaluation of the safety and security at the Expo Center and State Fair. Developing and implementing recommendations to ensure the well-being of all who engage with the venue.
- Building a new multi-use agriculture facility to provide flexibility and needed space for multiple events.

To generate sustainable funding to support the Expo Center and State Fair, the groups suggested that the State of Ohio/General Assembly pass a multiyear funding measure in the state budget to improve facilities, grounds and infrastructure, as well as the implementation of a pricing study to ensure that it is competitive and properly positioned in the market to attract more events throughout the year.

Other priorities can be seen in the proposed recommendations outline available [here](#). The list and publication are part of a joint effort among the big business associations.

“As industry partners, we remain committed to working with the State to ensure the sustainability and success of the Expo Center and State Fair,” the coalition wrote. “We respectfully request that Gov. DeWine, the Task Force, the Commission, and other public sector leaders respond to these recommendations with action and the urgency and seriousness warranted.”

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