

Ohio-Israel Agricultural & CleanTech Initiative of the Negev Foundation

Report (07/01/23-06/30/24)

FY2023/2024 Funding Cycle (07/01/23-12/31/23)

The Ohio-Israel Agricultural & CleanTech Initiative (OIACI) of The Negev Foundation focuses on promoting and enhancing trade opportunities, business attraction, technology transfer, and cooperation between Ohio and Israel in the agriculture, food and CleanTech industries. The Initiative's goal is to enable Ohio to Israel export and Israel to Ohio business and technology attraction in these sectors to enhance business opportunities in Ohio through collaboration with Israel. The Initiative pursues these objectives by working directly with Israeli and Ohio companies, participating in tradeshow, presenting seminars, facilitating demonstration of company products, assisting in technology transfer, planning for and having missions and delegations between the two regions, and promoting and coordinating collaborative R&D between Ohio and Israel. Presented below are activities that took place during the 2023/2024 funding cycle.

Israel at War

As a result of the October attack by Hamas on Israel, several projects were in progress and abruptly stopped. It has taken some time for Israelis to return to work and be able to resume travel and business dealings.

Collaborative

Collaborative projects include research partnerships, information sharing, and business relationships between Israeli and Ohio agricultural, food, and CleanTech institutions through collaboration with other organizations. In this strategy the OIACI takes advantage of the speed, simplicity, and low cost of global communication by serving as a crucial conduit.

International Trade

Israel

In August, the OIACI program director visited Israel while leading a mission of Ohio legislators, and to build relationships with Israeli companies. The trip was a total of 18 days, meeting in person with important stakeholders.

Ohio House Trade Mission to Israel

In collaboration with Ohio Jewish Communities, OIACI led a mission with leadership from the Ohio House of Representatives and their staff. The trip took participants to:

- Hear about Israel's Innovation Ecosystem with Avi Hasson, CEO of Start-up Nation Central,
- Learn about the water system during meetings and tours with Shafdan Wastewater Treatment Facility and Mekorot, the water authority,

- Met with Nir Barkat, Minister of Economy and Industry for a broad overview of Israel's tech eco-system,
- Meet with Mr. Robert Grossman lawyer engaged in international business in Israel,
- Visited the Gilat Research Center to learn about agriculture innovation,
- Had a traditional Sabbath Dinner with entrepreneur, philanthropist, and VC success story Michael Eisenberg,
- Conversation with representatives of the Israel Innovation Authority about the National Drone Initiative,
- Briefing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about regional geopolitics, followed by a briefing on the impact of Israel's tech eco-system on overt and covert relations with other countries,
- And had a geopolitical briefing at Mitzpe Shalem.

As a result of the trade mission, OAICI is building relationships with those participants to identify needs in their districts. This resulted in new networks with the Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation District and Scioto Farm Bureau.

Israeli Meetings

Oren Shaked, Senior Agricultural Specialist, USDA discussed the general trade environment for agricultural products to Israel, items in demand, regulations, and labeling requirements.

Kibbutz Volunteer Program, Karen, program director, discussed what a program with US volunteers as workforce training would look like, including supplemental training.

Phenome Network, Erez Atzmon, Vp business development, specialized in plant breeding and variety testing software solutions, Phenome has become a global trailblazer in data management and analysis for plant research. Over 100 companies around the world are already using the PhenomeOne software platform in an array of industries related to plant breeding (vegetable breeding, field crops, ornamental, cannabis, trees and any other crop), including seeds, Food & Beverage, Chemicals and Crop Protection, Oil and Paper.

During their initial August meeting in Israel, they discussed what types of US/Ohio companies they are interested in connecting with. Since the visit, OAICI Chairperson set them up with several networking meetings while they were in the US for a conference.

They visited Ohio and Indiana in January, 2023, to introduce their software to researchers at The Ohio State University, Ohio Soybean, Central State University, and Beck's. They are signing a deal with Beck's.

Sides & Sons, Gal Sides, vice president, discussed the types of specialty food products they are interested in importing into Israel. The products they sell and represent are considered niche, high quality, and brand leaders.

EPC, Lior Ditur, COO & Senior Process Engineer, showed their decentralized water treatment plant, the ease of use, and overall footprint, to show the benefits of their technology.

Export institute, Federico Atlasovich, head of ag-tech sector, shared upcoming opportunities and options for leading a trade mission to Ohio, so long as there are 4-10 good business to business meetings secured.

Kaleidoscope, Agritech, discussed the Agritech conference, exhibition, tours, and business networking options available to promote the event to the Ohio delegation better. Depending on the delegation, the group would receive a VIP reception invitation.

Palgey Maim, Ran Weismann, division manager, discussed the company's divisions, processes, and technologies they use to solve water scarcity.

AMBAL, Gal Peleg, consultant, took OIACI's program director on a fact-finding tour of Israeli cattle ranches to learn about their issues. This information was presented to OSU Extension professors who identified training opportunities.

Agritech

In collaboration with JobsOhio and the Israeli Economic Mission in New York, OIACI planned a mission to Israel for an international conference on agriculture and desert technologies. The delegation included leadership from JobsOhio, Ohio Department of Environment, Ohio Department of Agriculture, Cleveland Water Alliance, and Cambells.

Ultimately, the trip was canceled one week prior as a result of the terrorist attack.

Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce (FICC), Noah Grayson is the leading economic organization representing the trade and service sector, the largest sector in Israel. The FICC serves as roof organization to over 5000 businesses and organizations operating in more than 120 divisions which represent various economic branches including export, import, trade, real estate, financial and business services.

Julia and Noah had an introductory meeting in January to determine areas of collaboration. Since then, they have spoken several times to introduce Israeli companies to the Ohio market. These efforts are still in the planning stages.

Aleph Farms, Gary Brenner, Director Market and Corporate Development, Kevin Benmoussa, Executive VP & Chief Financial Officer, is a cellular agriculture company designing new ways to grow quality animal products that improve sustainability, food security, and animal welfare in our food systems.

Aleph Farms has the USA targeted as their third commercial market to enter, following Israel and Singapore. They are identifying value partnerships with patented synergies for manufacturing and larger companies that offer distribution solutions.

Terra One, Yuval Lavi and Adam, is a carbon capture company that uses sensors to determine the quantity of carbon captured. Their focus is returning farms back to wetlands.

Ohio

Savion Renewable Energy develops utility-scale photovoltaic and energy storage projects across the U.S. Madison Fields Solar Project is an agrivoltaics project in partnership with OSU to study the agronomic practices in solar farms to reduce land use impacts. There are collaborative international research projects proposed.

Clark Fruit and Vegetable Farm, Drew Clark, is a commercial vegetable and fruit farm in southern Ohio, with distribution to Ohio grocery stores. This introductory meeting was to learn about the types of technologies that might enhance the farm. They are interested in agrivoltaics to improve hot pepper yields. OIACI is now investigating how to help integrate this technology into the farm.

Bunker Hill Cheese, Bob Troyer, and Gad Dairy, Tzvika Dor, is an Ohio cheese producer that works with Gad Dairy for US distribution of Ezra Feta Cheese. There is an increased demand for imported cheese in Israel. Bunker Hill needed to source a one-time 300,000 gallon shipment of milk to produce gouda cheese for a trial run. OIACI assisted with milk sourcing.

EPIK Ltd,'s Tyler Shinnaberry was introduced to OIACI by the advisory committee chair. EPIK and OIACI discussed various Israeli technologies and opportunities for them in the US and Ohio.

Workshops, Seminars, and Podcasts

The Ohio-Israel Ag & CleanTech Initiative (OIACI) is working in two areas, connecting Israeli companies to Ohio communities to provide clean water and connecting Ohio companies to Israel. OIACI is identifying funding opportunities for each project, once a solid plan is in place.

Israeli companies in the clean water sector are trying to establish themselves in Ohio through demonstration projects located throughout the state, with the intention of them creating a permanent business presence in the state. OIACI is creating relationships with communities primarily in Ohio's western basin, identifying their unique water needs, i.e., failing septic systems, livestock waste, drinking water. Those communities are introduced to the Israeli companies to determine if there is a business opportunity.

OIACI is connecting Ohio businesses to Israeli technologies through podcasts, seminars, and conferences. The Advisory Committee is planning a new OIACI podcast, discussing best practices, outreach methods, and outlining topics and speakers. Working with Ohio Developmental Services Agency's Office of Export Assistance, OIACI is creating an educational seminar on doing business with Israel, featuring a workshop on achieving Kosher certification. The Cleveland Water Alliance is partnering with OIACI to have a water conference, showcasing innovative Israeli technologies.

OIACI Podcast

OIACI disbursed the five episodes of "Innovative States: Ohio, Israel, and the Impact of Exchange" which has 137 listens from 10 countries. Additional interviews are in the scheduling process with a focus on the Israel war and the impact on economics.

AMBAL Educational Mission

AMBAL planned bringing ranchers to Ohio to learn to improve their cattle breeding. OIACI worked with Gibbs Farm, located in Southern Ohio, and OSU Extension to provide hands-on educational opportunities at working farms and OSU classrooms.

Kosher Seminar

In collaboration with the Ohio Department of Agriculture and Buckeye Kosher, OIACI is planning a kosher seminar to inform food and wine producers about why they might want to have Kosher certification and the process it entails. The original date for fall was rescheduled as a result of needing additional time for preparation and outreach. This seminar has not been rescheduled.

Intro to Ohio

In collaboration with JobsOhio, USA Select, the Israeli Chamber of Commerce, and the Economic Mission to Israel, NY, OIACI is planning a seminar that introduces Israeli agriculture technology companies to Ohio as a place to launch their US business. The objective is for participating companies to attend Farm Science Review or Cultivate in 2025.

Farm Science Review manager is a confirmed speaker.

Trainings

Annual Meeting

OIACI hosted their annual meeting in September, with 20 participants. They learned about Ohio Department of Agriculture's upcoming marketing initiatives from Christy Eckstein of ODA, H2Ohio updates by Kirk Hines of ODA, the international trade environment by Anat Katz of the Israel Economic Mission, and Agrovoltatics from Dr. Eran from the Gilat Research Center. There was also an opportunity for participants to share information about the state of farming in Ohio and technologies that would be helpful.

AMBAL Training

Working with Yonaton Herschfeld, AMBAL's executive director, multiple initiatives are being addressed. In coordination with Ohio State University, OIACI produced an instructional video about cattle nutrition.

AMBAL is exploring hosting a cattle conference in Israel. They are working with OIACI to determine feasibility, topics, cost and speakers.