

# THE FARMER'S REPORT

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Wednesday, Jan. 25, 2023







The Isermann family from Streator, the 2022 Conservation Farm Family of the Year as named by the LaSalle County Soil & Water Conservation District.

## LaSalle County Soil & Water Conservation District names '22 Farm Family of Year

□ Isermann family from Streator chosen for the honor

STREATOR – The LaSalle County Soil & Water Conservation District is pleased to announce the Isermann Family from Streator is its 2022 Farm Family of the Year.

Dave Isermann is a fifth-generation farmer that began farming in the late 1970s, in Otter Creek Township, near Streator. Dave and his wife, Susan, have three adult children: Dan, Bridget, and Jim. Jim, along with his wife, Lori, have three children that are the seventh generation of Isermanns to live and work on the farm since 1851 when the first 80-acre parcel was purchased. Many changes in technology, agronomic practices, and overall farming techniques have happened since then. Many of the more recent changes have happened when Jim came back to farm with his dad after he graduated from college. Jim is a contractor for Illinois Corn, who partners with the Illinois Sustainable Ag Partnership, so he knows the importance of healthy soils and clean water.

The Isermann family raises corn, soybeans, hay, and have pasture ground for their herd of crossbred cattle in Livingston and LaSalle counties. The corn is planted by strip-tilling, where you disturb just a narrow strip of soil in the fall (ideally) and then plant into that strip in the Spring. The soybeans are no-till planted right into the prior year's crop residue. They do not apply any fall fertilizers, aside from manure and bedding from their cattle operation. All nutrients are applied in the spring by first broadcasting any dry phosphorus and potassium that is needed. A starter fertilizer is applied when planting, then an in-season side dress of either, 28% or 32%, when the timing is right. Depending on timing, cover crops are either drilled, or overseeded after harvest. They have also experimented with aerial seeding and using a highboy to seed while crops are in, but it really depends upon weather and timing. Cover crops are for protection from soil erosion, to absorb nutrients, add to soil health, and to improve water quality.

Preserving the land for the generations to come is of utmost importance for the father-son duo. They have entered into two voluntary conservation-based programs through the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) was able to assist with tissue sampling, cover crops, and pollinator habitat acres. Another voluntary program that they have utilized was the Environmental Qual-

*Preserving the land for the generations to come is of utmost importance for the Isermann family. They have entered into two voluntary conservation-based programs through the Natural Resources Conservation Service.*

ity Incentive Program (EQIP) that focused mainly on the cattle portion of their operation. With EQIP they were able complete a comprehensive nutrient management plan, do pasture improvements, have a grazing management plan written, and are moving forward with ag waste management program.

Dave and Jim have tried many different types of cover crop mixes and rates throughout the years. They began with putting turnips into standing corn for the cattle to graze on then they progressed to cereal rye for their operation. Cereal rye has the best establishment for them and is their "go-to" cover crop of choice.

The Isermann family has hosted several events at their farm. They have hosted Legislators, County Board members, town officials, and their peers out to their farm to tour and learn about agriculture and the diversity within their farming operation. They have been working with the University of Illinois, Dr. Andrew Margenot, on slow-release phosphorus struvite trials and deep soil sampling studying how nutrients distribute within the deeper soil profile.

In 2017, the Isermanns were recognized as the Illinois Beef Association's Environmental Steward of the Year. This award recognizes "a beef producer in Illinois whose natural resource stewardship practices protect the environment and contribute to productivity and profitability." Dave has served on the LaSalle County Stockman's Association board, Treasurer with the Streator High School FFA Alumni, and served on the St. Stephen's School Board. He currently serves as the LaSalle Farm Bureau as the President since 2017 and has been on the Board since 2013. Jim serves as the President of Missal Farmers Grain and is active with the St. Michael's/Ransom Athletic Club.

Congratulations to the Isermann family for being selected as the 2022 Farm Family of the Year for LaSalle County.

