

# THE FARMER'S REPORT

The Mendota Reporter

Established In 1854  
The Amboy News  
The Depot Museum

Wednesday, June 26, 2024



## Honey farms work to protect pollinators and educate

**By CELESTE HUTTES**  
*Illinois Farm Bureau Partners*

After serving his country in World War II, U.S. Army medic Ernest Boring returned to the family farm in McLean County, Illinois. The land and his family's beekeeping tradition helped restore his spirit.

"I think Grandpa found his happy place here after the war, and having grown up here, it's mine, too," says Amber Rutledge, Boring's granddaughter.

In tribute to her beloved grandfather, Rutledge created a happy place for bees: Wild Harvest Honey Farm in Heyworth.

### Honey & bee-yond

An aesthetician-turned-beekeeper, Rutledge transformed the old chicken house into a charming apiary, education center, honey tasting room and gift shop.

"Beekeeping has been a part of our family for over 100 years," Rutledge says. "We wanted to turn the land we grew up on into a bee sanctuary. One in every three bites of food depends on bees for pollination.

Our goal here is to educate people on the importance of bees for our survival."

With global bee populations on the decline, her work has never been more important.

According to the Planet Bee Foundation, U.S. beekeepers lost more than 45% of their managed honeybee colonies between April 2020 and April 2021. Several factors conspire against the honeybee, including pathogens, pesticides, poor nutrition and, primarily, parasites.

By providing a safe haven for honeybees – and food for thought for visitors – Rutledge hopes to protect this petite pollinator.

About 20 brightly decorated hives make up "bee village" at Wild Harvest Honey Farm, a favorite destination for school and community field trips. The farm also hosts themed events throughout the year, including fairy nights and an annual Honey Festival in the summer.

In her charming gift shop, Rutledge's wildflower honey products and pollen-enriched tea blends fly

off the shelf. Visitors buzz about her infused honeys, which feature flavors like lavender, bourbon and Carolina reaper. Visitors can even take a honey sensory class, similar to a wine tasting.

"Even three hours from here, honey tastes different because of the soil, and pollen from different plants has its own notes and flavors. I plant things to keep my honey sweet all year round," says Rutledge, who swears by radish to produce super-sweet honey.

In the tasting room at Wild Harvest Honey Farm, visitors can sample honey that hints of olive trees and wildflowers from Pompeii, the rosemary fields of Barcelona, and the lime trees of Monaco.

### The buzz on beekeeping

Beyond a satisfied sweet tooth, you'll leave Wild Harvest Honey Farm with a greater appreciation for the power of pollinators.

"You don't have to have bees to help save the bees," Rutledge says. "The best thing anybody can do is to feed the bees. If you do want to pursue beekeeping, take a class and join a club where

you'll get support and help."

The Illinois State Beekeeping Association (ISBA) is a great place to start.

Actively supporting beekeeping in Illinois since 1891, the ISBA offers a forum to share best practices and scientific developments – and maybe find a mentor.

"We get beekeepers together twice a year and help educate each other and help with research projects and things like that," says Rose Leedle, ISBA president. "We provide an ongoing opportunity to talk with more experienced beekeepers and possibly find one to mentor you if needed."

Rose says ISBA membership usually hovers around 1,500, which is roughly a third of registered beekeepers in Illinois. The ISBA encourages would-be beekeepers to take an introduction to beekeeping class and to get to know their local farmers.

"Go out and introduce yourself to the neighboring farmers and explain what you're trying to do," says Doug Leedle, Rose's husband and a certified master beekeeper. "And in your second year of beekeeping, give them a bottle of honey."

### Protecting pollinators

Even farmers who do not grow bee-friendly crops like soybeans, pumpkin, melon or fruit can help pollinators.



**A window provides a view of an active beehive in the Honey House store at Wild Harvest Honey. (Photo by Jeff Adkins/©Journal Communications)**

"A lot of farms no longer have fence rows, so we've taken away all the nutrition from the honeybee," says Doug, a second-generation beekeeper since age 10. "But farmers can plant wildflowers in the corners of their field, so bees have something to eat, too."

Rose asks farmers to consider planting cover crops in the fall that come up early in the spring. Let them flower, then plant soybeans or other crops later.

