

THE FARMER'S REPORT

The Mendota Reporter

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Wednesday, March 30, 2022



SVCC gets \$5,000 from SVACC Agribusiness Committee

DIXON – Sauk Valley Community College received \$5,000 from the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce Agribusiness Committee for the Ag program. The contribution will be used toward precision ag projects, including the purchasing of a greenhouse.

“Since the start of SVCC’s Ag program five years ago, community support has been tremendous. We sincerely appreciate SVACC’s generous gift as we look to make precision ag a key component of our overall Ag Production Technology program. Our first precision ag course will start this coming fall,

so these funds will help us add the necessary technologies as we transition to precision ag practices,” said Josh West, the Dean of Business, Career, and Technical Programs.

SVCC’s precision ag course has been added to the course catalog for Fall 2022. Registration for Summer and Fall 2022 classes opens on April 6 for new students. Please call 815-835-6354 or visit svcc.edu/schedule to make an appointment with an advisor to register for classes.

For more information on SVCC’s Ag program, email kevin.m.larsen@svcc.edu.



Sauk Valley Community College received \$5,000 from the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce Agribusiness Committee for the Ag program to be used toward precision ag projects, including the purchasing of a greenhouse.

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PRI scientists provide winter soil conditions and an insect pest forecast for Illinois

CHAMPAIGN – Near-average winter soil and air temperatures are an indication that crop insect pests may have survived the cold in Illinois, according to scientists Jennie Atkins and Kelly Estes at the Prairie Research Institute (PRI) at the University of Illinois.

Four-inch soil temperatures under bare soil averaged 36 degrees from December through February, 1 degree above the long-term average. Regional temperatures ranged from 34 degrees in the north to 40 degrees in southern Illinois.

However, soil temperatures fluctuated greatly throughout the season, Atkins said. Warmer weather in December led to 4-inch bare soil temperatures that were 4 degrees higher than normal, averaging 41 degrees for the month. Even the monthly lows were above freezing for most of the state.

Colder weather in January caused 4-inch bare soil temperatures to fall 9 degrees to an average of 33 degrees, 1 degree below normal. The lack of snow to insulate soils, especially in central and southern Illinois, caused temperatures to fall as low as 15 degrees.

Increased snow cover in February for most of the state helped to shield soils from the coldest weather. Bare soil temperatures averaged 34 degrees for the month, 1 degree below normal. Yet the daily lows were higher than previously, falling to only 24 degrees, while daily highs reached into the 50s.

"Given the averages we experienced this past winter, we expect little effects of winter temperatures on overwintering field crop insect pest populations."

–Kelly Estes, PRI

Temperatures were rising as the state entered March. After the first week, 4-inch bare soil temperature averages were in the mid-40s with highs in southern Illinois in the 60s.

The temperature averages bode well for insect survival over the winter. Insects not only overwinter in different life stages, but also in different locations. Some overwinter in the soil, while others spend the winter months in leaf debris, grass, or even under tree bark.

"A few different factors can affect insect survivability during the winter months: dramatic temperature swings, snow cover, and even soil moisture. Given the averages we experienced this past winter, we expect little effects of winter temperatures on overwintering field crop insect pest populations," said Estes.

Don't rule out the potential impact of spring weather, though. It is important to remember that what happens in April and May weather can also have an impact on insect populations heading into the growing season, especially if we see a wet spring or a late cold snap.

Farm Progress announces extension to Farm Progress Show Site in Decatur

□ *Show grounds locked in for future world-class ag events*

ST. CHARLES – Farm Progress is excited to announce its extended contract with Brush College, LLC, confirming Farm Progress Show's biennial location in Progress City USA at Richland Community College in Decatur. The contract enables Farm Progress to continue carrying out its mission to provide world-class ag experiences in both Illinois and Iowa for decades to come.

"Since being selected in 2005 as the first permanent site to host the Farm Progress Show, the relationship between Richland Community College [owner of Brush College LLC] and Farm Progress has grown into a great partnership opening tremendous opportunities for the Decatur region and the companies participating in the Show. We look forward to hosting the future shows," said Greg Florian, Vice President of Finance and Administration at Richland Community College.