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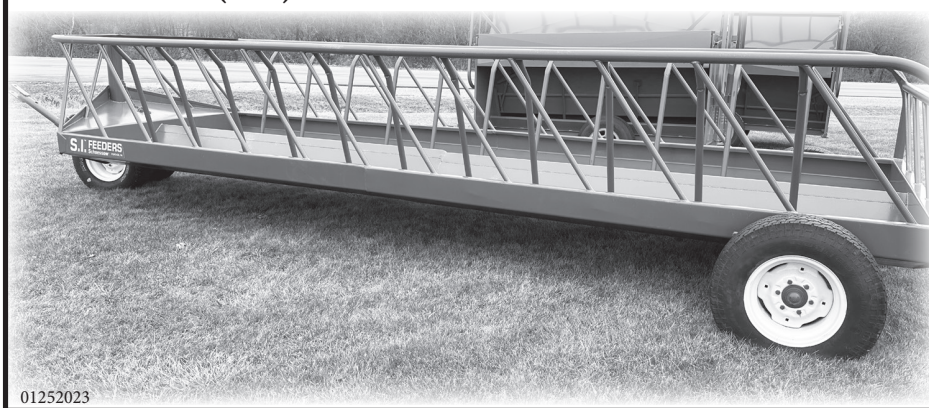
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## Bringing farm youth into mental health conversations

By **TAMMIE SLOUP**  
*FarmWeek*

While much research has centered on farm stress, studies have predominately focused on adult farmers and agricultural workers.

Children and adolescents, who often have farm responsibilities, have largely been left out of studies and conversation about mental health.

That is starting to change. Josie Rudolphi, assistant professor and Extension specialist in the Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering at the University of Illinois and director of the North Central Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance, is part of a research team focusing on how farm stress and mental health is experienced throughout the family.

Prevalence of mental health conditions and even risk for suicide is higher among agricultural populations than the general population.

“But a lot of what we know has focused on adult farmers and agricultural workers,” Rudolphi said during a recent webinar focusing on farm youth mental health and hosted by AgriSafe. “We know that the farm is a business but it’s also a residence. We know there are upwards of 2 million youth who are either living or working on a farm. We know they’re often participating in farm work or present in the farm environment and experiencing some of these stressful realities of agricultural production. But children have been absent from a lot of the research we’ve done around farm stress.”

The Farm Adolescent and Adult Mental Health Study (FAAM) is a project

of the National Children’s Center for Rural and Agricultural Safety and Health and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Now in year two of the five-year study, adolescents and farm owner/operators were recruited this summer for a confidential online survey to help develop resources and programs to reduce farm-related stress, improve resiliency and improve overall physical and mental health among farm adults and farm adolescents. More than 122 families participated, including 26 from Illinois, and were screened for depression and anxiety symptoms.

In both categories and for both adolescents and adults, at least 60% experienced at least mild symptoms of depression and anxiety — more than the general population, Rudolphi said.

Rudolphi has also worked closely with fellow presenter Jana Davidson, program manager at the Progressive Agriculture Foundation, which is North America’s largest safety and health educational program for children. A couple years ago, the foundation spearheaded a roundtable focusing on farm youth mental health and how to create curriculum addressing the issue.

“We have a vision that no child would become ill, injured or die from farm ranch and rural activities, Davidson said. “We knew that there was a lot of folks coming together and really talking about farm mental health in general, but the children were being left out. So we decided the best way for us to kind of get a pulse on what was happening and really understand how farm families are feeling was to have a roundtable.”

Roundtable participants found specific stressors are common to farm youth:

- Weather
- Family finances
- Long work hours
- Negative interactions with those who have a disconnect with the ag industry
- Pressure to carry on farming tradition
- Inability to participate in extra-curricular activities

“Our focus is for children to understand stress and their emotions,” Davidson said. “And begin to make that connection between mental health and physical health to keep breaking that stigma between the two and that they really do go hand-in-hand.”

When bringing the curriculum into the classroom for agriculture safety days, Davidson said they focus on fun, hands-on activities, such as making stress balls. The foundation also provides take-home bags for students with more reference materials and guides for parents on how to talk to their children about stressors and mental health.

A few small acts can make a big impact, Davidson said, adding she’s read



there are nine vital minutes each day for a child: the three minutes after they wake up, three minutes after they get home from school and the three minutes before they go to bed.

“So, remember that when trying to make those memorable for that child,” Davidson said. “Ask them questions, listen — we can all be better listeners — and

just make sure we’re present in their lives.”

She also encouraged role modeling when it comes to coping with stress.

“Our children are looking to us as their first teacher to guide them. So, if we practice self-care and encourage them to do the same, they will likely adopt it. If we have coping strategies, when we get stressed out

and they see us practicing that whether that’s yoga, journaling, riding a bike ... they’ll learn to adopt those practices.”