On a smaller scale, homeowners can help by planting pollinator-friendly flowers, such as coneflower, bee balm, zinnia and milkweed, as well as flowering trees.

And remember, while humans might not appreciate a messy yard, pollinators do. Simply leaving a few

leaves on the ground in the fall and slowing down spring cleanup can give native miner and digger bees – which winter in piles of leaves – a better chance of survival.

The Leedles also offer a fresh take on those despised dandelions.

"Your lawn doesn't have to look like the 18th hole of Augusta," Doug says with a laugh. "Dandelions are one of the first flowers that bees utilize. What we humans see as weeds, pollinators see as a buffet."

Back at Wild Harvest Honey Farm, the beloved bees feast on a smorgasbord of pollen, while Rutledge nourishes a family legacy.

"Bees are part of my heritage. I feel connected to my ancestors knowing that I'm carrying on a tradition they would be proud of and doing my part for the environment," Rutledge says. "Besides, I'm always rooting for the underdog – and these days, that's the bees."

(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](http://ILFBpartners.com).)



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## Welcome To The LaSalle County

# 4-H SHOW & JUNIOR FAIR

### Thursday, July 11 – Sunday, July 14, 2024

### LaSalle County Junior Fairgrounds • Ottawa

#### Thursday, July 11

8 a.m. – General 4-H Projects judging  
9 a.m.-3 p.m. – Soil & Water Conservation District activity  
10 a.m.-2 p.m. – OSF Innovation & Steam activities  
TBA – Kane Family Farms Ski Ball  
10 a.m.-7 p.m. – Axe Throwing by Axetreme Throwing  
2 p.m. – Style Revue, Exhibit Hall 3, includes “4-H SwagShow”  
2 p.m. – Watermelon eating contest  
3:30 p.m. – Dynamic Dog Show and “Rescue ME!” event  
5-7 p.m. – GrainCo FS hamburger dinner (4-H exhibitors & parents only)  
6-7 p.m. – Magical Moments face painting  
7 p.m. – Illini State Pullers Truck & Tractor Pull

#### Friday, July 12

8 a.m. – Swine & Poultry judging  
9 a.m.-3 p.m. – Soil & Water Conservation District activity

10 a.m.-noon – Scavenger Hunt  
10 a.m.-2 p.m. – OSF Innovation & Steam activities  
10 a.m.-7 p.m. – Axe Throwing by Axetreme Throwing  
TBA – Kane Family Farms Ski Ball  
11 a.m. – Dairy Show  
1 p.m. – Goat Show  
2 p.m. – Public presentation  
3 p.m. – 4-H Talent Show  
4 p.m. – Cat Show  
4 p.m. – 3x3 Basketball Tournament  
6 p.m. – Mutton Busting  
7 p.m. – T&A Bucking Bulls Rodeo featuring Rugged Cross Cattle Co.

#### Saturday, July 13

8 a.m. – Horse Show  
8:30 a.m. – Beef Showmanship contest followed by Purebred & Market Beef judging  
8:30 a.m. – Rabbit Show  
10 a.m.-7 p.m. – Axe Throwing by Axetreme Throwing  
TBA – Kane Family Farms Ski Ball

11 a.m.-2 p.m. – 4-H Pop Up Tent activities  
11 a.m., 1 p.m., 3 p.m. – Funny Magic Guy Rob Thompson in Exhibit Hall  
1 p.m. – Bicycle Rodeo for ages 5-8  
2 p.m. – Bicycle Rodeo for ages 9-12  
4 p.m. – Basketball court games  
4-7 p.m. – Gypsy Queen Karaoke  
4:30 p.m. – Fair Auction  
6 p.m. – Dodgeball Tournament  
7 p.m. – Ramer Race Promotions Demolition Derby

#### Sunday, July 14

8 a.m. – Horse Show in arena  
8 a.m. – Sheep Show  
10 a.m. – Master Showman contest  
11:30 a.m. – Cow Pie Bingo  
1 p.m. – Tug of War  
TBA – Closing ceremonies honoring 4-H & Cloverbud graduates; Hall of Fame recognition

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## Researchers battle invasive carp species

By HANNAH SPANGLER  
*FarmWeek*

Once an invasive species like Asian carp shows up, research shows they are nearly impossible to eliminate.