The first show at this world-class site was held in 2005 and since then has continued to grow. In 2007, paved roads were added followed by three expansions of the exhibit field over the course of nine shows. The Farm Progress Show alternates between its two long-term locations in Decatur and Boone, Iowa. Both show sites have carefully designed and developed infrastructures, offering convenience for exhibitors and show visitors.

Don Tourte, SVP of Sales & Events for Farm

Progress, expressed gratitude for the Decatur community's support while addressing the core mission of the Farm Progress Show, saying, "We're delighted to retain our location in Decatur and our partnership with Brush College to bring together the agricultural community."

He continued, "By keeping our deep roots in both Illinois and Iowa, it's an opportunity for us to continue our legacy and support of the industry."

Today, the Farm Progress Show is just one of many world-class agricultural events hosted by Farm Progress. Husker Harvest Days, located in Grand Island, Neb., is the world's largest irrigated farm show. Additionally, New York Farm Show, hosted in Syracuse, N.Y., proudly stands as the largest farm show in the Northeast.

This year's Farm Progress Show will take place from Aug. 30 to Sept. 1 in Boone, Iowa. For more information, please visit: farmprogressshow.com

About Farm Progress

As part of Informa Markets, Farm Progress is the largest, most diversified agriculture information

business in North America. Through a robust network of live events, digital products, marketing services, broadcasting, and publications, Farm Progress enables farmers, growers, and ranchers to connect and do business. It serves 80% of the 2 million farms and ranches in the U.S., and an estimated 85% of the nation's annual agricultural gross domestic product. Visit our website at <https://Marketing.FarmProgress.com>.

About Progress City USA

Progress City USA, located adjacent to Richland Community College in Decatur, is a state-of-the-art open air convention center built in conjunction with numerous local, state, and federal partnerships. As a division of Richland Community College, Progress City USA serves both the Greater Decatur community as well as the needs of many regional and national organizations.

The site, which comprises over 300 acres, was designed and built in 305 days as the semi-permanent home to the Farm Progress Show as well as various multi-purpose events.

FDA launches Agricultural Water Assessment Builder

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released a new user-friendly online Agricultural Water Assessment Builder to help farms understand the proposed requirements for an agricultural water assessment in the Agricultural Water Proposed Rule. Use of the tool is optional.

If finalized, the proposed rule would require farms to conduct systems-based agricultural water assessments to determine and guide appropriate measures to minimize potential risks associated with pre-harvest agricultural water. The assessment would include an evaluation of the water

system, agricultural water use practices, crop characteristics, environmental conditions, potential impacts on source water by activities conducted on adjacent and nearby land, and other relevant factors, such as the results of optional testing. Covered farms would be required to conduct pre-harvest agricultural water assessments annually, and whenever a significant change occurs that affects the likelihood that a known or reasonably foreseeable hazard will be introduced into or onto produce or food contact surfaces.

The Agricultural Water Assessment Builder prompts users to answer questions and/or fill in in-

formation specific to their farms. Information entered into the tool is not shared with the FDA and will not be saved. However, users have the opportunity save or print the information they provide to their local computers.

This user-friendly tool incorporates information from the Agricultural Water Proposed Rule, the Final Qualitative Assessment of Risk to Public Health from On-Farm Contamination of Produce, and the 2015 Produce Safety Final Rule.

The development of this tool is consistent with FDA objectives in the New Era of Smarter Food Safety Blueprint to look for smarter tools and approaches for food safety.

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IDOA accepting Specialty Crop Block Grant proposals

SPRINGFIELD – In an effort to expand the availability of fresh, locally-grown produce and strengthen the competitiveness of the state's specialty crop industry, the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) plans to distribute more than \$586,000 over a three-year period thanks to funding allocated in the Specialty Crop Block Grant program in the federal Farm Bill.

Application for grant funding is available on the Illinois Department of Agriculture website and must be returned to the Department by 4 p.m. on Friday, April 15. To be eligible for funding, all projects must begin in calendar year 2023.

Eligible applicants include non-profit organizations, local and government entities, trade and commodity associations, public and private colleges/universities. Illinois encourages applications that benefit smaller farms and ranches, new and beginning farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged producers, veteran producers, and/or underserved communities.