*(This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit FarmWeekNow.com.)*



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## Food price inflation to remain high; impacts variable

By DANIEL GRANT  
*FarmWeek*

It looks like U.S. consumers will have to stomach another year of historically high food prices.

The latest food price outlook from the US Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service projects all food prices could increase 3.5% to 4.5% in 2023.

If realized, this year's inflation rate would be much lower compared to 2022, but still higher than average. USDA estimated all food prices increased 9.5% to 10.5% in 2022, with the cost of food at home up as much as 11-12% while prices of food away from home jumped 7-8%.

"Food prices are expected to grow more slowly in

2023 than in 2022, but still at above historical average rates," USDA noted in its December food price outlook.

The 20-year average rate of food price inflation hovered near 2% annually prior to the COVID pandemic and war in Ukraine.

Issues with logistics, high transportation costs and freight rates, labor,

soaring production costs and weather have all contributed to the recent price surge.

Some of the largest price hikes by category in 2022 include eggs (forecast to increase 30.5% to 31.5%), poultry (up 14-15%), fats and oils (up 18-19%), cereals and bakery products (up 13.5%) and fresh fruit and vegetables (up 7-8%).

"The ongoing outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) continues to reduce the U.S. egg layer flock, as well as the poultry flock to a lesser extent," USDA noted in its food price report. "This decrease is expected to increase wholesale and retail egg prices for the coming months."

In the first two weeks of December, USDA reported 4.8 million birds were destroyed to keep HPAI in check, bringing total losses for the year to 57.3 million birds nationwide.

The majority of bird losses due to HPAI (42.5 million) were table egg layers. Roughly 9.4 million turkeys were destroyed since the first of the year, the CME

Group's Daily Livestock Report noted.

"Keep in mind there is a lag in price transmission and retailers likely are operating with compressed margins," authors of the Daily Livestock Reported noted. "Given the trend of the last few weeks, we would expect retail (egg) prices to be sharply higher and unlikely to drop much in January and February."

How does food price inflation affect U.S. citizens? It depends, in part, on your location and income level.

A recent survey-based report released by Purdue University's Center for Food Demand Analysis and Sustainability found stark regional differences about food spending.

The survey of 1,200 consumers across the U.S. found households closer to the coasts are spending much more per week on food. But households farther from the coasts are experiencing higher rates of food insecurity.

"The regional differences are not surprising," said

Jayson Lusk, distinguished professor of ag economics at Purdue who leads the center. "The West and Northeast are generally higher-cost and higher-income areas, so we would expect them to spend more on food."

The survey also seemed to indicate consumers reached a choke point in 2022 and responded to rapidly rising food costs by simply purchasing less of it. Grocery spending subsequently leveled off since May, according to the survey.

"There is a similar story for spending on restaurants, but this area still appears fairly robust," Lusk said. "We will watch closely for further declines."

USDA projects the cost of food away from home could increase 4-5% in 2023 compared to a 3-4% rise in food at home.

*(This story was distributed through a cooperative project between Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Press Association. For more food and farming news, visit FarmWeekNow.com.)*

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Consumers will likely see the cost of groceries continue to rise well into 2023, according to the US Department of Agriculture. Egg prices are likely to increase as ongoing outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza continue to reduce the US egg layer flock. (File photo by Illinois Farm Bureau photographer Catrina Rawson)



## Illinois Rural Development poised for 'historic investment'

By KAY SHIPMAN  
FarmWeek

Rural Illinois stands to benefit from increased funding and changes in the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP). U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced that \$300 million, including \$250 million from the Inflation Reduction Act, is available nationwide.

"This is an historic investment," said Betsy Dirksen Londrigan, Illinois State Rural Development director. "The amount being made available this year compounds our capabilities. It's a program that in Illinois is consistently over-subscribed. It means we're going to be able to help more people."

REAP provides farmers and small rural businesses with grants and guaranteed loans to develop renewable energy systems and to improve energy efficiency. The application deadline for Fiscal Year 2023 is March 31.

Callie Heidbreder, Illinois Rural Development business programs specialist and rural energy coordinator, explained that REAP applicants previously could apply for up to 25% of total eligible project costs, but that has increased to up to 40% of those costs thanks to the additional funding.



