

## Inter-institutional Network for Food and Agricultural Sustainability (INFAS)

### *Member Profile: Casey Hoy, The Ohio State University*

#### **Background**

Casey Hoy is a Professor of Entomology and holds the W. K. Kellogg Foundation Endowed Chair in Agricultural Ecosystems Management at The Ohio State University. Casey leads the Agroecosystems Management Program (AMP) of the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, focusing on interdisciplinary leadership in systemic and holistic approaches to agroecosystem health, sustainability and resilience. Casey also is the Faculty Director of the Initiative for Food and AgriCultural Transformation (InFACT). Casey has been a member of INFAS since it started, serving on the inaugural Executive Committee and his work, particularly the institutional culture change represented by InFACT, relates directly to the vision and goals of INFAS.



#### **Connections to INFAS**

InFACT is engaged in efforts to establish that food is a basic civil right and that when there are high rates of food insecurity, that civil right is being violated. Ohio currently has the sixth highest rate of household food insecurity in the US; InFACT aims to transform Ohio food insecurity rates. InFACT aspires to serve as a community partner that can help create new practical models of a food system within the University and surrounding communities and the state that assure good food for all, and conceptual models that apply nationally and globally. InFACT is an example of an academic organization that leverages its academic setting, knowledge, and resources to partner with surrounding community members and organizations in order to increase food security, food justice, and equity within the food system.

**"InFACT's vision is to use OSU's campuses and lands as living laboratories to create new conceptual, physical and social models of food systems that promote human health while balancing technology, ecological capacities, economics, justice and equity."-  
The Ohio State University**

In addition to partnering directly with communities and partners outside of the University, InFACT efforts connect with INFAS's mission to achieve racial equity and justice within the food system. Casey agrees with the United Nations contention that access to food is a human right; InFACT aims to create a more equitable and just food system where everyone has equal access to healthy food. In addition to these connections centered on structural and racial inequities in the food system, both InFACT and INFAS focus heavily on network weaving and bridging connections between disciplines and with nonacademic partners to take on a holistic approach to addressing challenges in the food system.

#### **Value of INFAS**

Casey finds tremendous value in being part of INFAS because it allows him to share ideas with, and learn from, colleagues at numerous institutions and with diverse disciplinary knowledge. He can apply what others are doing to his work while supporting their efforts, thereby collectively increasing positive change within the food system and academia. Casey feels that INFAS is a particularly valuable network because it convenes scholars with shared values and purpose who can collectively address challenges in food systems and sustainable agriculture that are larger than what an individual scholar or institution could tackle on its own, such as establishing and ensuring a right to food in the United States. As a result, INFAS provides the vehicle for its participants to collaborate and work together on large challenges and structural inequalities within our food system. Casey feels that INFAS is a network that

effectively fosters communication and allows its members to learn from each other's successes and failures.

## **Local Work**

OSU's Initiative for Food and AgriCultural Transformation (InFACT) is a \$125 million investment over 10 years that was designed to approach transformations in the food system holistically by using a multi-disciplinary approach. The goal of InFACT is to use research and scholarship to bring about effective change within the food system beginning with the OSU campus and working outward to surrounding communities, Ohio, the nation and the world. InFACT has drawn participation from more than 100 faculty members from over 20 departments, 23 interdisciplinary programs (including AMP), 10 colleges, and additional partners from outside OSU. It also engages students to build bridges between disciplines and create a more inclusive approach to transforming the food system.



In addition to increasing collaboration among faculty, staff, and students, InFACT is focused on creating community partnerships to ensure that voices beyond academia are involved in the initiative, and that communities are well represented in planning and implementation. InFACT supports and collaborates with community organizations that are working to improve the food system, bring about food system transformation and increase food security.

InFACT's overarching objective is to improve food security, the economics of the food system, and to improve education at OSU about all aspects of food. The initiative strives to create models, practical examples, of transformations within the food system that can be achieved. An example goal is to develop OSU policy that results in 40% of OSU's food being sourced locally and sustainably by 2025, one of a number of sustainability goals set by the University. OSU is one of the largest universities in the U.S. and has six campuses spread across the state. Therefore, improving the food system within the OSU university system could significantly impact the state's food system and help support the state's agriculture and food economy. Casey co-chairs a panel of faculty, staff, students, and external partners that is developing the action plan.

InFACT has support under OSU's Discovery Themes Initiative to hire 30 new faculty members from a wide range of disciplines to enhance and connect a network of hundreds of existing faculty through collaborations in research, teaching and outreach. The broad hiring areas, which give insight into OSU's very broadly interdisciplinary approach to food security, include climate resilient agriculture, health and nutrition, policy and planning, business and entrepreneurship, and culture, art and design. Importantly, the efforts will involve making explicit connections between climate change, the economy, housing, class, race, and gender, to name a few key concerns, and from economic, political, environmental, and social/ cultural perspectives.

While InFACT has committed to making a difference in OSU and its surrounding communities' food systems, their vision is much larger: they plan to apply their experience and knowledge to help grow and develop food and agricultural transformation more broadly in Ohio and throughout the nation and world. InFACT hopes to share experience in the OSU living laboratory with others across the globe, and bring ideas from the experience of others to experiments in improving Ohio food systems.