



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OHIO AGRICULTURE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE ASSESSMENT REPORT: Sandusky Watershed

The Ohio Agriculture Conservation Initiative (OACI) is a partnership between agriculture, conservation, environmental and research communities to recognize farmers for their dedication to advancing methods that improve water quality in Ohio and increasing the number of best management practices (BMPs) being implemented on farms.

2023 HUC8 Sandusky Watershed Assessment

In 2023, OACI conducted a randomized sampling of crop production fields within the HUC8 Sandusky watershed using a statistical approach to determine what practices are being used by farmers within this watershed to manage water and nutrients in crop year 2022. A trained Soil and Water Conservation District employee interviewed the landowner or farm manager for each field surveyed. The Ohio State University and the Center for Survey Statistics and Methodology at Iowa State University helped in designing the sampling strategy and data analysis.

Key Survey Results

Key findings from the survey included the following:

433
crop production
fields were surveyed.

The average size of
fields surveyed was
72.7 ACRES.

55% of the fields
were either **no tilled** or
minimally tilled.

92% of the fields had
been managed by the
farmer for **three years**
or longer.

92% of surveyed
fields were soil tested
at least **once**
every 4 years;
85% of soil
samples were
completed using
precision
agriculture.

62% of fields
surveyed had
phosphorus
applied using
variable-rate
technology (VRT);
21%
of fields had
nitrogen
applied using VRT.

Approximately **57%**
of fields surveyed were
currently enrolled in a
cost share
conservation
program,
including both state and
federal level programs.

59% of the farmland
assessed was **owned**
by the farmer and **41%**
was in a **lease.**

Farmers utilized fertilizer
retailers and crop consultants
for **87%** of fields surveyed

Commercial fertilizer is the majority nutrient source (**80%**) used in this region, followed by manure (**14%**).

Conclusion

The assessment results establish a baseline of adoption for various farming practices in the Sandusky watershed, allowing for a more targeted approach to increase BMPs adoption. OACI will continue to assess more watersheds in Ohio, revisiting previously assessed watersheds in a few years to determine levels of change. OACI encourages Ohio's farmers to get involved in the OACI Farmer Certification program, H2Ohio and any other conservation focused program to learn about new practices, share information and become better stewards of the land. For more information, visit OhioACI.org.