



## BETTER ALIGNING OHIO'S PRISON SYSTEM TO ITS CORE MISSION

### **The phasing out of outmoded prison farming operations will improve safety and provide more meaningful career opportunities for prisoners returning to society**

Ohio has become a national leader in criminal justice reform over the past five years, finding new and innovative ways to reform the organizational structure of the state's prison system and help prisoners successfully transition back into the community.

Today, the state prison system owns 12,500 acres of farmland as well as 2,300 beef cattle and 1,000 dairy cows, at its eight farm operations. In its continuing efforts to improve its prison system, the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction will begin to phase out these prisoner-operated farm operations and re-focus resources on its core mission – keeping prisons safe and providing rehabilitative opportunities to inmates.

**Developing More Meaningful Training Experiences:** Helping prisoners get the education and job training they need for a meaningful career after their release is a top priority, yet only a 0.004 percent of inmates participate in job training at one of the state's eight prison farms. Few – if any – inmates have pursued careers in farming following their release.

As this transition is made, inmates currently assigned to prison farm operations will be reassigned to other programs for job training opportunities. The Ohio Penal Industries, DRC's vocational training division, is developing other opportunities to assist inmates with their successful reentry, including adding new crews in construction trades. For example, numerous employers currently have openings posted for meat cutters on *OhioMeansJobs.com*.

**Directing More Resources Inside Prison Walls:** By selling its livestock and farmland, the state prison system can drive more energy and resources back inside the prisons walls, where safety needs are greatest. These efforts will allow the department to invest additional resources into areas such as restrictive housing, where security risks are higher.

**Improving Safety:** The department anticipates that phasing out prison farming operations will also minimize the opportunities for passing illegal contraband into our prisons. The agency continues to focus much attention on addressing this issue to ensure the safety of staff and our inmate population.

**Providing More Revenue to Schools and Communities:** Traditionally, local governments and schools have not earned tax income from the 12,500 acres of state-owned farmland. By selling portions of this land and adding it back into the local tax base, as many as ten Ohio counties may see higher revenues for their school districts and local governments.

**BOTTOM LINE:** Ohio's prison farms have become a drain on DRC's energy and resources, and are not generating the training benefits to justify continuing their operations. By focusing on programs inside prison walls, Ohio can provide more resources to improve safety and give inmates meaningful, in-demand job training that will reduce crime in Ohio by providing a foundation for an individual's successful reentry back into society.