Rural communities across the nation will soon benefit from increased funding and changes in the Rural Energy for America Program, U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced. (Photo by Illinois Farm Bureau photographer Catrina Rawson)

In addition, maximum grant amounts have also doubled, Heidbreder said, from \$250,000 to \$500,000 for energy efficiency improvements. Likewise, the maximum for a renewable energy system request has increased from \$500,000 to \$1 million.

"There are definitely greater thresholds available and an ability to take more dollars out to the applicants in Illinois," Heidbreder said.

The rural energy coordinator anticipates Illinois Rural Development may receive more project applications sparked by the amount of available funding. Heidbreder related she was speaking with a farmer focused on an en-

ergy efficient grain dryer. Although he also had been considering a solar project, the farmer wasn't aware of the additional funding available.

"He said, 'Does it make sense to look at solar?'" she recalled. "I think we will see more examples like that as people, who have been thinking about these types of projects, needed an extra nudge to pull the trigger and make those possible for their operations."

Dirksen Londrigan pointed out important REAP changes now apply to cooperatives.

Electric and telephone cooperatives may now receive direct payment in lieu of federal tax credits for installation of certain

renewable energy projects, the state director said. For example, if a cooperative is installing a solar project, it may apply for REAP and potentially receive a direct payment, reducing the overall payback of the system.

"Typically, they (cooperatives) don't have a tax liability. This is an incentive because they can receive a direct payment. That's an important change," Dirksen Londrigan said.

Heidbreder offered three examples of Illinois REAP projects funded in fiscal year 2022.

The Lacon Rehab and Nursing LLC in Lacon operates a skilled nursing and sub-acute rehabilitation facility. It received funding to buy and install

a 556-kilowatt solar array to help power the business and save more than \$41,300 annually.

A Bureau County farmer received funding to buy and install an energy efficient electric irrigation motor. The farmer anticipates saving more than \$4,300 each year and replacing 110,898 kilowatt hours or 59% annually.

A McHenry County farmer received funding to buy and install an energy efficient grain dryer and will save more than \$52,300 per year in energy costs and replace 1.113 million kilowatt hours or 39% annually.

Heidbreder encouraged interested applicants to email her at [Callie.Heidbreder@usda.gov](mailto:Callie.Heidbreder@usda.gov) to ensure they and the project they

are considering are both eligible "before they get too far down the road." Information also is available online.

In addition, state and local governments, federally recognized tribes, land-grant universities or other higher education institutions, rural electric cooperatives, public power entities and Resource Conservation and Development Councils may apply for grants to conduct energy audits and provide development assistance.

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## ISA hosts second 'Gather Around the Table' event for food industry guests

BLOOMINGTON – The Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) and stakeholders from the food industry gathered around the table at OC Farms in Kankakee recently for an on-the-farm dinner event to discuss sustainable soybean production.

“We were excited to bring back the Gather Around the Table dinner event for a second year because we believe that Illinois soybean farmers share the same commitment as food industry stakeholders to provide consumers sustainably grown food ingredients, being good stewards of our land, and reducing our environmental impact,” said Rachel Peabody, Director of Communications for ISA. “We value the opportunity to get to know our stakeholders better and learn about their current efforts in meeting consumer demands for sustainable products and supporting the environment.”

The event included a four-course soy-centric meal and walking tours to learn about soybean production directly from Illinois farmers. Topics for discussion included the wide uses of soybeans, why land stewardship is important to farmers, soil erosion prevention tactics, water use reduction and quality, and renewable energy use. Guests were also invited to discuss their organization’s consumer demands for sustainable products with the hope that ISA can lend a hand in helping them meet those demands.

“After attending the Gather Around

the Table event last year as a guest, I decided that if ISA wanted to continue hosting this event, I wanted to open up my farm to that opportunity,” says ISA Board Director and OC Farms owner, Jeff O’Connor. “It’s a natural setting to bring together people from different industries, locations, and backgrounds to think together about what we can accomplish in the service of healthier populations and a more sustainable future.

Evening presenters included Mayasari Effendi from Mayasari Tempeh who discussed tempeh education, Roger Theisen from Corteva who presented High Oleic oil versatility and benefits as an ingredient, and Beth Breeding from the National Turkey Federation who offered a unique perspective on the role of soy in animal agriculture.

During the walking tours, O’Connor provided insights on his sustainability practices, on farm biodiesel usage, carbon sequestration, how farmers are meeting Illinois nutrient loss goals, slake test and rainfall simulator demonstrations, and the use of soy as a protein source.

