

# Not yet a household word

Even Google is stumped. Search for “agbioscience” and it answers “did you mean....?” My spellchecker red-lines it, and in conversation it elicits a look of acute confusion. Agbioscience. Add it to your vocabulary, because it can revive Ohio.

*“Many of the most pressing challenges facing humankind have solutions rooted in modern agriculture and agbioscience.”*

That isn’t hype. It’s a direct quote from Battelle, the world’s largest independent research and development organization and a global leader in scientific discovery. It calls agbioscience a “core driver of economic growth and business expansion opportunities.” In other words, it’s how Ohio can create jobs.

Agbioscience strings together advanced agricultural inputs, farm products and value-added processing to produce more and better foods and a host of industrial and commercial goods. In Ohio, its potential is immense.

The advocacy group BioOhio says that since 2004, Ohio has added an average of 59 new bioscience companies every year with more than 1,300 such companies now here. In the past decade, biosciences employment has climbed 19.5 percent. And the jobs pay well. The average bioscience salary is \$68,384, two-thirds higher than the average for all Ohio industries. The sector should grow another 20 percent over the next 10 years.

Much of that growth will come by integrating agriculture and bioscience. Seventy-five thousand Ohio farms will provide raw materials that thousands of Ohio workers will turn into car parts, cups and grocery bags; cleaners, lubricants and coatings; fibers, fabrics, floor tiles and plastics; ink, rubber, furniture, eyeglasses, computer parts, and yes, even kitchen sinks.

Energy jobs could come too. A federal study says homegrown plant material can replace 60 percent of our nation’s oil consumption. And Battelle estimates that farm products could replace up to two-thirds of the petroleum based chemicals that are in some 50,000 products.



There also will be more jobs as agriculture expands its original purpose. Food production must double by 2050 to keep up with population growth. Farmers and bioscience will deliver higher yielding, pest resistant, weather tolerant crops and more food animal protein through improved reproduction, feed conversion and animal health. Along with more food will come better food—foods that fight cancer, diabetes and infectious diseases. And agbioscience will enable us to achieve these gains without straining environmental resources.

Be it industrial goods, energy or food, Ohio has a leg up on the competition. We have farmland and a bioscience foundation; innovative public and private institutions such as The Ohio State University and Battelle; Fortune 500 companies and entrepreneurial small businesses; a strong transportation infrastructure and an improving business climate. Most importantly we have the human resources: scientists, truck drivers, farmers, bankers, factory workers, clerks, educators, technicians and thousands of other capable and willing workers ready to ensure Ohio’s agbioscience emergence.

Like any growth industry, agbioscience will require nurturing. Your role, and Farm Bureau’s, is to advocate for constructive laws and regulations, sufficient funding for research and development and opportunities for workforce education and training. Broad public support will foster commitment from investors and businessmen that in turn will spark Ohio’s economy.

Here’s a final, rather profound thought from Battelle: *“There is no other arena of economic activity, or field of science and innovation, that so directly addresses human survival and quality of life, global economic development, and prospects for an environmentally sustainable future as agriculture and agbioscience.”*

Google may not get it yet, but Ohioans should. Agbioscience means jobs. And better lives. O

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 NOUN a core driver of economic growth  
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**Editor’s note:** read the Battelle report written by Simon Tripp on the Power and Promise of agbiosciences at <http://nccea.org/documents/powerandpromiseweb.pdf>

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