

# THE FARMER'S REPORT

The Mendota Reporter

Established In 1854  
The Ambroy News  
The Depot Museum

Wednesday, May 22, 2024



## Is artificial intelligence the new weatherman?

By RHIANNON BRANCH  
FarmWeek

Thanks to platforms like ChatGPT, farmers have access to artificial intelligence (AI) at their fingertips. While there are advantages to this new technology, it could pay off to tap into a more reliable source when it comes to factors that influence important management decisions.

Take the weather for example. It plays a role in numerous aspects of the farm including planting dates, pest management and even marketing plans. Illinois State Climatologist Trent Ford told FarmWeek while AI is helping scientists become more efficient in analyzing climate data, it isn't as simple as a farmer asking ChatGPT when to plant.

"You can do that. It'll give you an answer. And it thinks the answer is right," Ford said. "But it probably won't be."

University of Illinois Extension recently hosted workshops in Marion, Sangamon and Winnebago counties to educate participants about online climate tools and provide hands-on instruction for agricultural related uses.

Duane Friend, University of Illinois climate specialist, told FarmWeek many in the ag industry are unaware of the tools available to them.

"I think a lot of times when they hear the word climate tools, they think we're talking about tools that will tell them what's going on 10



Storm clouds pass over a lone corn crib in Vermilion County. Artificial intelligence could help shape the field of meteorology and improve weather forecasts, according to experts around the state. (Photo by Catrina Rawson)

years from now," he said. "All of these things we're talking about can be done within this growing season."

The workshop took a deep dive into easily accessible and free online tools like drought and freeze risk maps from Purdue University and soil temperature maps and growing degree day calculators from the Illinois State Water Survey.

"These tools are better refined than ChatGPT is," Ford said. "We have climate scientists who have experience working with data who are cultivating these tools, who are making it so that it's pulling in the best information. Whereas right now our AI tools just grab everything off the internet and anything that looks relevant based on

the algorithm is thrown in. So, there's a lot of quality control that's needed and happening behind the scenes with these tools."

During the Grain and Feed Association of Illinois' annual convention, Senior Science Fellow for Nutrient Ag Solutions Eric Snodgrass echoed that growers need to be savvy consumers of artificial intelligence in the climate space.

"Putting this kind of power into the hands of people that don't know how to use it may allow them to draw conclusions based upon its output that are just not founded in real science or real understanding," he told FarmWeek. "Some folks might make a story up that is based off of their

analysis using something like ChatGPT that actually has no fundamental reason to happen."

Snodgrass urges growers not to abandon institutional knowledge.

"If you are already working with someone who historically has done a great job helping you market a crop, continue to lean heavily on those people," he said. "Then ask them if they are using ChatGPT and AI to enhance their abilities and does it make sense what they're doing?"

Nonetheless, Snodgrass and Ford both expressed excitement about how AI is revolutionizing weather prediction techniques by processing data faster.

"You can do these ma-

chine learning techniques on the processing power of a cellphone versus a supercomputer," Snodgrass said. "So, this is going to be one area that's going to be a major beneficiary of AI."

Ford expects to see expansion of AI-supported weather forecasting in the next decade.

"Now what we're seeing is that if people are using a long enough and good enough historical data record, they can train AI-based models and get similar kinds of forecast scores as the big physics-based models," he said.

But for now, he recommends producers confide in proven maps, calculators and other tools backed by trusted sources. Ford and Friend collected feedback from the climate tools workshops that they plan to incorporate when considering new and updated resources to help farmers improve their bottom line.

(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.)



### ARE YOU SPENDING TOO MANY HOURS MOWING

**FINISH CUT MOWERS**



**ROUGH CUT MOWERS**



**TILLAGE EQUIPMENT**



- Double the width of your ride-on mower and drastically reduce mowing times.
- Superior quality & performance.
- 40" & 60" heavy duty finish cut deck design.
- 10.5-25 HP engine options.
- Attach to ATV's & UTV's also.

**PROUDLY MANUFACTURED IN MENDOTA, IL**



For a free catalog and product DVD please call 815-539-6954 or visit [www.kunzeng.com!](http://www.kunzeng.com!)

