

*Agriculture*

# OUTLOOK

**The Mendota Reporter**  
**Wednesday, March 11, 2020**





# AG OUTLOOK '20

## New Innovation Initiative announced for USDA

WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue recently announced the Agriculture Innovation Agenda, a department-wide initiative to align resources, programs, and research to position American agriculture to better meet future global demands. Specifically, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will stimulate innovation so that American agriculture can achieve the goal of increasing production by 40 percent while cutting the environmental footprint of U.S. agriculture in half by 2050.



challenge facing us: to meet future food, fiber, fuel, and feed demands with finite resources. USDA's Agriculture Innovation Agenda is our opportunity to define American agriculture's role to feed everyone and do right as a key player in the solution to this challenge," said Secretary Perdue. "This agenda is a strategic, department-wide effort

to better align USDA's resources, programs, and research to provide farmers with the tools they need to be successful.

"We are also continually mindful of the need for America's agriculture industry to be environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable to maintain our position as a leader in the global effort to meet demand. We are committed as ever to the environmental sustainability and continued success, of America's farmers, ranchers, foresters, and producers."

### Background

Secretary Perdue said the first component of the Ag Innovation Agenda is to develop a U.S. ag-innovation strategy that aligns and synchronizes public and private sector research. The second component is to align the work of our customer-facing agencies and integrate innovative technologies and practices into USDA programs. The third component is to conduct a review of USDA productivity and conservation data. USDA already closely tracks data on yield, but on the environmental side, there's some catching up to do. Finally, USDA has set benchmarks to hold us accountable. These targets will help measure progress toward meeting the food, fiber, fuel, feed, and climate demands of the future. Some of the benchmarks include:

- Food loss and waste: Advance our work toward the United States' goal to reduce food loss and waste by 50 percent in the United States by the year 2030.
- Carbon Sequestration and Greenhouse Gas: Enhance carbon sequestration through soil health and forestry, leverage the agricultural sector's renewable energy benefits for the economy, and capitalize on innovative technologies and practices to achieve net reduction of the agricultural sector's current carbon footprint by 2050 without regulatory overreach.
- Water Quality: Reduce nutrient loss by 30 percent nationally by 2050.
- Renewable Energy: We can increase the production of renewable energy feedstocks and set a goal to increase biofuel production efficiency and competitiveness to achieve market-driven blend rates of 15% of transportation fuels in 2030 and 30% of transportation fuels by 2050.



### From days gone by

A broken down windmill that once played a vital role on an area farm now sits idle on the deserted landscape that surrounds it. (Reporter photo)



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## Illinois EQIP application deadlines set

CHAMPAIGN – Look to the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for conservation assistance on agricultural and forestland. Ivan Dozier, Illinois NRCS State Conservationist explains, “NRCS has a long history of conservation planning with agricultural producers and forestry managers. We have the technical knowledge to develop a conservation plan for your resource concerns and NRCS has conservation programs that are available to implement that plan.”

The primary financial assistance program is the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural and forestland producers. To participate, producers can apply for EQIP throughout the year; however, Illinois NRCS has established two application deadlines for March 20, 2020 and April 17, 2020. Producers are encouraged to submit applications by one of the application deadlines if they are interested in the program.

With EQIP, producers can successfully address natural resource issues on their farm. Some EQIP activities include installing structures to address gully erosion, improving pastureland diversity by inter-seeding, and improving soil health by increasing organic matter with cover crops. In addition to conservation practices, EQIP funds the development of a plan, such as Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs), Grazing Plans, Drainage Water Management Plans, and more.

Producers interested in EQIP should submit a signed application (NRCS-CPA-1200 form) to their local NRCS field office. Applications submitted by March 20, 2020 and April 17, 2020 will be evaluated by NRCS staff for the funding period submitted.

Applicants must meet program eligibility requirements to participate in EQIP. Local NRCS field office staff will work with applicants to assess the land and answer ranking questions. If an application is ranked high enough to be funded, the NRCS staff will work with the applicant to develop a contract.

