

July 21, 2010

Good morning.

My name is Bob Jones. I am a vegetable grower from The Chef's Garden in Huron, Ohio. Thank you all for your public service and for the opportunity to speak about the specialty crop and organic agriculture programs at the USDA.

The Chef's Garden is a multi-generational family farm specializing in sustainably-grown gourmet vegetables for four and five star restaurants in all fifty states and twelve countries. I am proud to say my children are the fourth generation to work on our farm, we hope to continue the Jones family farming legacy long into the future. We have been fortunate and blessed to develop relationships with chefs patient enough to teach a family of dirt farmers the food business.

The Chef's Garden grew out of necessity. After many years as wholesale vegetable growers, suffering financial hardship, losing the family farm in 1983, we began rebuilding by custom-growing for chefs we met at Cleveland area farmer's markets.

My personal experience with the Farm Bill comes by way of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, funded by the USDA, and administered in Ohio by the Ohio Department of Agriculture. This source of funding is critical to the specialty crop industry. It is, at this time, the sole source of funding available to this industry as a whole.

In Ohio, we have an unusual problem that has created a tremendous opportunity. The amount of fresh produce consumed in our state is several times the amount grown in our state. Yet the vast majority of Ohio's fresh fruits and vegetables are exported out of the state. This is a losing proposition for both the growers and consumers of fresh produce. When considering sustainability and carbon footprints, we growers must strive

to balance the production and consumption numbers in our state. We must truly listen to our consumers' needs, and then convince growers to meet and exceed those needs. This is where the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is most valuable: helping specialty crop producers help themselves!

Sixty percent of all the nation's farmers do not grow Farm Bill "program crops" and therefore do not receive direct subsidies. (site: USDA, 2007 farm bill Proposals, page 171) Please hear me clearly: we do not want them! Ohio growers like me are much more interested in becoming better growers, marketers and promoters. The technical research on production methods, conservation issues, nutritional programs, farm to school programming, promotional activities, Food Safety programs such as our "Ohio Produce Marketing Agreement," and producer/consumer connection activities, are much more valuable to the sustainability of our specialty crop industry than direct subsidies. In Ohio we have funded several such projects and are just beginning to see their potential.

In Ohio, we need to better understand the producer/consumer imbalance and find ways to eliminate it, and then begin marketing outside of our state as we are within 500 miles of the vast majority of the populations of both the U.S. and Canada. Ohio and other Midwest farms could and should supply the majority of these consumers' fresh produce year-round.

Helping specialty crop producers understand and take advantage of the opportunities that exist for them is critical. We can only accomplish these lofty goals with continued support of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.

However, the current program could be even more workable if the funding formula was more balanced per its distribution by state. I understand that under the farm

bill, each state receives a minimum grant and then the rest of the available dollar\|s are distributed according to specialty crop cash receipts data by state. Currently it appears that Ohio, for example, receives only about one percent of these additionally distributed dollars compared to California receiving nearly 40 percent. I understand this funding discrepancy and the need to flow more dollars to the states with more production. That said, in states like Ohio, we do not have existing support programs and systems of technical assistance similar to what other states enjoy. The block grant program is one of the few tools we have to support our growers and better realize our specialty crop opportunities. To meet this need, I believe some shifts in the existing formula may be warranted. I also believe the program's success would benefit from having each state's specialty crop producers involved in determining the best use of each state's allotted funds once the funds are in the hands of the state Departments of Agriculture.

It would also help if the funding cycle was moved to an earlier time of year. Under the current funding cycle, in some years states do not find out the amount of funding they will receive until February. USDA contracts for these projects are not finalized until August or September, which makes it difficult to conduct in-season research projects within the funding year. It is also difficult for specialty crop producers to be involved during the growing season. Moving the entire cycle back a month or two could help keep the very people this program is intended to help, involved in state-level decision-making, and will, in my opinion, dramatically increase the program's effectiveness. The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is critically important and helpful. It is truly the only way to help our industry sustain itself in the long run.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this process, and for your support of our industry. I welcome any questions you may have.

ROBERT N. JONES

565 Wilbor Ave
Huron, Ohio 44839

phone: 419.656.8380
email: bobj@chefs-garden.com

Current employment:

- ***Director of Production, The Chef's Garden, Huron, Ohio.***
Direct fertility program, IPM program and Food Safety Program for 600 varieties of heirloom vegetables, herbs and edible flowers sold to restaurants in all fifty states and twelve countries.