03162022



FARM - HOME - CROP - HAIL - AUTO - LIFE  
COMMERCIAL - BONDS - HEALTH



## FIRST STATE INSURANCE

• Complete Insurance Service •

715 Washington Street, Mendota • 815-539-5651

10252023

## Door open for ag trade in Indo-Pacific

By TAMMIE SLOUP  
*FarmWeek*

A rise in incomes and increased appetite for finer products and animal proteins have opened the door for trade opportunities in the Indo-Pacific region.

The U.S. ambassadors to the Philippines and Vietnam recently joined USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack for a discussion on the trade outlook in those countries. And the future looks bright.

About 60% of the world's population resides in the Indo-Pacific, and the region is expected to be the largest contributor to global growth over the next three decades.

The Philippines' imports have tripled during the past decade, and the U.S. remains the top single country supplier. The U.S. is also the No. 2 customer for the country, said Ambassador MaryKay Carlson, adding soybean meal, wheat and dairy are the three top U.S. exports to the Philippines.

Despite tariffs and trade challenges over the past decade, the Philippines is America's ninth-largest market for food and agricultural-related exports.

"This is a testament to our brand recognition and the industry ties developed over the course of the past half century," Carlson said during USDA's Agricultural Outlook Forum last month. "While opportunities in the Philippine market for U.S. food and agricultural products remain very strong, USDA and industry colleagues are working with our Philippines government counterparts to provide even greater transparency for food and agricultural trade and to remove market constraints, continue to advocate for longer validity periods for import clearance certificates, and for better alignment of tariff rate quotas with actual import demand."

Ambassador Marc Knapper called 2023 a "watershed year" for the U.S.-Vietnam relationship, which was upgraded in September to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for the purposes of peace, cooperation and sustainable development.

The U.S. is the No. 2 exporter to Vietnam, supplying products such as wheat, cotton and dairy products. The U.S. is the largest importer of Vietnam products, including coffee and cashew nuts.

However, more work can be done to further open the Vietnam market to American products, for example, access to U.S. stone fruit.

Both Vietnam and the Philippines have fast-growing, dynamic economies, the ambassadors said.

The Philippines faces challenges in feeding its growing population due to limited land, water and technological issues, making partnership with the U.S. crucial for food security and economic growth.

U.S. farmers can benefit from trade expansion in the Philippines, a familiar market with high brand recognition for American products.

The Philippines' growing population and economy present opportunities for U.S. food and agricultural exports, with a forecasted increase in consumer numbers and income growth, Carlson said.

"It's hard to put a cap on what the possibilities are for the U.S.-Philippines market," she said.

A 7% economic growth forecast and rapid expansion of the food sector in Vietnam also is good news for U.S. farmers, Knapper said, adding potential growth opportunities in Vietnam include U.S. cotton, lumber, protein and nuts, fruit and wine.

In 2022, the Biden administration launched the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, a new trade bloc made up of the United States and a dozen other countries, including the Philippines and Vietnam.

U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai said efforts are not solely focused on opening new markets, as the U.S. must also enforce existing trade agreements.

Tai said the U.S. "will do everything we can to resolve our concerns" with the dispute over Mexico's plans to restrict imports of genetically modified corn.

"Mexico's policies regarding agricultural biotechnology are threatening to cause serious economic harm to U.S. farmers," Tai said. Last August, the U.S. established a dispute panel under the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which is expected to be resolved this year.

Tai also stressed the U.S. will "not hesitate to use all available tools to en-

force trade commitments" in response to serious concerns about how Canada is implementing its dairy market access commitment under the USMCA.

More than 20 lawmakers, including U.S. House Reps. Darin LaHood, R-Dunlap, and Mary Miller, R-Oakland, urged "strong support and swift action to bolster U.S. food and agriculture trade opportunities and expand market access for farmers and ranchers in new and key markets" in a letter to Vilsack and Tai.

The lawmakers expressed concern about the recent farm trade deficit trend, which might be partly attributable to the proactive trade policies of economic competitors.

"We are troubled by the most recent U.S. Department of Agriculture, Outlook for U.S. Agricultural Trade, report which projects agricultural exports in fiscal year 2024 at \$169.5 billion," the letter states. "The forecast also indicates an agricultural trade deficit of \$30 billion, nearly double the \$16.7 billion trade deficit last year, impacting local farm economies and U.S. leadership in global agriculture trade."