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program available for agricultural producers and forestry producers. Through EQIP, NRCS will provide financial and technical assistance to install conservation practices. For information on EQIP, contact the local NRCS field office or visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/il/programs/financial/eqip/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/il/programs/financial/eqip/)



### Feeding time

A herd of cattle gathers around the lunch table as it enjoys outdoor dining on a sun-splashed and mild late-winter day. (Reporter photo)

## NASS urges farmers to participate in prospective plantings survey

BLOOMINGTON – Some farmers may be holding out to decide what crops they’re going to plant this spring for a variety of reasons, including weather and economic indicators.

But those contacted by USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) should still take the time to respond to the prospective plantings survey, which should have hit mailboxes at the end of February.

NASS, currently in the process of contacting about 80,000 farmers nationwide, relies solely on those farmers to generate the March 31 prospective plantings report.

“The best source of data is the farmers,” Lance Honig, NASS Crops Branch Chief, said at USDA’s Ag Outlook Forum. “The more who fill out the form, whether it be online, through the mail or by phone, the more accurate the information is going to be.”

USDA released its first baseline estimates of 2020 crop acreage at the forum. It projects U.S. plantings this season at 94 million acres of corn (up 5% from last year) and 85 million acres of soybeans (up 12% from a year ago), assuming normal weather.

Of course, a lot can change from now until planters actually hit the field, as evidenced last year when farmers declared a record 19.4 million prevented plant acres. But that doesn’t diminish the importance of the prospective plantings report.



Some farmers may be holding out to decide what crops they’re going to plant this spring.

“The report gives us the first look at what acreage might look like in 2020 and what farmers’ intentions are at that point,” Honig said. “We fully recognize plans could change. But, quite frankly, this report could be a factor farmers look at to see if they want to change their plans.”

NASS procedures were questioned last year due to extreme acreage and yield uncertainty caused by a bevy of weather issues. Illinois Farm Bureau worked with the agency to ensure the best procedures are in place.

“Many farmers and out-

side analysts felt that the USDA estimates did not reflect the poor planting conditions that had been expected to reduce the prospects for such a big crop,” said Robert Johansson, USDA chief economist.

“Of course, what the estimates did reflect was what farmers were saying on the NASS surveys coupled with satellite information as well as data from the Farm Service Agency and the Risk Management Agency.”

In the end, the NASS corn crop forecast in August was less than a 5% deviation from

the final estimate for the fifth straight year. The highest deviation between those two estimates in the last 25 years occurred in 1995 when the August corn crop forecast missed the final mark by more than 7.5%.

“2019 was a challenging year for everyone involved. But extreme weather conditions occur somewhere just about every year,” Honig said. “Our procedures are designed to account for something like that. We did have to do some re-surveys (for planting and harvest).”

Jim Angel, immediate

past Illinois state climatologist, doesn’t foresee a repeat of last year’s extreme weather conditions despite the wet start to 2020.

“We’d like to think that will never happen again. No two years are exactly the same,” Angel said. “Right now, our main concern is we’ve had a very wet winter across the Midwest, so it’s kind of the same situation.”

“The thing that broke the dam last year is we had big storms in March that dumped a lot of rain and snow,” he added. “Right now, we haven’t had that, yet.”

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## Nice and neat

Rolls of hay are neatly stacked up on an area farm. Hay rolls are a compact way of storing a lot of hay, and they shed rain water better than either small or large square (rectangular) bales, if they're left outdoors without cover. (Reporter photo)

## Illinois farmers lobby against measure it says would hurt state's ethanol industry

By GREG BISHOP

The Center Square

SPRINGFIELD — The Illinois Farm Bureau is joining the Illinois Associated Builders and Contractors in opposing a measure to require prevailing wage for entry-level laborers working in refineries.

Illinois Farm Bureau President Richard Guebert said at a recent Ag Breakfast in Springfield that for agriculture to thrive in Illinois, it needs four things: "Great trade agreements" and exports, growth in the livestock industry, and "a renewable fuel industry that works well."

"[Ethanol] provides another opportunity for us to market the goods that we so well raise here in this state and that's corn or soybeans made into biodiesel," Guebert said.

He urged the room full of farmers to oppose Senate Bill 1407. He said it would limit future markets for corn and soybeans.

