

Monday, December 2, 2024

Hirzel Farms, Inc.

Luckey, OH 43443

Wood County

Chair Schaffer, Vice Chair Landis, and Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, thank you for accepting my testimony in support of House Bill 162.

I would like to introduce myself to you. My name is Bridget Burgess, and I am part of the Hirzel Farms team located in Luckey, OH. Hirzel Canning Co and Farms were established in 1923. Today, we have 3 canning facilities located in Northwood, Ottawa, Pemberville, OH and our farm operations. We are a 5th generation family business. The farming operation includes 1,400 acres certified organic, a Class II composting facility, seed cleaning operation, and food grade processing facility that is also certified organic.

Being involved in agriculture from our own farm to tables across the country for over 100 years, there are responsibilities we as farmers must ensure that the crops we are raising are nutritious, healthy, and good tasting. To do this, it is vital that we look after the soil. Just as we maintain and amend our machinery in our canning facilities, our soil needs to be maintained for our farms to be productive and able to sustain the biology necessary to feed growing crops. Our soil is alive! For it to continue to thrive and our land to be fruitful, it is important to use cover crops, change crop rotations (diversity), and apply compost.

For generations, the Hirzel family has taken environmental stewardship seriously. We have desired to be on the forefront of research and education in soil health. We have conducted on-farm research and education for over 40 years. There are multiple farms that are changing hands to much younger generations that need awareness and to be reminded of how important taking care of the soil is to the family farm and business. The first step to raising nutrient dense food is feeding the soil. If the soil is not healthy, your food will not be healthy. Ohio Soil Health week would be a great way to get the message out there. In the meantime, Hirzel Farms will continue to do our best educating, providing cover crops, compost, and awareness to young and older growers how important soil health is to our own health and food supply. Most people say, "you are what you eat". We like to say, "you are what your food eats".

I ask that the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee pass HB 162 and formally declare the second full week in November Ohio Soil Health Week. Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony.

Sincerely,

Bridget Burgess

Bridget Burgess, Hirzel Farms, Inc.