For 12 years, scientists at the University of Illinois College of ACES researched ways to stop the spread of invasive carp through physiological barriers.

Originally brought to the southeast United States in 1970 to clean aquaculture and wastewater treatment facilities, the species has now invaded 45 states. The rapid growth threatens native fish populations and economic resources.

“What we have been looking at is what prevents them from moving and how we can use that to contain them,” said Cory Suski, U of I Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences professor. “Rather than trying to have them arrive somewhere and then trying to remove them afterward, it’s a better strategy to just try and stop them in the first place.”

Facing boat and barge traffic in the Illinois River, Suski said his team knew stopping the carp wouldn’t be as simple as blocking off the Illinois River. This created the key question, “How do you stop the fish from swimming when they can’t stop the river?”

In the lab, Suski and his team tested different non-physical barriers that would stop the fish, but not the boats. He said that in the tests, carbon dioxide effectively obstructed the carp.

“All fish don’t like carbon dioxide, they just swim away from it,” Suski told *FarmWeek*. “What we’ve shown at a bunch of different scales from the lab and a pond, is that if you make an area of high carbon dioxide, you can just exclude fish from going into that area.”

But the tradeoff for this method and other non-physical barriers is you deter all fish, not just carp. To protect other species that rely on migration, Suski said the carbon dioxide needs to be targeted to a smaller area like a shipping lock or dam.

As the project continues, Suski said the team will combine carbon dioxide with other non-physical barriers, sound and bubbles, to increase and improve the ability to stop fish passage.

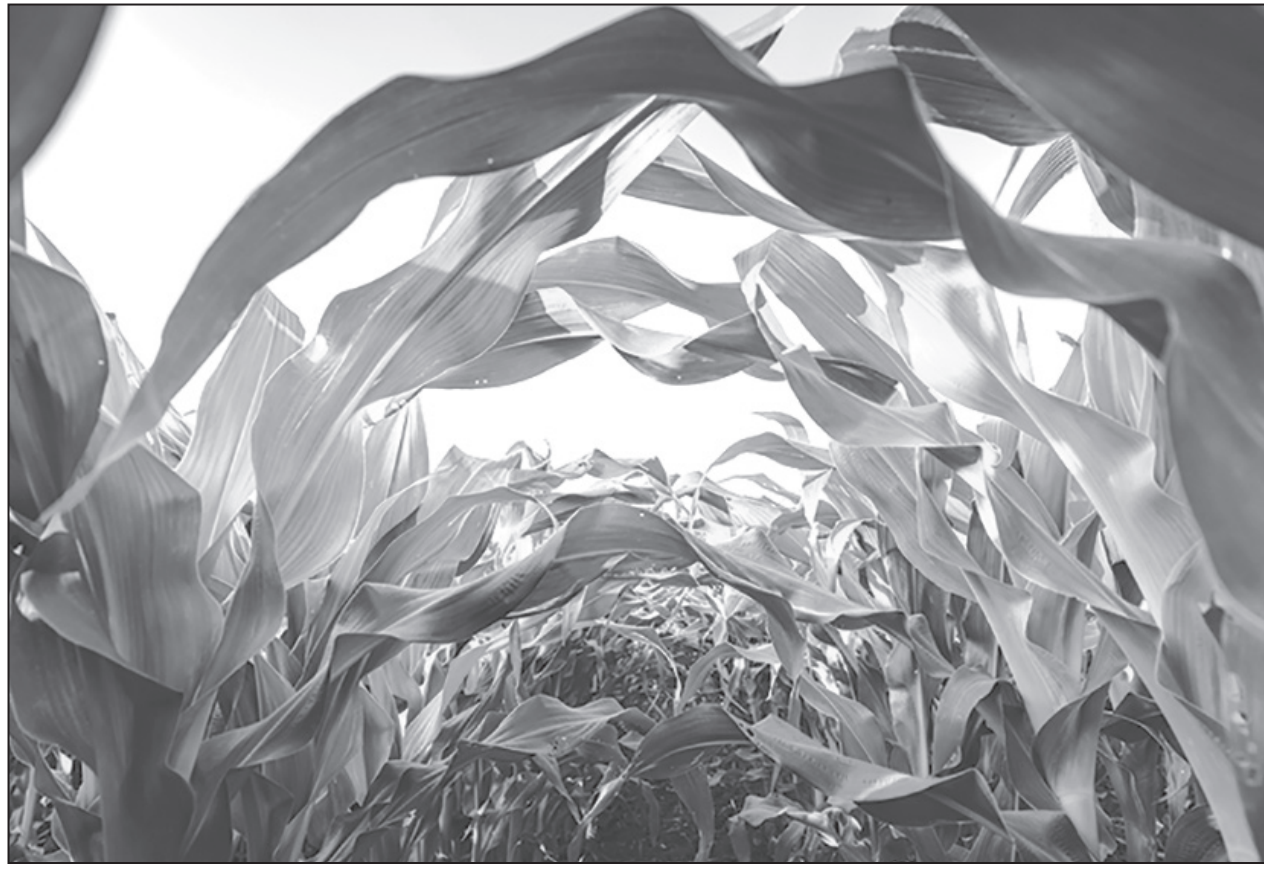
The team plans to extend the research beyond trials in labs and ponds, expanding into rivers to test findings at a larger scale.