"Forty-two percent of Illinois corn goes through



Illinois Farm Bureau President Richard Guebert talks about Senate Bill 1407 at a recent Ag Breakfast in Springfield. (Photo by Greg Bishop, The Center Square)

an ethanol plant. Twenty percent of the distillers' grains are fed to livestock in the state of Illinois," Guebert said.

The builder's group previously said Senate Bill 1407 will hurt its apprenticeship programs.

One of the co-sponsors of the bill in the Senate, state Sen. Ram Villivalam, D-Chicago, said he wanted to see how negotiations on the bill go in the House.

"I would like to look at the information again on what's been taking place in

the House in terms of negotiations," Villivalam said.

The measure is up for final passage in the House. If it's amended there, it would go back to the Senate for concurrence.

Gov. J.B. Pritzker hasn't taken a position on the bill.

"There's a negotiation discussion going on," Pritzker said. "I know because I've heard a little bit of it between Democratic leaders and Republican leaders so we'll have to see how that ends up, but at this point, I know that they're lobbying on their position but we'll see if they're able to reach some sort of agreement."



Former state Rep. Jerry Costello, left, was appointed by Gov. JB Pritzker as the next director of the Illinois Department of Agriculture. (Photo contributed)

## Former state Rep. Costello is new Illinois ag director

By BEN ORNER

Capitol News Illinois

SPRINGFIELD — Gov. JB Pritzker recently appointed former state Rep. Jerry Costello II as the next director of the Illinois Department of Agriculture.

Costello, a Democrat from southern Illinois, served nearly eight years in the General Assembly from 2011 to 2019. During that time, he chaired the House Agriculture and Conservation Committee and was a member of the House Environment Committee.

He also served on the Pritzker administration's agriculture transition committee after the governor was elected in 2018.

Costello, 51, grew up in Belleville and spent time on a small farm in southern Illinois' Franklin County, where his family produced crops and raised cattle.

"With farming playing an important role in his family's history and a career of public service, there's no better person to lead the Illinois Department of Agriculture at this time than Jerry Costello," Pritzker said.

Costello left the Legislature last May to become the director of law enforcement for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

"I'm confident that Jerry's deep experience will bring a steady hand to the department and continue the impressive growth of this vital industry," Pritzker said.

Costello lives with his wife and three children in Smithton, outside St. Louis.

"I'm honored to continue serving the people of Illinois and excited to take the helm at the department I once oversaw in the state legislature," Costello said.

"As a leading producer of soybeans, corn and swine, Illinois is home to the most dedicated farmers in the world, and I look forward to partnering with them to grow our state's agricultural economy," he said.

Illinois Farm Bureau President Richard Guebert Jr. applauded Pritzker's decision.

"Jerry Costello has a proven record in supporting agriculture," Guebert said. "In his time serving in the General Assembly, he not only supported agriculture by his votes on key legislation important to agriculture, but he also championed many supportive efforts."

Upon taking the oath of office on Monday, March 2, Costello will be paid an annual salary of \$156,942, according to the governor's official appointment order.

After graduating from Southern Illinois University, Costello joined the U.S. Army's famed 82nd Airborne Division and saw combat in Operation Desert Storm. After returning home, he became a police officer and later an assistant chief of police.

The agriculture department has been without a permanent leader since mid-January, when Director John Sullivan resigned at Pritzker's request.

A former state senator who started at the ag department when Pritzker became governor in 2019, Sullivan was ousted for failing to disclose the contents of a 2012 email that pointed to the possible cover-up of a "rape in Champaign" and "ghost workers" in Gov. Pat Quinn's administration.

In an interview with the Rushville Times, Sullivan said he didn't fully read the email at the time, but he took "full responsibility."

"I know in my mind and my heart that I did not read all of that email," Sullivan told the Times. "If I had seen an email that talked about a rape in Champaign, I would have turned it over."

Costello will replace interim director Jeremy Flynn, who was Sullivan's chief of staff. He will be considered "acting" until he is confirmed by a vote in the Illinois Senate.