“This event is especially important in our current culture as we are becoming more diverse as a population in our food and diet preferences,” says O’Connor. “Promoting soy as a healthy, versatile protein is a great opportunity for soybean farmers as well as the food industry to positively impact human health, animal health and the environment.”

## Green infrastructure solutions aim to protect water supply

URBANA – A highway of subterranean pipes channel fresh water to and sewage away from Illinois’ homes, businesses, schools and parks. Pipes also carry runoff from rainstorms and snowmelt. This runoff includes pollutants swept away from parking lots, construction sites, and streets, potentially poisoning the waters and habitats crucial to wildlife and plants.

Illinois’ 155 lakes and 87,110 miles of rivers and streams are vulnerable to the impact of runoff. The Illinois Climate Assessment indicates Illinois is experiencing more extreme weather, including more rain water in a shorter period of time, combined with longer periods of summer drought and higher temperatures.

Infrastructure to move that stormwater, located under roads, is aging and unable to keep up with increased amounts of water. Many communities are turning to innovative solutions that not only help manage stormwater, but give people parks to play in and habitats for birds and butterflies.

Green stormwater infrastructure uses plants and other techniques that mimic nature to slow stormwater and let it infiltrate in place

rather than pooling where it becomes a nuisance.

“Green infrastructures are a great tool for communities,” says Lisa Merrifield, University of Illinois Extension community and economic development specialist. “It is usually much cheaper than replacing underground pipes.”

Green infrastructures may appear as a garden, brick parking lot, or plant-covered roof.

“Managing stormwater may be the reason communities turn to green infrastructure, but beautification, livability, and even social justice are co-benefits that make the strategy a really attractive option for communities,” Merrifield says.

To help communities maximize the benefits of green infrastructure, Illinois Extension experts are collaborating with Illinois Indiana Sea Grant professionals, the North Central Region Water Network, and other state Extension and Sea Grant programs.

“Our goal is to connect Extension professionals, so we have the latest science and technology to support real people in real communities,” says Merrifield.

Collectively, this group, the Green Infrastructure

Community of Practice, is working to share and cross-train Extension and Sea Grant professionals on models, methods, and tools to understand and assess green infrastructure and stormwater issues, including outreach to community leaders, business owners, K-12 teachers and students, and others.

The group also aims to help communities:

- Understand and use green infrastructure to minimize stormwater runoff and its potential impacts to the built and natural environment.

- Maximize the societal co-benefits associated with green infrastructure, including environmental literacy, workforce development, and diversity, equity and inclusion.

be more responsive and resilient to environmental and population changes over time.

“The Green Infrastructure Community of Practice is an invaluable resource for Extension and Sea Grant stormwater professionals,” says Eliana Brown, Illinois Extension water quality specialist. With a background in stormwater engineering and over 15 years of experience in stormwater management, Brown has witnessed both success stories and lessons learned from green infrastructure installations.

Green infrastructure provides opportunities to increase the quality of life for people in neighborhoods. Many communities increase their use of green infrastructure after a major environment or regulatory event.

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## Illinois Department of Agriculture shares strides made in 2022

SPRINGFIELD — Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) recently shared accomplishments made in 2022 to support the state's number one industry. From the opening of the state's first craft grow facility, to increasing Future Farmers of America (FFA) funding to ensure the future of agriculture in our state, to the success of the state fairs, great strides were made to further the success of agriculture in Illinois.

"Illinois has always been—and will always be—an agricultural state. And this year, we continued to lay the groundwork for a thriving, sustainable agricultural industry for generations into the future," said Pritzker. "From waiving all FFA dues for agricultural education students to issuing hundreds of cannabis licenses to social equity applicants, 2022 was full of firsts—and we're only getting started. My administration remains laser-focused on growing and supporting our number one industry, so that farmers and workers have the resources they need to put food on the table for the people of Illinois."

"In Illinois, our agricultural industry powers the economy and feeds the world. Thank you to the Department of Agriculture that provides resources and support to the skilled farmers, producers, transporters, and workers who make this possible," said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton. "The amazing accomplishments and growth we saw this year will provide momentum for increased productivity and entrepreneurship in 2023 and beyond."