To encourage further expansion of this industry, and to take full advan-

tage of the allocated federal funds, the Department invites the development of projects pertaining to the following issues affecting the specialty crop industry:

- Enhancing food safety.
- Improving the capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act, for example, by developing "Good Agricultural Practices," "Good Handling Practices," "Good Manufacturing Practices," and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems for small farmers, packers and processors.
- Investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes.
- Supporting the growth of organic specialty crops.
- Developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops.
- Improving pest and disease control.
- Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops.
- Improving efficiency and reducing

costs of distribution systems.

Projects that benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual are ineligible. Farmer's markets, roadside stands and community-sponsored agriculture programs should consider submitting proposals to the USDA's Farmers' Market and Local Food Promotion Program.

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service defines specialty crops as "fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture)." There are more than 3,200 producers devoting more than 90,000 acres of Illinois farmland to specialty crops production, creating nearly \$472 million in annual sales for Illinois farmers. Nationally, Illinois ranks first for its pumpkin and horseradish production in the top ten in the production of asparagus, cauliflower, fresh-cut herbs, peas, mustard greens, and lima beans.

Proposal packets and additional information about the program can be found online at the Department's website and/or by contacting AGR. ISCBG@illinois.gov.



Farm prices across Illinois have increased significantly over the past year due to heavy inflation.

Illinois farmers feeling pinch of rising costs

By ANDREW HENSEL
The Center Square

SPRINGFIELD – Farming prices across the country are rising due to inflation and Illinois farmers are feeling the repercussions.

Farm prices across Illinois have increased significantly over the past year due to heavy inflation. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the Consumer Price index, a leading marker of inflation, rose 7.9% in the past 12 months. In some areas, the cost of fertilizer has increased by 500%.

Julie Stephens, manager for the Illinois Farm Bureau's Effingham division, said that farmers are feeling inflation in many different ways.

"Whether it be the increased costs of fertilizer or fuel has gone up as well, and that is beginning to affect their costs to produce their crops this year," Stephens said.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics also reported that the food price index rose 8.6% over the past 12 months, the largest 12-month spike since April 1981.

Due to these high costs, farmers are losing money due to the manufacturers having the final say on pricing.

"The manufacturer is not going to take a hit person-

ally," Stephens said. "They will increase their costs to make up for any additional input of costs they face."

The manufacturer setting the price will also hurt farmers' bottom lines.

"A drastic increase in the price of fertilizer for farmers, ultimately farmers are price takers and not price makers," Stephens said. "This will definitely be going to affect and impact negatively their bottom lines."

Agricultural economists at the University of Illinois recently updated crop budgets to reflect higher fertilizer prices as well as the changing price of corn and soybeans, which are the state's two main crops.

U of I economists anticipate per-acre fertilizer costs will be about \$100 an acre higher for corn and \$50 an acre higher for soybeans than last year, which is forcing farmers to use just what they need to try and cut costs.

"As we said, those fertilizers are not free, so we have seen farmers only apply the fertilizer that is needed for their fields," Stephens said.

Stephens also said that she does not expect these prices to return to normal for some time.

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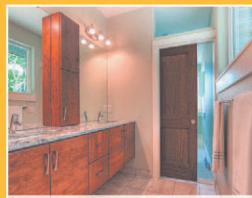
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Rural, urban farmers find common ground in passion for food

By KATIE ZELECHOWSKI
Illinois Farm Bureau

Increasing access to fresh, locally sourced food and connecting families with how it's grown are priorities for Chicago-based companies Sugar Beet Food Co-op and Herban Produce. During a recent farm-to-fork tour, 25 farmers from rural Illinois learned about the unique challenges both businesses face in the city.

The Taste of Illinois on Location event took place in December, as part of Illinois Farm Bureau's Annual Meeting, and highlighted similarities between different types of food production and shared values within agriculture across the state.

Sugar Beet Food Co-op, located in Oak Park, is a food hub created by area residents who needed a source of local, sustainable and healthy foods in their neighborhood. After four years of planning, the grocery opened in 2016.

"Generally, grocery stores are owned by corporations and those are people that are not in the community. Our store is actually owned by consumers, community members, people in the immediate area and producers," said Regina Milkovich, education and community outreach coordinator for the co-op.