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## Hanging out

Three horses step outside their barn and soak in the bright sunshine and mild temperature of a recent spring-like day. (Reporter photo)

## Still time to complete Census of Agriculture Special Study

WASHINGTON, D.C. – United States Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) continues to collect responses to the 2019 Organic Survey and the 2019 Census of Horticultural Specialties, both once-every-five-year special studies to the 2017 Census of Agriculture. Response windows are open through March. NASS encourages the producers who received these questionnaires to respond online, by mail, or telephone.

"We are extending the deadlines for response since we still have a steady stream of completed questionnaires coming in," said NASS Administrator Hubert Hamer. "NASS produces the most comprehensive agricultural data about U.S. agriculture. Our record of accuracy is why NASS data continue to be used throughout the industry. The better the response, the stronger the data. Responding to NASS surveys and censuses means contributing to the future."

The resulting data will be used by commodity associations, agribusinesses, policymakers, researchers, Extension, USDA agencies, and more.

Producers who did not respond by the original deadline will receive a second questionnaire this month. NASS may also follow-up by phone or farm visit to ensure that all producers have the opportunity to be counted in these data. Federal law requires NASS to keep all individual information confidential. Results for the 2019 Organic Survey and the 2019 Census of Horticultural Specialties will be available this October and December, respectively.

For more information, visit [www.nass.usda.gov/go/organic](http://www.nass.usda.gov/go/organic) or [www.nass.usda.gov/go/hort](http://www.nass.usda.gov/go/hort). For assistance, call toll-free (888) 424-7828.

## Farm life is uncontrollable: Know the warning signs of stress

DECATUR – On a farm, most pressures are constant and uncontrollable. Machinery breaks, weather delays work and commodity prices fluctuate. The work is isolating and stressful, which puts farmers at risk for severe and ongoing anxiety. Suicide rates are higher for farmers than any other occupation, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

"We know it's a problem in the population, and we know access to mental health care is not always available in rural areas," said Josie Rudolph, assistant professor of agricultural and biological engineering at University of Illinois. Rudolph notes, from a previous study she conducted, that up to 60% of young farmers and ranchers reported at least mild symptoms of depression and 70% reported at least mild symptoms of anxiety.

The agricultural landscape is also changing rapidly leading to a lot of uncertainty. Farmers are aging – 62% of Illinois farmers were 55 or older, according to the USDA 2017 Census of Agriculture. They also have more intense business management responsibilities and they face continued pressure to keep up with technological and production advances. Add

to this list everyday family issues, health concerns and financial worries – and it is no wonder the National Safety Council ranked agriculture as one of the top two most hazardous occupations.

"Between prices and trade wars, this has been an extremely stressful year for Illinois farmers," said Illinois Extension Local Foods and Small Farms Educator Doug Gucker.

Chronic stress can take a huge toll on a person's physical and mental health. It can lead to depression, anxiety and even suicidal thoughts or action. Prolonged stress diminishes problem-solving abilities. And on a farm, poor decision-making can lead to injury.

"Current research in brain health indicates that exposure to prolonged stress can cause long-term changes in the brain including brain structure and function, which could lead to poor emotional regulation and impaired thinking," said Karla Belzer, University of Illinois Extension Family Life Educator.

Some symptoms of stress include:

- Physical – Muscle aches, frequent headaches, frequent upset stomach and fatigue.
- Behavioral – Difficulty sleeping, irritability and easy to anger, inability to



Machinery breaks, weather delays and commodity price fluctuations are some of the uncontrollable aspects of farm life that can put farmers at risk for severe and ongoing anxiety.

focus, difficulty making decisions and increased use of alcohol/drugs.

- Emotional – Feelings of anxiety, panic, frustration, impatience, restlessness, isolation, hopelessness and discouragement.
- Relationship – Communication difficulties and maybe conflict with family members and friends, strained interactions, avoidance of others and verbal or physical outbreaks.

Everyone handles pressure and copes with stress differently. Feelings of emotional distress, anxiety, depression, anger, suicidal

thoughts, and substance abuse are all potential warning signs. Sometimes people aren't aware of the warning signs, some ignore them, and some have become so accustomed to them that they don't realize the danger they are in. Others may be concerned about mental health stigmas.