"This year has brought much success to the current landscape of agriculture in

Illinois, but also the future of agriculture in Illinois," said Illinois Department of Agriculture Director Jerry Costello. "With the support of the Pritzker administration, agriculture in Illinois continues to grow. The Department looks forward to moving our state's number one industry forward as we enter 2023."

### Supporting Vulnerable Communities and Working Toward Justice

- Issued 88 Craft Grow licenses, 54 Infuser licenses, and 189 Transporter licenses to date. 85% of all new licenses under the CRTA are equity by ownership.

- First Social Equity Craft Grow licensee successfully commenced business operations. Located in Rockford, Star Buds is 66% Black-owned.

- Signed landmark legislation creating a Farmer Disparity Study to identify and examine the hurdles for minority populations entering the agriculture industry. The study is now underway, facilitated by the Department and research led by the University of Illinois, Southern Illinois University, Illinois State University and Western Illinois University.

- Entered into a \$14.4 million Local Food Purchase Cooperative Agreement with the USDA to increase markets for disadvantaged farmers and to create sustainable infrastructure to connect with disadvantaged communities.

### Addressing Climate Change and Leading the Green Economy

- Providing financial assistance for cover crop adoption through the Fall Covers for Spring Savings Program with a minimum of 140,000 acres available in December 2022. To date, over 300,000 acres are en-

*"This year has brought much success to the current landscape of agriculture in Illinois, but also the future of agriculture in Illinois. With the support of the Pritzker administration, agriculture in Illinois continues to grow. The Department looks forward to moving our state's number one industry forward as we enter 2023."*

—Illinois Department of Agriculture Director Jerry Costello

rolled in the program.

- Record apiary growth in Illinois, with over 650 new beekeepers registering in 2022, protecting our pollinators and their positive environmental impact.

- Implemented pesticide-related rules making Illinois one of the most stringent in the nation on the application of the pesticide Dicamba.

- Operated plastic pesticide container-recycling program with over 2 million pounds of plastic collected and properly disposed of unwanted and unused pesticides protecting Illinois' waterways.

- Pritzker Administration secured \$12.9 million in new funding to support the development of 40 new conservation planning positions across the state.

- The IDOA/NRCS partnership leverages \$3.5 million Illinois state Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy funds with \$9.4 million of federal funds from the USDA/NRCS to deliver over \$12.9 million in new funding to support conservation planning and NLRs staffing and programming.

- Launched a statewide study of Illinois producers and conservation professionals—in partnership with the US Climate Alliance—to increase the understanding of constraints affecting adoption of new farm and land management practices that impact the

climate and NLRs goals. Advanced the creation of the Illinois Climate Smart Partnership and the Illinois Climate Smart Institute. These two initiatives are aimed at raising awareness of carbon capturing or limiting release of carbon by generating new educational and training opportunities to advance evidence-based climate-smart agricultural practices throughout Illinois.

### Securing the Future of Agriculture

- In the 2022-2023 school year, FFA dues were waived for every student taking agriculture education classes across Illinois. The \$550,000 appropriation is spearheaded by State Senator Doris Turner.

### Marketing Illinois Agriculture

- In FY22, \$102,637,471 in actual and projected sales was generated for Illinois agricultural companies as a result of direct buyer/seller introductions at in-person events.

- Other achievements included agreements between the State of Illinois and foreign dignitaries; co-sponsored marketing events via strategic partnerships; buyers missions and tours, directly introducing Illinois agriculture companies to qualified buyers; Illinois Pavilions at trade shows. In-person shows are starting to return since the pandemic, which will allow

for increased numbers.

- Nationally ranked #1 in soy production, #2 in corn production, and #4 in pork production, offering world-class genetics to domestic and international partners.

- Nationally ranked #1 in food processing with \$150 billion in sales and employing over 86,000 people.

### Illinois Agriculture on the Global Stage

- Governor Pritzker signed a commitment of \$2.6 billion in soybean and corn purchases by the Taiwanese Government. The letter of intent agrees to the sale of over \$2 billion of Illinois soybeans and \$600 million of Illinois corn over the next two years. The sale follows the 2019 two-year agreement that authorized over \$2.2 billion in crop sales. The sales will take place over 2023 and 2024.

### Accelerating Economic Growth and Creating Jobs

- Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES), awarded \$1.2 million to small and mid-sized meat and poultry establishments for capacity expansion and \$3.5 million to livestock producers impacted by pandemic related plant interruptions.