Tai said the "slight trade deficit" in U.S. agricultural trade in 2023 should not be cause for alarm.

"On the contrary, this highlights the current strength of the American economy. The U.S. dollar is extraordinarily strong at the moment, which gives American consumers more buying power on the international market," she said.

Also, products driving those import numbers up are things like high-value distilled spirits, tropical fruits, coffee and other products not produced in the U.S.

"We are charging full steam ahead," she said. "We are continuing negotiations with our partners in the Indo-Pacific and Africa. We are laser-focused on deepening our existing relationships and creating new ones — all to get more wins and open more doors for our farmers and producers."

*(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.)*

## Current estate tax policy a burden on family farms

By HANNAH SPANGLER  
*FarmWeek*

Jeff Brooks, Whiteside County Farm Bureau member, faced an unprecedented challenge when he lost his father in 2023 — the weight of the Illinois estate tax.

"This burden is putting pressure on the current operations of our family farm," Brooks testified April 12 before members of the Illinois House Revenue and Finance Committee. "In March of 2023, still coping with my father's passing, we learned the amount of a significant payment that was still due on our farming operation."

The committee heard testimony on HB 4600, the Family Farm Preservation Act, sponsored by state Rep. Sharon Chung, D-Bloomington.

"Illinois' No. 1 industry is in farming with 96% of Illinois farms being family-owned," Chung said. "HB 4600 addresses the discrepancy between escalating farm estate evaluations and annual farm income."

The Family Farm Preservation Act, an Illinois Farm Bureau initiative, if adopted, would create a \$6 million true exemption to the estate tax for family farms, tied to inflation. Additionally, the bill would allow a surviving spouse to utilize their own estate tax exemption and any unused exemption from the deceased spouse upon their passing.

Brooks said his father risked his life savings to put a payment down on their 120-acre farm, an investment meant to provide stability for the family's future. "Two weeks before my father's passing, we were able to make the final payment on the last farm we would purchase together," he said.

Assets resulting from years of hard work might now have to be sold by Brooks, a fourth-generation family farmer. "We were not prepared for the complexity, expenses and sometimes confusion of this undertaking. Thus far, we have spent over \$64,000 in professional fees just to have an accurate estate tax return filed." And without a change in the current policy, he said he will have to do this again when his mother passes.

"The death of a loved one should not force families to have to sell the farm," IFB President Brian Duncan said. "This current Illinois estate tax hits normal, everyday Illinois family farmers who do not make millions of dollars."

Brooks said he hopes the legislation passes so his daughters and other Illinois farm families won't have to endure the same struggle in the future.

"As I reflect upon my father's passing, the greatest disappointment I have was that we spent too much time discussing how the Illinois estate tax was going to affect our operation," Brooks said. "I wish I would have spent more time talking with him about the new baby calves, how the crops looked and the latest technology."

*(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.)*

## Mississippi River drought over, but situation still shaky



A container vessel traverses the Mississippi River near New Orleans. Water levels on the Mighty Mississippi recovered in recent weeks, which triggered the removal of draft restrictions. (Photo by Daniel Grant)

By **TAMMIE SLOUP**  
*FarmWeek*

The drought that plagued the Mississippi River basin since 2022 and resulted in ag shipment delays and higher transportation costs is officially over.

“I’m happy to report there are no draft restrictions on the Mississippi River for the third week and we do not have dredges operating for low water,” Brigadier General Kimberly Peebles, commanding general of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mississippi Valley Division, said last month. “The Dredges POTTER, HURLEY and JADWIN have completed dredging operations and are on a 72-hour response if needed.”

Low water conditions began in the region in September 2022. The Corps maintained 9-foot navigation throughout the system, work-

ing with other industries to identify problem spots on the river, and respond with necessary dredge assets.

The low water levels, a result of dryness across the Midwest and South, reduced the ability for barges to effectively navigate, driving up farmers’ transportation costs as they sought storage and marketing options for their recently harvested crops the past couple years.

The Mississippi River is one of the busiest waterways in the U.S. Of its 4,267 miles of navigable channels, 589 million tons of cargo move on the system each year with cost savings in transportation at \$12.5 billion, according to the USACE.