People in rural communities are willing to help others, but rarely ask for favors or seek professional help. It is not always easy or comfortable to ask someone how someone is doing in stressful times, but more often than not, people will

feel relieved that someone noticed, that someone cares. This might be all it takes. A recent study at U of I found that mental health information in rural areas is best delivered face-to-face, from family and friends.

"Farmers want information from their innermost circle," Rudolph said. "Equipping those people with as much information as possible to deal with the stress and subsequent mental health issues of our farmers is important. These results really help us inform dissemination and creation of future resources."

## Land Values Conference set for March 19 in Bloomington

BLOOMINGTON – The current state of land values and farmland lease trends across Illinois will be the highlight of the 2020 Illinois Land Values Conference, which will be held at the DoubleTree by Hilton in Bloomington on Thursday, March 19. The event is sponsored by the Illinois Society of Professional Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers.

"As we begin 2020, the farmland values seem to be holding firm as farmland owners and investors continue to seek the safety and security of this tightly held asset class," said David Klein, AFM, ALC, First Mid Ag Services, Bloomington, and overall chair of the 2020 Illinois Farmland Values Survey and Conference. He

added that cash rental rates seem to be holding steady across the entire state as well with expectations this trend will continue into 2021.

The results of the complete annual survey among ISPFMRA members and others in the field will be discussed at the conference. A complimentary copy of the 2020 Illinois Land Values and Lease Trends Report will be provided to everyone registering and attending the conference.

Also on the agenda that day will be Kevin Van Trump, author of the Van Trump Report. He will address the assembly with a special presentation "Navigating the Future of Agriculture." Adding to the program will be

Dr. Bruce Sherrick, Director of TIAA Center for Farmland Research at the University of Illinois. His topic will be "Wait....what just happened? Land Values and the New Order of Ag."

Klein will be joined by Dr. Gary Schnitkey, professor, Agriculture & Consumer Economics at the University of Illinois, in presenting the overall results of the complete survey.

The program will get underway at 8:30 a.m. and should conclude at noon. Registration opens at 7:30 a.m. The cost for attending is \$70 per person for ISPFMRA and RLI members and \$85 for non-members, payable at the door.

Online registration is available at [www.ispfmra.org](http://www.ispfmra.org).



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Avoid accidents by taking preventative steps that will reduce the need to enter a grain bin.

## Take steps to prevent farm grain bin accidents this spring

DECATUR – Grain bin accidents happen quickly. In a matter of seconds, a grown man can be buried by moving grain and suffocate. Farming is one of the most dangerous occupations, according to the National Safety Council. No amount of bushels is worth a life. Illinois farmers should take time to be safe while monitoring or working with grain bins this spring.

In Illinois, most accidents involve being trapped in flowing corn, soybeans or wheat from bins, wagons or trucks. Adults can be trapped in less than five seconds and submerged in 20 seconds or less and small children can quickly be suffocated.

“Grain flowing from the bottom of a bin is like quicksand,” said Doug Gucker, Illinois Extension Local Food Systems and Small Farms Educator. “Once someone has been pulled into grain above their knees, they cannot get out by themselves

because of the pressure on their legs.”

Avoid accidents by taking preventative steps that will reduce the need to enter a grain bin. Lock entrances to grain handling areas to keep out bystanders and children. Install ladder inside bins for an emergency exit. If you must enter a bin to check storage conditions, shut off and lock out all unloading equipment and treat the bin as a potentially dangerous confined space. Enter a bin with a trained observer to assist you and wear a properly anchored lifeline.

Make sure the atmosphere in the bin is safe. Run the fan in the grain bin for several hours before attempting to go in because dust and gasses produced by out-of-condition grain can be deadly. Wear a dust filter or respirator and hearing protection.

Moldy or wet grain often clumps together on the upper layers. As you unload from

the bottom, a large air pocket can form below the surface. Use a long wooden pole to break up clumped grain from above. The weight of anyone walking on the crusted surface can cause grain to collapse.