### Improving Health Care Quality and Affordability

- Advanced the Farm Family Resource Initiative (FFRI), allowing for expansion of farmer stress-related mental health initiatives

from a 6-county pilot program to a state-wide program connecting farmers with mental health resources and providers.

### Advancing Public Safety

- Worked with the agricultural community to create an online training course for the handling of anhydrous ammonia, protecting both growers and the public. Over 12,000 growers completed the program to date.

- Ensured farmers markets were considered an essential service throughout the pandemic, providing a safe experience for consumers to purchase of fresh, local products with SNAP food assistance.

- Inspected over 179 meat and poultry establishments in the State ensuring food safety for consumers.

- Veterinary team worked directly with USDA to manage and mitigate avian influenza cases in backyard poultry flocks. No commercial cases in Illinois to date.

- Department led pesticide training program, in collaboration with University of Illinois Extension, pivoted from in-person to on-line format within weeks to provide a seamless means for applicators to receive licensure. This created no gap in services to the agricultural community and now both online and classroom training and testing are available to increase access.



## Illinois Farm Bureau debuts new environmental documentary at annual meeting

BLOOMINGTON — Farmers and the agricultural research community joined forces in a new Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB)-produced documentary highlighting Illinois' progress in reducing nutrient loss.

"Farmers continuously work to find innovative solutions for preserving our soil and to protect water quality," said Richard Guebert Jr., IFB president. "We wanted to celebrate our farmers' dedication to the environment, while sharing with a broader audience the trials and, in some cases, financial risks farmers take to conserve our natural resources."

He added, "This documentary sends a clear message to various organizations and individuals working together on the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRs): Continue to remain passionately dedicated to improving agriculture's impact on the environment."

Centered around the Ganschow family in Bureau County, the hour-long documentary, titled "Sustaining Our Future: A Farm Family Story," illustrates how three generations of farmers have approached sustainability. It also highlights the role of scientific research in the process and includes perspectives from the Louisiana Farm Bureau on the hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico.

During the filming of the documentary, Jim Ganschow unexpectedly passed away. IFB dedicates the documentary in his memory in respect and honor of the values and demeanor he lived by and the legacy he leaves behind.

IFB debuted the documentary to its members Saturday, Dec. 3, during the opening session of its 108th Annual Meeting at



**Michael Ganschow harvests corn during a final video shoot of Illinois Farm Bureau's new documentary "Sustaining Our Future: A Farm Family Story." The documentary is centered around the Ganschow family in Bureau County as they work to implement conservation practices. (Photo by Catrina Rawson, IFB photographer)**

the Palmer House Hilton in downtown Chicago. Viewers can now watch the documentary at <https://bit.ly/3UQ05X9>.

"Farmers throughout Illinois go to great lengths to preserve our soil and protect water quality," said Lauren Lurkins, IFB director of environmental policy. "IFB staff wanted to go to those same great lengths to produce a video that showcases these efforts, the farmer spirit and the collaboration required to achieve the goals of the NLRs."

She added that the documentary "does a great job of highlighting not just the policy issue at hand, but the work IFB has done to address nutrient loss and the personal stories of our farmer members involved."

IFB's video and environmental teams partnered with farmers, county Farm Bureaus, researchers and other key stakeholders to film the documentary over the course of a year. Dozens of interviews and archival footage show the long-term commitment and continuous improvement involved in conservation.

trogen by 15% and total phosphorus by 25% into Illinois waterways by 2025. The eventual target is a 45% reduction in the loss of these nutrients to the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico.

To read more about IFB's environmental initiatives,

visit [www.ilfb.org/Environment](http://www.ilfb.org/Environment).

### About Illinois Farm Bureau

IFB is a member of the American Farm Bureau Federation, a national organization of farmers and ranchers. Founded in 1916,

IFB is a non-profit, membership organization directed by farmers who join through their county Farm Bureau. IFB has a total membership of more than 366,043 and a farmer membership of 76,527. IFB represents three out of four Illinois farmers.



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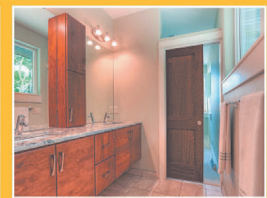
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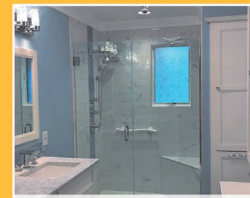
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