But as river levels are bouncing back, the chance of drought hasn’t dissipated.

“While river levels have rebounded over the past couple months, river gauge readings are considerably lower compared to years such as 2018, 2019 and 2020,” said Mike Steenhoek, executive director of the Soy Transportation Coalition. “In addition, much ground in the Midwest remains severely dehydrated, which means that it will require significant and persistent precipitation to occur to recharge the soil and provide residual water to maintain water levels on the river.

“Any prolonged period

of dry weather could quickly usher in a return of low water levels. This will clearly be an area of focus in the weeks to come.”

The USACE also is wrapping up public scoping meetings for the Lower Mississippi River Comprehensive Management Study, which is a five-year, \$25 million mega-study that will deliver recommendations for effective and practical management of the Mississippi River from Cape Girardeau, Missouri, to the Gulf of Mexico.

The purpose of the study is to identify recommendations for the comprehensive management of the region across multiple purposes, including hurricane and storm damage reduction, flood risk management, structure and non-structural flood control, floodplain management strategies, navigation, ecosystem and environmental restoration, water supply, hydropower production, recreation and other purposes as determined by the Secretary of the Army.

The study area encompasses seven states: Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri and Tennessee.

*(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.)*

### BUILD IT ONCE - BUILD IT RIGHT

**MAZE LUMBER**  
BUILD IT ONCE. BUILD IT RIGHT. SINCE 1848

Illinois' longest operating lumberyard continues to thrive along Peru's historic riverfront. Maze Lumber has been providing top quality building materials to Illinois Valley contractors and homeowners for 176 years, still owned by the founding fathers (Maze).

Located in a 15,000-square foot showroom and office, we offer building materials for the modern home as well as a full line of the traditional lumber items used in home building, commercial construction, and industrial applications. Our experienced sales staff takes pride in their ability to provide knowledgeable assistance along with prompt delivery at reasonable prices.



**mazelumber.com**  
Water Street, Peru | 815-223-1742



05292024

**UNTZ Truck & Trailer Repair, Inc.**  
24-HOUR ROAD SERVICE

BRUCE UNTZ  
President



3460 Brennen Drive • Peru, Illinois 61354  
**(815) 224-2675** • Evenings: (815) 223-5381 / (815) 343-8701

## Advocates push for cover crop expansion funding in Illinois' next state budget

SPRINGFIELD — Advocates for healthy Illinois farm fields are uniting again this spring to urge legislators to provide more support for farmers' use of cover crops to protect the state's soils and water supplies.

Environmental advocates and experts are teaming up with Illinois farming organizations to push for \$3.1 million in new state funding to support expansion of the highly popular Fall Covers for Spring Savings Program (FCSS), as state legislators debate and formulate Illinois' next state budget.

The FCSS gives farmers whose applications are accepted a \$5-an-acre subsidy on their next year's crop insurance for every acre of cover crops they plant. These crops are proven to help prevent environmentally and economically damaging soil erosion and other climate and weather challenges. Unlike other similar programs, the more cover crops farmers plant over the years, the more benefit they yield.

Many Illinois farmers have voluntarily embraced this program, giving landowners the flexibility they need to make the best choices for their fields and farm operations to maximize their production and conservation efforts. The main challenge is that the program's popularity far exceeds the funds available to meet the demand.

In Fiscal Year 2020-2021, 50,000 acres of cover crop benefit were provided under a \$300,000 state budget amount. For the 2022-2024 Fiscal Years, the program was more than doubled to a \$660,000 budget and 100,000 acres. But in all cases, immediate demand caused all the mon-

ey to go almost as quickly as the program was opened for applications.

Now, advocates say the time is right to expand the program to provide the incentives for 500,000 acres of eligible land, at a \$3.1 million program cost. They expect that will allow 400,000 more acres to take advantage of the powerful benefits of cover crops, including the removal of carbon dioxide that equates to more than 37,000 vehicles off Illinois roads each year, nearly 1,000 rail cars burning coal, and more than 21,000 homes' energy use.

Cover crops also help build land resistance to floods, reduce the risk that drought causes crop yield losses, improve soil and water quality, and improve farmers' long-term return on their investment.