As a cooperative, the store is specifically designed to meet the needs and interests of its more than 2,400 owner members. Cost sharing efforts between produce, meat and prepackaged food departments, as well as the café, absorb premiums on expensive products to lower the overall cost to shoppers.

"We have a lot of people to feed and only so many grocery stores that are owned by a few corporations," Milkovich said.



"We've really pieced together a sustainable business plan to make this a sustainable farm that will be here for decades to come" said Alicia Nesbary-Moore, co-owner of Herban Produce on Chicago's West Side. The farm grows fresh vegetables, such as specialty varieties of lettuce and greens, in a greenhouse on the two-acre property. (Photo by Katie Zelechowski)

"There's a great chance to set a standard of what people really want in a grocery store and (show them) that they can be involved in the process."

An extensive bulk aisle also helps consumers save, while providing new opportunities for local farmers and producers to sell products.

"It's really beneficial to shopping because a lot of pricing is contained in the packaging – the hidden cost of food," she said. "If you remove that out of the situation, we're able to price things specifically for the retail price of food."

Individual packaging can account for as much as 20% of the end product,

Milkovich said.

Phil Wright raises cattle in Paris, Ill., and worked as a grain buyer for 35 years. After retiring five years ago, he started a bread-making business and sells his creations locally. Visiting the urban market reminded Wright of food insecurity in his hometown, where a fire recently destroyed the town's only grocery.

"This experience to me proves that we all need to work together to create a sustainable food supply," he said. "I don't care if I'm from a small town in the middle of a cornfield in central Illinois, or in the middle of Chicago; we've got to work together."

on their tables.

"We're in East Garfield Park, so it's traditionally a Black neighborhood," Nesbary-Moore said. "(The farm) really started to create this narrative and conversation (about food) within the community."

The farm originally started as a nonprofit and transitioned to a for-profit business on two acres (or 15 city blocks) in 2020. The business grows 50 types of vegetables and fruits in a hydroponic greenhouse and 100 raised, outdoor garden beds. Produce is sold to area restaurants and consumers.

A community supported agriculture (CSA) program offers subscriptions to community members who want to purchase fresh produce grown on the farm. Unlike traditional CSA models, where customers pay monthly or seasonal fees to finance the farm for a season upfront, Herban Produce subscriptions are made weekly.

The budget-friendly approach makes food boxes more affordable and accessible to residents.

An on-site event space also offers a place for peo-

ple to take urban gardening classes focused on growing plants in small spaces like windowsills and patios. The farm also partners with other organizations to teach kids and young adults about farming.

"It's an eye-opening experience for a lot of the youth because they're exposed to agriculture right in their city," Nesbary-Moore said. "They're amazed that they're able to farm right in the middle of the city."

Educational opportunities create advocates for urban ag and empower others to join in finding solutions that work. Milkovich said big change can happen when people work together.

"Consumers can make better choices for themselves, and they don't have to wait for a development to come into their community," Milkovich said. "They can start fundraising and pursuing a co-op in their town that's custom to what they need."

(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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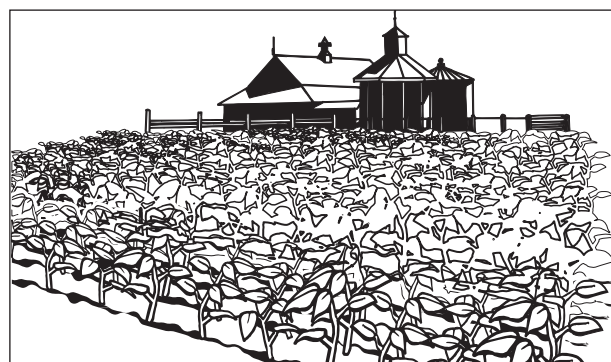
USDA to gather data about farm labor

SPRINGFIELD – USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will conduct its biannual Agricultural Labor Survey in April. The survey will collect information about hired labor from 546 Illinois farmers and ranchers. NASS will publish survey results May 25 in the Farm Labor report available on the NASS website.