Business-related activities:

- *Chairman, Board of Directors, The Chef's Garden, 2009-present.*
- *Chairman, Policy Development Committee, Ohio Produce Growers Marketers Association, 2009-2010.*
- *Board of Directors, OFA (Association of Horticultural Professionals), 2009-2010.*
- *Immediate Past President, Ohio Produce Growers and Marketers Association, 2009-2010.*
- *Provisional Chair, Ohio Produce Marketing Agreement Advisory Board, 2010.*
- *President, Ohio Produce Growers and Marketers Association, 2007-2008.*
- *Chairman, Ohio Produce Growers and Marketers Association transition committee. (This committee merged the Ohio Vegetable and Potato Growers Association, Ohio Fruit Growers Society and Direct Agricultural Marketers Association of Ohio), 2006.*
- *Board of Directors, Ohio Vegetable and Potato Growers Association, 2000-2006.*
- Speaker and participant at over fifty trade conferences and seminars over a twenty year period.

Education:

- B.S., Agriculture, The Ohio State University, 1989.
- M.A., The Institute for Effective Church Leadership, 2002.

Other activities:

- Board of Directors, Seasons of Life, a Christian-based counseling center.
- Football Official, Ohio High School Athletic Association, 23 years.

The Chef's Garden®

The Story of Our Family Farm



When this story began — some 40 years ago, not far from the shores of Lake Erie — Bob Jones could be found tinkering with an old John Deere tractor, designing modifications that would help to pull wagons of sweet corn from the field to the packing shed.

Every week, Bob and his two sons, Lee and Bobby, harvested and packed produce to take to the Cleveland farmers' markets. They also sold their produce daily from a stand in the front yard of their farm home.

In the 1980s, after a significant loss of acreage following a severe hailstorm threatened their survival in agriculture, Lee Jones met a chef who was interested in purchasing squash blossoms. As they rebuilt, the family made a decision to do things a little bit differently.

Conventional farming that emphasized high yield over flavor was out, and growing responsibly for quality instead of quantity was the Jones family's new direction. A world of micro greens, micro herbs, heirloom vegetables, specialty lettuces and edible flowers blossomed at the farm.

In Huron, Ohio, the lake winds bring sweet, moist air, and the soil, which was formerly lake bottom, is sandy and fertile. This combination offers the perfect microclimate for "growing vegetables slowly and gently in full accord with nature."® This is the commitment that guides the family's approach to agriculture today.

In order to grow foods with optimum quality, flavor, nutrition and shelf-life, The Chef's Garden is committed to sustainable agricultural practices that replenish nutrients depleted from the soil. Embracing the traditional philosophies of farming and recognizing the importance of growing crops through natural means, The Chef's Garden rebuilds the soil by letting the land sit fallow, planting specific cover crops for compost, and avoiding pesticides and other chemicals that are commonly used to control weeds and insects.

While farming at The Chef's Garden has evolved "back in time," using methods employed by our great grandfathers, innovation and new product development help us remain the leading grower of artisanal produce in the nation. In addition, advanced food safety programs, which include regular testing for foodborne illnesses and enable us to track each product from seed to shipping, provide our customers with food they can be confident to serve their guests.

Recognizing our like-minded methods and philosophies, we've been privileged to supply produce to some of the finest restaurants around the world for nearly 30 years. We believe that our successes come from a doggedness to survive in agriculture, our commitment to delivering the best-tasting and freshest products direct from Earth to Table®, and a constant quest to improve.



**Committee on Agriculture
U.S. House of Representatives
Required Witness Disclosure Form**

House Rules* require nongovernmental witnesses to disclose the amount and source of Federal grants received since October 1, 2007.

Name: Bob Jones

Address: 565 Wilbor Ave Huron Ohio 44839

Telephone: 419-433-4947

Organization you represent (if any): The Chef's Garden

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2007, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract. House Rules do **NOT** require disclosure of federal payments to individuals, such as Social Security or Medicare benefits, farm program payments, or assistance to agricultural producers:

Source: USDA Value Added Producer Amount: \$97,500.00

Source: _____ Amount: _____

2. If you are appearing on behalf of an organization, please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants and subcontracts) the organization has received since October 1, 2007, as well as the source and the amount of each grant or contract:

Source: _____ Amount: _____

Source: _____ Amount: _____

Please check here if this form is NOT applicable to you: _____

Signature: _____

* Rule XI, clause 2(g)(4) of the U.S. House of Representatives provides: *Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof. In the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by any entity represented by the witness.*

PLEASE ATTACH DISCLOSURE FORM TO EACH COPY OF TESTIMONY.