The cover crop increased funding proposal is included in Senate Bill 3814 sponsored by Sen. Patrick Joyce, and House Bill 5757 sponsored by Rep. Janet Yang Rohr. Both bills have strong bipartisan support in the Legislature and are expected to be considered in the upcoming budget discussions.

### What they're saying

"The cover crop program has proved popular over the years, and I'm proud to carry legislation that would expand this program by at

least 500,000 acres. Not only does this program uplift farmers, but it has positive environmental impacts — including, most importantly, helping Illinois meet its nutrient loss reduction goals."

**State Senator  
Patrick Joyce**  
\*\*\*

"Cover crops are critical for maintaining soil integrity, filtering contaminants and overall sustaining healthy farms, so expanding funding for the Fall Covers for Spring Savings Program has to be top of mind when we go into our upcoming budget negotiations. Just as our farming communities are adapting to a changing climate that presents growing challenges to their livelihoods, Springfield too needs to adapt to sustain funding for this program."

**State Representative  
Janet Yang Rohr**  
\*\*\*

"Fall Covers for Spring Savings is a cost-effective and widely supported program. Expanding the program to 500,000 acres will position Illinois as a leader in voluntary conservation efforts that support our farmers, our climate goals, and the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy."

**Dylan Cook, Midwest  
Policy Manager,  
American Farmland Trust**  
\*\*\*

"If we want to protect

public health, support biodiversity, keep soil in place and ensure clean water for the people of Illinois, we have to change the way we farm. Until farmers receiving generous taxpayer subsidies are required to implement public health safeguards, we acknowledge the urgent need to accelerate the adoption of conservation practices. Under current circumstances, public money would certainly be better spent directly incentivizing cover crop adoption rather than continuing to throw millions at education and outreach events that have failed to produce results."

**Robert Hirschfeld,  
Director of Water Policy,  
Prairie Rivers Network**  
\*\*\*

"Expanding Fall Covers for Spring Savings to 500,000 acres will allow more growers to be supported in the transition to soil health management systems. This expansion sends a clear message to Illinois farmers that the state cares about improving water quality and wants to support farmers in one of the most powerful conservation practices they can adopt

*Many Illinois farmers have voluntarily embraced this program, giving landowners the flexibility they need to make the best choices for their fields and farm operations to maximize their production and conservation efforts. The main challenge is that the program's popularity far exceeds the funds available to meet the demand.*

onto their annual row crop fields."

**Megan Baskerville, IL  
Ag Program Director,  
The Nature Conservancy**  
\*\*\*

"Cover crops are a proven method of promoting soil conservation, a vital tool in protecting one of Illinois' most valuable resources. With climate change threatening our landscape with increased instances of both flooding and droughts, it is more important than ever for our state government to give agricultural producers the resources needed to adopt these kinds of practices. The funding of 500,000 acres in the Fall Covers for Spring Savings program is a major step in affirming Illinois' commitment to protecting our natural resources."

**Eliot Clay, State Programs Director, Illinois  
Environmental Council**

\*\*\*  
"Fall Covers for Spring Savings enables more farmers to take steps to protect our waterways, soil, and wildlife. We all benefit by making it more affordable and accessible for farmers to adopt sustainable practices, like cover crops. Funding the Fall Covers for Spring Savings program to cover 500,000 acres is a crucial step to reach the goals set out in the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy."

**Liz Rupel, Lead  
Organizer, Illinois  
Stewardship Alliance**  
\*\*\*

Organizations Supporting the funding increase include: American Farmland Trust, Delta Institute, Illinois Environmental Council, Illinois Stewardship Alliance, Prairie Rivers Network, The Nature Conservancy.

