

# Delaware County: Landcue pilot program confirms, IDs agricultural uses on farms

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Although it might not be obvious if standing in one of the area's heavily populated suburbs, agriculture is big business in Delaware County.

In its 2020-21 annual report, the Ohio Department of Agriculture reported that the county had 803 farms covering 132,875 acres, out of a total 283,644 acres in the county.



Those farms produced 5.4 million bushels of corn and 4.1 million bushels of wheat and were home to 2,700 cattle and calves, the ODA said, resulting in cash receipts exceeding \$86 million.

The Delaware County Auditor's Office is employing a new satellite-based technology, called Landcue, to verify the use of land dedicated to agriculture.

State law mandates that such use must be verified because farmland devoted exclusively to commercial agriculture should be valued based on its use for agricultural production, and land dedicated to farming is subject to substantially lower taxes, the county said in a news release, quoting the Ohio Department of Taxation.

“Approximately half of the land in Delaware County is used for agricultural production,” said George Kaitsa, county auditor.

Most recently, he said, the auditor's office has contracted with the Delaware Soil & Water Conservation District to conduct the county's current agricultural-use valuation inspections.

“This is an exciting opportunity to utilize cutting-edge technology in the valuation of our county’s farmland while reducing the need for the traditional human inspection of land,” Kaitsa said.

"The Landcue system can not only identify that land is being farmed, but it can identify the types of crops planted in a particular field," Kaitsa said.

"The advantage of the Landcue system is that it utilizes satellite imagery to provide frequent views of cropland during the course of the year, as opposed to having a single view of cropland from flights which only provide a single view of crops that are planted or harvested each year," he said.

Landcue is produced by Woolpert Engineering, which has offices in Ohio and other eastern states.

The auditor's office is partnering with Woolpert Engineering in using Landcue as a pilot program.

Kaitsa said Delaware County is one of two Ohio counties participating in the pilot program.

Delaware County and Gallia County are working together with Woolpert Engineering in the development of the software and farmland imagery used by the Landcue system, he said.

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