In the survey, NASS asks producers to answer a variety of questions about hired farm labor on their operations, including total

number of hired farm workers, the total hours worked, and total wages paid for the weeks of Jan. 9-15 and April 10-16. Survey participants can respond online at accounts.usda.gov or by mail.

"Agricultural labor data are critical in helping producers when hiring workers and estimating expenses," said Mark Schleusener, NASS's Illinois State Statistician. "The data that farm operators provide through NASS's Agricultural Labor Survey also allow federal policymakers to base farm



labor policies on accurate information."

USDA and the U.S. Department of Labor use the results of this survey to estimate the demand for and availability of seasonal agricultural workers, establish minimum wage rates for agricultural workers, administer farm labor recruitment and placement service programs, and assist legislators in determining labor policies.

"By asking about two separate time periods each time we collect data during the year, we are able to publish biannual data and capture seasonal variation," said Schleusener. "This approach reduces the number of times we survey farms, while ensuring that

accurate and timely data are available."

All previous Farm Labor publications are available on the NASS website at www.nass.usda.gov. For more information on NASS surveys and reports, call the NASS Heartland Regional Office at (800) 551-1014.

Participants can visit youtu.be/6oWSOjGTQzU for further instructions on completing the survey.

Producers responding online will now use NASS's new Respondent Portal. On the portal, producers can complete their surveys, see previously reported data, access data visualizations and reports of interest, link to other USDA agencies, get a local weather update and more.

Illinois soybean farmers elected to USSEC executive positions

BLOOMINGTON – Two Illinois soybean farmer leaders were elected to executive leadership positions with the United States Soybean Export Council (USSEC) during Commodity Classic in New Orleans. Doug Winter of Mill Shoals was elected Chairman of the USSEC Executive committee, and Stan Born of Mahomet was elected Vice Chairman of the USSEC Executive committee.

USSEC's board is comprised of 15 members representing various stakeholders from the U.S. Soy industry. Four members are appointed from the American Soybean Association (ASA), four members are appointed from the United Soybean Board (USB), and seven sub-class seats are elected representing industry, state, and trade organizations.

A fifth-generation farmer, Winter grows soybeans, corn, and wheat on 3200 acres. "I am very proud to continue representing Illinois and U.S. soybean farmers as we work to increase U.S. Soy's reach and market share worldwide," says Winter. "We look forward, with high energy and a passion, to creating and maintaining relationships with our global customers who rely on U.S. soy products."

The momentum we are developing as a Council is second to none," said newly elected Born. "USSEC works hard to create preference for U.S. Soy in markets all around the world. Our members benefit from the capability of the best team in the industry. USSEC represents our products and enables customers to see for themselves how U.S. Soy is their best value option. I'm honored to serve with this team."

USSEC members represent the soy supply chain including U.S. Soy farmers, processors, commodity shippers, merchandisers, allied agribusinesses, and agricultural organizations. USSEC is funded by the U.S. soybean checkoff, USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) matching funds, and industry. The appointments will run through the 2022/2023 year.

The Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) checkoff and membership programs represent more than 43,000 soybean farmers in Illinois. The checkoff funds market development and utilization efforts while the membership program supports the government relations interests of Illinois soybean farmers at the local, state, and national level, through the Illinois Soybean Growers (ISG). ISA upholds the interests of Illinois soybean producers through promotion, advocacy, and education with the vision of becoming a market leader in sustainable soybean production and profitability. For more information, visit the website www.ilsoy.org and ilsoygrowers.com.

A black and white advertisement for a Walker B23i riding mower. The top left features the Walker logo (a circle with 'W' and 'M') and the text "WALKER B23i out front mowing" and "walkermowers.com". The main image shows a man in a cap and work clothes sitting on the mower, which is in a field. The bottom of the ad features the "VAESSEN" logo in a large, stylized font, followed by "IMPLEMENT REPAIR" and the address "542 US RT. 52 N. SUBLETTE, IL • 815-849-9010".

A black and white advertisement for the LaSalle County Farm Bureau. It features a silhouette of the state of Illinois with a star over LaSalle County. The text reads "LaSalle County Farm Bureau®" and a quote: "Representing agriculture and our member families through information and legislation to improve financial stability and quality of life." Below this is the address "4201 N. Columbus Dr. Ottawa, IL 61350" and the phone number "Phone: 815-433-0371". At the bottom is the website "www.lcfb.org".