According to Suski, the upcoming research will have projects focused on each stage of carps’ life — eggs, baby carp and adults. However, the primary emphasis will be on studying juvenile and adult carp.

He said that while capturing eggs could put a huge dent in the population, only one project will focus on eggs because it is difficult to gather them.

“One female carp can have hundreds of thousands of eggs,” Suski said. “The eggs are about the size of a small bead so getting those eggs is like trying to scoop thousands of beads out of the Spoon River.”

*(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.)*



**A recent NASA study published in the journal *Nature* predicts that high greenhouse gas emissions may cause corn output to decline as early as 2030, but wheat output would increase.**

## How rising food demand is affecting farming

The population is growing and so is its demand for food to fuel those extra bodies. Harvard Business Review reports the global population has quadrupled over the last century. It’s predicted that, by 2050, the population will exceed nine billion people.

The world is not able to feed all of its inhabitants, according to Penn State. There are more than one billion people who are estimated to lack sufficient food, and two billion who do not receive adequate nutrition. Researchers from the Institute on the Environment at the University of Minnesota concluded that, to feed the world by 2030, yields on maize, rice, wheat, and soybeans will have to rise by 60 to 110 percent. At the start of 2023, projections show them only increasing by 45 to 60 percent. There are a few reasons why food supply may not meet up with demand.

- Climate change: Climate change is predicted to cause issues to crop yields, especially in portions of the world where the population is grow-

ing the fastest. For example, a recent NASA study published in the journal *Nature* predicts that high greenhouse gas emissions may cause corn output to decline as early as 2030, but wheat output would increase. Farmers may need to roll with the punches and shift operations to cope with the environmental changes.

- Decreased commercial farming interest: Fewer people are working in farming. Land prices for expansion, new government mandates and regulations, and the impact of immigration and trade policies have made farming less attractive than it once was. Fewer commercial operations result in a diminished food commodity output.

- Consumer waste: Food loss and waste (FLW) is a widespread issue, posing a challenge to food security. The World Bank estimates 30 percent of all food across the globe is wasted, amounting to 1.3 billion tons of food per year. The average global household wastes 74 kg of food each year, according to the United Nations En-

vironment Programme’s 2021 Food Waste Index. Food waste is an issue that needs a solution as the world looks for ways to feed an expanding population in the decades to come.

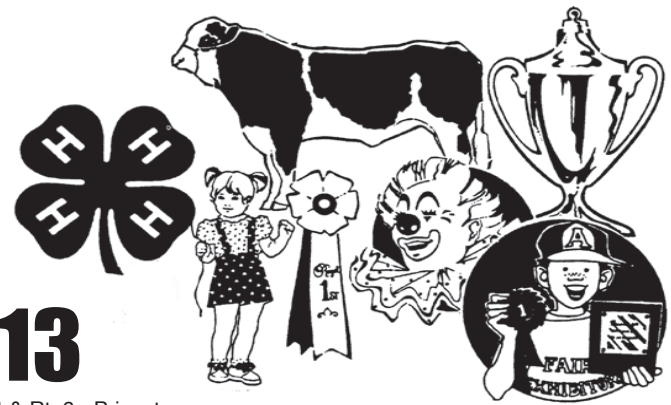
In order to improve output, farmers have to make some changes. These can include investment in tools and technologies that enable farmers to apply nutrients more precisely and at lower cost, advises the Environmental Defense Fund. Seeds that need less water and fewer nutrients, as well as new fertilizers that are less likely to be lost to air and water, are some additional ideas. Farmers also may want to employ green practices, such as hydroponics and drip irrigation, if they haven’t already, to improve efficiency and cut costs. The public also may need to petition their lawmakers to make it easier for farm workers arriving on working visas to man the fields.