If grain starts to flow while you are in the bin, stay near the outer wall and keep walking. Get to a bin ladder or safety rope as quickly as possible. If someone becomes trapped in grain, shut off power unloading equipment immediately. Turn on the aeration fan and call 911. For more information on grain safety, including training programs, visit [grain-safety.org](http://grain-safety.org).

The Local Food Systems and Small Farms program is a branch of University of Illinois Extension that provides research-based information about agriculture health and safety, environmentally and economically sound pest control and improving profitability and sustainability.

## The climate conversation is heating up: What can ag do?

CHICAGO – The Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) checkoff program recently hosted nearly 50 attendees to engage with industry experts around climate variability. The summit explored data around the shifting climate in Illinois over the last century, what this could mean for the future, what different industries are doing and what agriculture can do.

“Critical conversations like this help us better understand and respond to topics affecting our industry and help us remain a leader on behalf of soybean farmers throughout the state,” said Doug Schroeder, chairman of the ISA and farmer from Mahomet. “Today, we looked at how agriculture can show up and be part of the conversation. We know agriculture is part of the solution, not the problem.”

Jim Angel, retired Illinois state climatologist, shared data showing the changes climatologists have seen over the last century. In Illinois, there has been a 1.2 degree Fahrenheit increase in surface temperatures since 1895 with projections for an average of another 5 to 9 degree Fahrenheit increase by the end of this century. Looking forward, Angel sees the Midwest becoming warmer and experiencing more frequent and heavier rain events. In addition, 2020 is shaping up to be another wet year.

When questioned what the biggest contributor to carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is and the best solution, Angel stated, “There’s no one single contributor when it comes to carbon dioxide emissions. Each industry has the opportunity to decrease its carbon footprint, but agriculture has the unique opportunity to take some away. Carbon dioxide can be put back into the soil through organic matter.”

Jill Wheeler, head of sustainable productivity in North America at Syngenta, sees a growing focus on climate smart agriculture, momentum toward an ecosystem services market and corporate commitments. “We need to integrate and bridge the gap between industry and producers,” Wheeler said. “Industries have started to make sustainability commitments, but we need to make sure we can meet those commitments first. Farmers are an important part of finding this solution, and we need to make sure they are a part of the conversation.”

Pipa Elias, director of agriculture for North America at The Nature Conservancy

(TNC), works with corporations, policymakers and other stakeholders to combat climate change from the ground up. Elias is working to open up conversations within the supply chain that lead to collaborative solutions.

“There are two paths,” Elias stated. “We continue what we are doing, or we partner with each other to create a better future. We are all part of the solution. The power is in our hands right now, but we may not have these opportunities in the future.”

Both Syngenta and TNC are members of the Ecosystem Services Market Consortium, an initiative working to create a market-based approach to improve soil health systems that benefit growers financially and deliver environmental benefits to society as a whole. According to TNC, farmers have the potential to benefit significantly from this approach. Cover crops can sequester about 0.13 tons of carbon per acre. At a payment of \$10 per ton, that’s \$160 million back in farmers’ pockets across 122 million acres of cropland in the Corn Belt.

“Many people do not think of agriculture when talking about corporate climate goals,” said Elias. “We need to give growers access to knowledge and resources to successfully adopt conservation practices while also benefiting from the market. The only way this system works is if growers make money.”

“Now is the time to have these conversations, when there is a willingness from all parties to come to the table,” stated Jayma Appleby, director of industry relations for the ISA. “We need to engage, rather than educate. Who are the partners we need to work with to be successful in this endeavor? It has to be more than just agriculture with skin in the game. We also need to make sure solutions are profitable for all involved.”

The ISA checkoff and membership programs represent more than 43,000 soybean farmers in Illinois. The checkoff funds market development, soybean production and profitability research, issues management analysis, communications and education. Membership and advocacy efforts support Illinois soybean farmers’ interests in local areas, Springfield and Washington, D.C., through the Illinois Soybean Growers. ISA programs are designed to ensure Illinois soy is the highest quality, most dependable, sustainable and competitive in the global marketplace. For more information, visit [ilsoy.org](http://ilsoy.org).

# GARAGE SALE TIME!



*It's a great time to have a Garage Sale. If you're planning to get together some of the items you no longer use around your home and set up your own sale, be sure you follow some important basic steps!*

### 1. WHAT TO SELL

Anything that still has usability and some value.