**SUBLETTE MECHANICAL**



2025 Sublette Rd. • Sublette, IL 61367

**Parker** **TIL**

**HOSE DOCTOR**  
On-Site Hose Repair

**Specializing in On Farm Repair**  
Call 815-849-5223 or Cellular 815-994-7543  
www.sublette-mechanical.com

05272020

**Peru Waltham Mutual Insurance**





Frank McConville  
McConville Insurance Agency  
Mendota & Tonica, IL  
815-539-9714  
815-442-3116

**Wickert  
INSURANCE**

Rock Falls, IL 815-626-6086  
Dixon, IL 815-285-1300

GRINNELL MUTUAL MEMBER





Bart Hartauer  
Hartauer Insurance Agency  
LaSalle, IL  
815-223-1795

**VISIT US ONLINE @ PERUMUTUAL.COM**

02262020

## USDA makes \$1.5 billion available to help farmers advance conservation and climate-smart agriculture

CHAMPAIGN—Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced the availability of an historic \$1.5 billion in fiscal year 2024 to invest in partner-driven conservation and climate solutions through the Regional

Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) as part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is accepting project proposals now through July 2, 2024, that will help farmers,

ranchers, and forest landowners adopt and expand conservation strategies to enhance natural resources while tackling the climate crisis. These projects in turn can save farmers money, create new revenue streams, and increase

productivity.

The investments in climate-smart agriculture that USDA has made since the beginning of the Biden-Harris Administration, and will continue to make through the Inflation Reduction Act

and Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities, are estimated to support over 180,000 farms and over 225 million acres in the next five years.

The investment is made available through the Farm Bill and the Inflation Reduction Act, the largest climate investment in history, which has enabled USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to boost funding for RCPP. Additionally, NRCS is announcing progress on its effort to streamline and simplify RCPP and improve processes and implementation.

"We had unprecedented demand for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program last year, showing the robust interest in conservation from farmers and ranchers," Secretary Vilsack said. "Through the increase in funding from President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, we're able to invest even more this year in this important program, increasing our impact across the landscape. We're looking forward to seeing what the more streamlined and customer-oriented Regional Conservation Partnership Program can do to get more conservation on the ground in the coming months and years."

There are two separate funding opportunities being announced: RCPP Classic and RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA). RCPP Classic projects are implemented using NRCS contracts and easements with producers, landowners and communities in

collaboration with project partners. Through RCPP AFA, the lead partner works directly with agricultural producers to support the development of innovative conservation approaches that would not otherwise be available under RCPP Classic. NRCS will set aside \$100 million for Tribal-led projects to be used between both funding opportunities.

The 2024 RCPP funding priorities are climate-smart agriculture, urban agriculture, conservation, and environmental justice. This funding advances President Biden's Justice40 Initiative, which aims to ensure that 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain climate, clean energy, and other federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities marginalized by underinvestment and overburdened by pollution. Today's action also advances President Biden's America the Beautiful initiative, a 10-year, locally led and nationally scaled conservation initiative that includes the voluntary efforts of farmers, ranchers and private landowners.

NRCS encourages proposals led by historically underserved entities or Indian tribes.

Project proposals for RCPP are being accepted through the RCPP portal. Details on the RCPP Classic and RCPP AFA funding opportunities are available on Grants.gov.

NRCS will be hosting webinars to provide additional information. Learn how to participate at the RCPP website.



To be a part of the monthly  
Farmer's Report, contact  
your ad representative at  
**The Mendota Reporter**  
or **The Amboy News**

The Mendota Reporter

703 Illinois Ave. • Mendota, IL 61342

Ph: (815) 539-9396 • Fax: (815) 539-7862

[www.mendotareporter.com](http://www.mendotareporter.com)

Established in 1854  
The Amboy News

703 Illinois Ave. • Mendota, IL 61342

Ph: (815) 857-2311

[www.amboynews.com](http://www.amboynews.com)

09282016

## Severe weather season is off to an active start

By RHIANNON BRANCH  
FarmWeek

Severe weather season made a bold entrance in the Midwest this year and the potential for more dangerous storms lingers.

Frequent rains have delayed planting in some areas. Storms have damaged farm buildings and equipment, and high winds have created challenges for spring herbicide applications.

As of the end of April, Illinois had had 42 tornadoes, 127 hail events (greater than 1 inch) and 95 severe wind events, according to the Storm Prediction Center.



Ed Shimon, warning coordination meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Lincoln, told FarmWeek those statistics mostly came from two storms in February,

two in March and three so far in April.

“Forty-two tornadoes total in Illinois already is pretty high,” he said. “Over the last 30 years, the running average in Illinois is about 56 per year.”

