

## Researchers Surveying Ohioans On Agricultural Issues

COLUMBUS, Ohio — What Ohioans think of rural development, farmland preservation, the environment, food safety and animal welfare will help shape public policy throughout the state for years to come.

That's why a team of researchers at Ohio State University is sending surveys to 8,000 Ohioans, asking about their per-

ceptions on those issues.

Surveys are being sent to residents in both metropolitan and rural areas beginning May 25.

One goal of the study is to assess differences among rural and urban Ohioans concerning food and agricultural issues.

"We expect that people in urban areas value different aspects of the rural landscape than

rural residents," said Jeff Sharp, rural sociologist and one of the study's principal investigators. Participants' backgrounds — what sort of area they grew up in, if their parents or grandparents were farmers, and how often they travel to rural areas for recreational or social reasons — also may affect their views, he said.

While some other states, such as Iowa and Nebraska, conduct similar surveys on an annual or biannual basis, this is the first such survey to be conducted in Ohio. About 1,000 surveys will be sent to residents living in the nonmetropolitan and metropolitan fringe areas of each of Ohio State University Extension's five regional districts. An additional

3,000 surveys will be sent to residents of metropolitan core counties, such as Franklin, Hamilton and Cuyahoga, he said.

The results could go a long way in helping state and community leaders make decisions on rural development and agricultural policy, he said. They also might help shape future research, education and outreach agendas of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences at Ohio State.

The survey is funded by the college's academic, research and Extension budgets. The researchers involved also are contributing funds from their own research budgets, Sharp said.

Involved in the study are Sharp, Mark Tucker, Sherrie Whaley, all assistant professors in the Department of Human and Community Resource Development; Linda Lobao and Bill Flinn, professors in the same department; and Greg Davis, community development district specialist and Jerry Thomas, district director, both with Ohio State University Extension's Northwest District office in Findlay. Graduate students Molly Bean and Holly Kendall are assisting in the project.

The research team hopes to begin releasing results of the survey in September, Sharp said. To see a copy of the survey and learn more about the project, see the project's Website at <http://aede.ag.ohio-state.edu/programs/exurbs/faesurvey.html>.

## Ohio Project Targets Areas To Preserve Farmland

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Efforts to save Ohio's farmland would be most effective if they focused on areas between 20 miles and 40 miles from major metropolitan areas, say Ohio State University researchers.

Jason Reece, data manager and geographical information systems analyst for an Ohio State University project examining trends in Ohio's townships, said he hopes newly gathered data will help communities plan for future growth.

"Just as a matter of the state's physical geography, most of Ohio's agricultural land is situated within 50 miles of its major metropolitan areas," Reece said. "That's also where a lot of our population is growing — it's not

just at the edge of urban areas."

Reece worked with Elena Irwin, assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural, Environmental and Development Economics, to study land use in Ohio for a report, "Land Cover in Ohio's Townships: An Analysis of Township Land Cover and Population Change." For it, Reece gathered satellite image data from the early 1990s to determine what land in Ohio is agricultural, forested or urbanized.

The researchers focused on land within a 50-mile radius of seven metropolitan areas: Cleveland/Akron, Cincinnati, Columbus, Toledo, Dayton and Fort Wayne, Ind. — land that blankets much of the state's agricul-

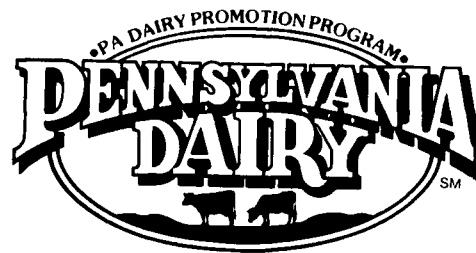
tural land. Most of the land outside those 50-mile circles is in southeast Ohio, which is hilly, heavily forested and not suitable for most agricultural production, Reece said.

Then, the researchers looked at population trends outside cities and villages — that is, township population trends — from 1990 to 2000.

"We found that over 80 percent of the total township population growth that occurred between 1990 and 2000 took place within 40 miles of the

major urban centers. That land also happens to be heavily agricultural," he said.

Property owners and communities in Ohio can work together to preserve farmland with the Ohio Department of Agriculture's Ohio's Agricultural Easement Purchase Program, which allows the state and local governments to pay landowners for agricultural easements. The idea is to make it worthwhile for farmers to protect productive farmland from development.



## Strategy Needed To Maximize Soybean Yields

WEST BEND, Wis. — Producers still have several options available to maximize soybean yields this year, even with delayed plantings, explains Hunt Wiley, director of research for Dairyland Seed Co. "Producers need to focus on the idea of maximizing the number of nodes per acre, and use strategies to increase the number of nodes."

The number of nodes a plant produces, not the maturity, helps determine yield. Soybean nodes are areas on the stem where leaves, branches, flowers and pods develop. A typical soybean plant has about 22 nodes, if all goes well. "The more nodes a plant develops, the higher the yield potential," Wiley says. "So, a producer's goal should be to maximize the number of nodes per acre to recapture lost yield potential due to delayed planting."

Several strategies can help maximize the number of nodes per acre, Wiley says. "Stay with the latest maturing variety that is reasonable for your latitude," he says. "Later maturing varieties produce more nodes before flowering in induced, compared to an early season variety."

Another strategy is to increase seeding rates to get as many plants per acre as your soil type and fertility level will tolerate. "Soybeans planted later in the

year are typically shorter and produce fewer nodes," Wiley says. "More plants mean more stems and branches, which allows for more node sites."

Variety selection can also maximize nodes per acre. "Varieties with more height, more branching tendency and more aggressive vegetative growth will help produce more nodes per acre," Wiley says.

Producers thinking about switching from corn to soybeans should be careful to address any disease concerns, specifically Soybean Cyst Nematode, in their fields, Wiley says.

At the Otterbein research station, Wiley often is planting soybean varieties of different maturities late into the season. And in many cases, the later maturing varieties yield the best.

"A couple of years ago, we planted six varieties ranging from group 0 to mid 4 on July 4," Wiley recalls. "All set seed, all finished the season, and the latest maturity variety yielded the best. It was the tallest and had the most nodes per acre."

Wiley stresses that managing for the number of nodes per acre will help maximize soybean yields. "And that's done the best by staying with the longest-season variety planted at the highest reasonable population," he says.

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