### 2. HOW TO PRICE

Decide the price of each item and then tag that item.

### 3. LENGTH OF SALE

Sales from Thursday through Saturday seem best.

### 4. HOW TO SET IT UP

Make it easy for buyers to view the items and have a central place with sufficient change for them to pay.

### 5. HOW TO ADVERTISE

The most effective place to reach more people is in The Mendota Reporter. We will be happy to assist you in placing your sale ad.

## GARAGE SALE DEADLINES\*

**THURSDAY, 5 PM -**

**to appear in Monday's Money Saver**

**MONDAY, 10 AM -**

**To appear in Wednesday's Reporter**

\* On a week with a holiday, deadlines may change. Please call to verify.



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# AG OUTLOOK '20

## Keep an eye out for crop pests

**BLOOMINGTON** – A warmer, wetter winter has caused higher-than-normal soil temperatures across the state, which could be helping agricultural pests survive.

According to Jennie Atkins and Kelly Estes of the University of Illinois' Prairie Research Institute, Illinois temperatures averaged 33 degrees for the winter season, 4 degrees above the long-term average. Winter 2019-20 ranks as the 12th warmest on record for the state.

The state has also experienced higher soil temperatures. At 4 inches under bare soil, temperatures have averaged 37 degrees from December through February, 3 degrees warmer than the long-term average.

All Illinois regions had temperatures below freezing during the season. However, these periods were generally short, with daily highs often rising to more than 32 degrees. Seasonal highs reached into the 50s.

While warmer temperatures favor insect survivability, repeated swings in temperature (alternating between cold and warm) are more detrimental to pests, Atkins noted. However, Illinois didn't experience dramatic swings in temperature, so the mild winter could be setting the stage for a comeback for some field crop pests.

Estes advised farmers to be observant this spring. Weather events in April and May can impact insect populations going into the growing season, especially if the state has another very wet spring or late cold snap.



## Yearning for life

The waters of a gentle creek flow through farmland dull in color from the winter season, but sure to be full of colorful life as the warmer temperatures of spring and the planting season are near. (Reporter photo)



## Showing of Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman planned at IVCC

**OGLESBY** – In celebration of the 50th anniversary of Earth Day in April, local county Farm Bureaus will partner with Illinois Valley Community College's Ag Club to host a free showing of Discovery's Rancher, Farmer, Fisherman.

The public is to attend the 6 p.m. Monday, March 23 event in IVCC's Dr. Mary Margaret Weeg Cultural Centre.

The documentary will be followed by a brief panel, with

experts diving into a discussion about conservation efforts and environmental focus on local agricultural lands.

Earth Day is an annual celebration of the environment and an opportunity to identify areas in which existing conservation efforts can be enhanced to improve our natural resources, including land, air, and water.

For information about this free event or to register, call the Bureau County Farm Bureau at (815) 875-6468.

## Farm Bureaus hold farmland assessment meetings

**WOODHULL** – State Representative Dan Swanson (R-Alpha) partnered with the Knox, Bureau and Henry County Farm Bureaus® to host Farmland Assessment meetings in each of the three counties on March 2, with dozens of local taxpayers attending the informational events.

"As a farmer, I know firsthand the impact property taxes and increasing assessments can have on those who feed the world. This program educates, empowers and provided tools to taxpayers,"

said Swanson.

The events, held at Carl Sandburg College in Knox County, the Bureau County Metro Center in Princeton and Black Hawk East in Henry County, all included a presentation by Brenda Matherly, Director of Local Government Affairs with the Illinois Farm Bureau, and provided attendees a better understanding on how farmland assessments are calculated and the long-term impact of those values. She discussed increasing property assessments and

adjustments due to flooding. Due, in part, to a change in the Farmland Assessment Act, all farmland assessments will continue to go up. The rate of the increase will depend on soil type. This increase in assessed values will be reflected on the property tax bills payable in 2020 and for several years to come.

Additional information was provided on the opportunity to receive a flood debasement on those acres that saw crop loss and prevented planting due to last year's flood.

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