OHIO SENATE BILL 299’S SUPPORT FOR WORKING LANDS PROGRAMS

From the passage of Senate Bill 299 in 2018 to April 2019, the Ohio Department of Agriculture distributed $3.5 million of the $23.5 million available to the 24 soil and water conservation districts in northwest Ohio to implement nutrient management programs.

The Ohio Department of Agriculture is working to distribute funds to the districts, focusing on three major programs unique to Ohio:

- **The Ohio Working Lands Program** will encourage producers to establish year-round vegetative cover on eligible cropland. The program will promote the conversion, establishment and maintenance of forage/hay land on certain cropland acres. Also, there will be a new incentive payment to encourage producers to re-enroll acreage through the Lake Erie Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. This will help reach the 67,000 acreage goal and increase conservation efforts.

- **The Voluntary Nutrient Management Plan Development Program** will be a partnership with the Ohio Agribusiness Association, in which financial incentives are offered for nutrient management plans. This would help to ensure the 4R principles are put into place.

- **The Cost Share and Equipment Buy Down Program** will provide producers with funds to purchase technological improvements to agricultural land, equipment and structures to reduce nutrient loss.
The Ohio Working Lands Program creates opportunities for northwest Ohio producers to receive support for practices that help improve water quality and soil health. Unique to the program, support is offered for buffers that may be harvested for hay and forage. A fact sheet details guidelines and benefits for the buffer program.

The program also supports increased planting of small grains such as wheat, barley, and oats, which may also be harvested by producers. Because small grains are harvested earlier in the season, the amount of acreage available for the land application of manure increases, easing pressures to land apply during less favorable conditions. Additional benefits and guidelines for the program are available in a fact sheet on the Small Grains Program.
TYPE
Investment

ISSUE
ErieStat