Food demand continues to rise, and it has become challenging for agricultural operations to keep up.

# COME TO THE BUREAU COUNTY 4-H FAIR

## July 11-13

Bureau County 4-H Fairgrounds • Rt. 34 & Rt. 6 • Princeton



**Please note:** Please note: Times will vary according to project area. Full schedules will be posted at the fairgrounds.

### Monday – July 8

4 p.m. – Clothing/Sewing Judging, Extension Office

### Thursday – July 11

7:30 a.m. – Exhibit Buildings Open

9:00 a.m. – Judging Begins

Morning Judging: Foods, Food Decorating Projects, Crops/Horticulture, Natural Resources & Conservation, Weather

Afternoon Judging: Photography, Animal Sciences, Veterinary Sciences, Computers, eSports, Exploratory, Robotics, Health, Electricity, Interior Design, Journalism, Performing Arts, Woodworking, Video, Workforce Prep

5:00 p.m. – Fashion Revue, “4-H Rising Above the Rest”

6:00 p.m. – Exhibit Building Closed

### Friday – July 12

7:30 a.m. – Exhibit Buildings Open

8:30 a.m. – Judging Begins

Morning Judging: Visual Arts

Afternoon Judging: Aerospace with launch (weather permitting), Bicycle, Cat Show, Citizenship, Cloverbud projects, Do Your Own Thing, Passport to the World, College & Career Readiness, Child Development, Leadership, Read-A-Book, Small Engines, Welding, Tractor, Treasures From Trash

3:00 p.m. – All Market Lamb Weigh-in; all sheep and goats must be in pens

4:00 p.m. – Sheep Show start time

4:30 -5:30 p.m. – Swine & Beef Weigh-In

(All swine and market beef must be checked in at this time)