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Cover crops protect soil between growing seasons

By JOANIE STIERS
Illinois Farm Bureau
Partners Contributor

After farmer Lucas Roney spends the fall season gathering crops, he likes seeing his fields greening with new growth as he parks harvesting equipment in the shed.

“As farmers, we always like to see things growing,” said Roney, who grows corn and soybeans with his family in Moultrie County. “Whenever you can look out there in the winter and see there are plants growing in the field, it makes you feel good about what you are doing. You feel like you’re keeping the soil alive.”

They’ve got it covered

Throughout the Illinois landscape, more and more farmers have adopted the use of cover crops, a ground cover planted but not harvested in the traditional sense. Instead, a cover crop’s job is to hold soil in place, keep the soil active, store nutrients, retain moisture and improve the soil structure. (Some cover crops are harvested for forage, such as oats and turnips used for feeding cattle.)

Environmental benefits abound, including reduction of both soil erosion and nutrient loss into rivers and streams. By spring, farmers terminate the cover crop and plant corn and soybeans directly into the residual blanket that naturally gives yield-robbing weeds less space to grow.

An unharvested benefit

An early adopter of cover crops, Livingston County farmer Matt Boucher remembers neighbors asking if he was growing hay or planned to harvest a field of rye before planting it to soybeans.



Matt Boucher uses a soil compaction tester in the fields where he planted cover crops. (Photo by Jeff Adkins, Farm Flavor Media)

“We’ve gone from a straight single product to 12- to 15-way mixes of cover crop varieties, and we’ve seen good results in both their various situations.”

—Matt Boucher, Livingston County

Instead, he planted right into the green cover on his field, contrary to the most popular practice of planting into a field considered “clean,” or free of growth. Today, his farm primarily uses a drill to sow cover crops on about 70% of the family’s farmland. He also has hired aerial application, which involves showering cover crop seed above standing corn or soybeans just before fall harvest to grow by late fall. Sometimes, fertilizer-spreading trucks have broadcasted cover crop seed across a harvested field.

Boucher’s most common cover crop choices include annual rye, cereal rye, buckwheat or radish (not the type for eating, rather a deep-rooted variety that breaks up compacted soil).

“We’ve gone from a straight single product to 12- to 15-way mixes of cover crop varieties, and we’ve seen good results in both their various situations,” said Boucher, who grows corn, soybeans and wheat with his family.

Boucher doesn’t measure the results of cover crops in bushels or the boost to his corn and soybean production. Instead, his family sets environmental goals for the cover crops to accomplish, such as reduced erosion, weed control, nitrogen naturally produced from a legume cover crop or even “tillage.” He finds that cover crops and their various root systems loosen the soil and produce a suitable seedbed without relying solely on means of mechanical tillage.

Barriers to adoption

Cover crop adopters recognize the investment in management, time and expense creates the largest barrier to wider adoption.

Namely, cover crops do not generate income for farmers. Cash crops like corn and soybeans do, and farmers fear risking the profitability that puts food on their tables.

“We are putting something out in the field that isn’t going to be harvested, that we are not necessarily going to get a direct financial result from year one,” Boucher said. “It can be a challenge for some farmers to see the return on their investment.”

After about seven years of cover crops, his family now sees improvements in the soil structure. Boucher



Cereal rye cover crops grow over recently harvested corn. (Photo by Jeff Adkins, Farm Flavor Media)

shares these results and cover crop tips on the farm’s Facebook page and through the family’s seed company, Potential Ag. In addition to corn and soybean seed, Boucher also sells seed for cover crops and works with farmer customers who want to learn more about this trending conservation practice.

Roney’s cover crop practices are enrolled in the Conservation Stewardship Program, a U.S. Department of Agriculture initiative that helps with its costs. He also provides updates on his

cover crops in reports for the Illinois Farm Bureau Crop-Watchers® 2.0 program on FarmWeekNow.com, which provides farmers statewide with internet-based regional crop updates during the growing season.

“I really think there is going to be increased adoption in cover crops,” Roney said.

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