He said the active pattern is following the path of 2023 when Illinois had 123 tornados, the most of any state in the country.

Shimon pointed out the storm systems have been widespread with tornadic activity recorded in the southern, central and northern portions of the state.

“Storms follow the jet stream and the way the jet stream is buckled in the west and kind of lifting up to the northeast through Illinois on a pretty frequent basis this spring has given us more frequent severe weather,” he said.

There was a preliminary count of 68 severe hail reports across the state in March alone, with another 30 to 40 this month, as of April 22, State Climatologist Trent Ford told the RFD Radio Network.

The 10-day outlook is a bit milder but favors warmer than average temperatures and slightly above normal precipitation. There was potential for torrential downpours over the weekend, according to forecasts as of press time.

“When you have a really warm air mass in the April and early May time frame, there is always potential for severe weather when a storm does develop. So people need to be weather aware for sure,” Shimon said.

There is potential for severe weather year-round, but the most reports come in during April, May and June, which is why that period is commonly referred to as severe weather season in the Midwest, he added.

*(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.)*

# Holy Cow!

## May is National Beef Month

When it comes to beef and your health, you can rest easy knowing that along with being delicious, beef contains important nutrients that your body needs. In just one 3 oz. cooked serving, you're getting 10 essential nutrients, including about half your Daily Value for protein!

**Pfeiffer Farms** FRESH MARKET

2511 Reynolds Rd. Ashton, IL

Hours: Thurs/Fri. 9-5:30 | Sat. 8:30-4:30



BEEF



PORK



EGGS



POULTRY

Visit us at [www.pfeifferfarms.com](http://www.pfeifferfarms.com)  
or find us on Facebook



CUSTOM BUTCHERING & PROCESSING  
VENISON PROCESSING  
FRESH SAUSAGE & SMOKED PRODUCTS  
RETAIL & WHOLESALE

**FREEDOM SAUSAGE, INC.**

MARK D. WILEY, PRESIDENT

HOURS: MON-FRI 7AM TO 4PM | SAT 9AM TO 12PM

Ph. (815) 792-8276

Fax. (815) 792-8283

4155 E. 1650TH RD.

EARLVILLE, IL 60518-6192



**Custom Butchering & Meat Processing**  
Retail & Wholesale

**Retail Butcher Shop**

- Fresh cut steaks, chops, ribs
- Grill ready marinated beef, pork, chicken, seafood
- Brats, smoked bacon, jerky, meat sticks

Hours: Mon-Fri 8AM - 5PM ~ Sat 8AM - 4PM

815-849-5532

[countryvillagemeat.com](http://countryvillagemeat.com)

05312023

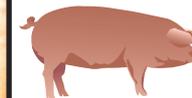
401 N Pennsylvania Ave,  
Sublette, IL 61367

Meating You  
is Our Pleasure!



**Earlville Cold Storage Locker LLC**

Custom Butchering & Meat Processing • Curing • Smoking  
Locker Storage • Cooked Roast Beef & Roast Pork  
Retail Meats • Fresh & Smoked Sausage



101 East Street • Earlville, Illinois 60518  
Phone: 815-246-9469 | Fax: 815-246-9490

GENE COPPES - Owner

# MAKE FARM SAFETY THE TOP CROP!

**Agriculture, which has high rates of fatalities and serious injuries, ranks among the most dangerous professions in the United States. Training farmers, ranchers, and tree farmers to operate machinery safely and use protective equipment correctly can help reduce the high number of accidents.**

This message brought to you by:



1102 Meriden St.  
Mendota, IL  
815-539-9341

**FINANCIAL** Your Full Service,  
Member Owned  
Financial Institution



CREDIT UNION

Membership Open to the Community  
[www.financialplus.org](http://www.financialplus.org)

Mendota | Peru | Ottawa | Morris | Diamond



**FIRST STATE INSURANCE**



With locations in:  
Mendota 539-5651  
Earlville 246-8261



"The more than one  
company agency"



703 Illinois Avenue  
Mendota • (815) 539-9396

**FIRST STATE BANK**

706 Washington Street &  
1403 13th Ave., Mendota • 800.362.9623  
[firststatebank.biz](http://firststatebank.biz)

Member  
**FDIC**