6:00 p.m. – Swine Show

6:00 p.m. – Exhibit Buildings Closed

### Saturday – July 13

7:30 a.m. – Exhibit Buildings Open

8:00 a.m. – All Livestock must be in pens

8:30 a.m. – Dairy Show

9:00 a.m. – Horse Show, Poultry Show, Rabbit Show

9:30 a.m. – Market Beef Show

10:30 a.m. (or after completion of Market Beef) – Breeding Beef & Bucket Calves

1:00 p.m. – Waterfowl & Pigeon Show



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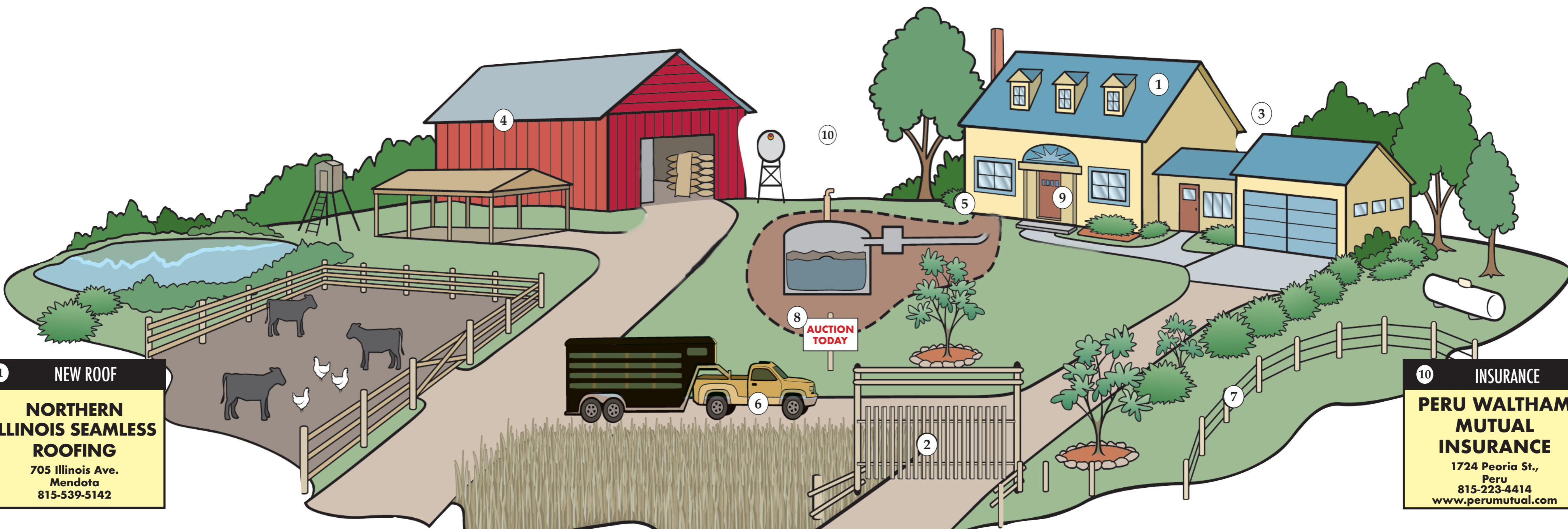
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Holly Spangler receives the Service to Agriculture award from Michael Lauher, AFM, vice president of the Illinois Society of Professional Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers. It is the highest honor the group bestows on a non-member and was presented at the group's annual meeting held in Champaign.

## Prairie Farmer magazine editor receives Service to Ag Citation

CHAMPAIGN – Holly Spangler, senior editor of Prairie Farmer magazine and executive editor for Farm Progress Publications, was presented the Service to Agriculture award by the Illinois Society of Professional Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers during the group's annual meeting in Champaign. Presenting the honor was Michael Lauher, AFM, vice president of the organization. It is the Chapter's highest honor to a non-member and has been awarded annually since 1940.

In making the presentation, Lauher noted that Spangler has covered Illinois agriculture for more than two decades, "bringing meaningful production agriculture experience to the magazine's coverage." In addition to her Prairie Farmer responsibilities, she also manages editorial staff at six magazines throughout the eastern Corn Belt.

She began her career with Prairie Farmer just before graduating from the University of Illinois in agricultural communications. An award-winning writer and photographer, Spangler is past president of the American Agricultural Editors Association.

In 2015, she became only the 10th U.S. agricultural journalist to earn the Writer of Merit designation and is a five-time winner of the top writing award for editorial opinion in U.S. agriculture.

She was named an AAEEA Master Writer in 2005. In 2011, Spangler was one of 10 recipients worldwide to receive the IFAJ-Alltech Young Leaders in Ag Journalism award. She currently serves on the Illinois Fairgrounds Foundation, the U

of I Agricultural Communications Advisory committee, and is an advisory board member for the U of I College of ACES Research Station at Monmouth.

Her work in agricultural media has been recognized by the Illinois Soybean Association, Illinois Corn Growers Association, Illinois Council on Agricultural Education and MidAmerica Croplife Association.

Spangler and her husband, John, farm in western Illinois where they raise corn, soybeans and beef cattle on 2,500 acres. Their operation includes 125 head of commercial cows in a cow/calf operation. The family farm includes John's parents and their three children.

She is the fourth Prairie Farmer magazine editor to be recognized with the Service to Agriculture citation by the Chapter. Previous honorees were Paul C. Johnson, 1963, James Thompson, 1981, and Josh Flint, 2014. Other recipients have been agribusiness professionals and leaders, state and federal officials, farmers and media.

The ISPFMRA is the oldest of the 28 state chapters of the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers. The Illinois group was founded at the University of Illinois campus in 1928 under the leadership of D. Howard Doane. Current Chapter membership is 262 active members with over 40 'friends' of the Chapter.

The ISPFMRA is the sponsor of the annual Illinois Land Values and Lease Trends Report. The 2024 Report was released at the annual Illinois Land Values Conference, which was held this spring in Bloomington.



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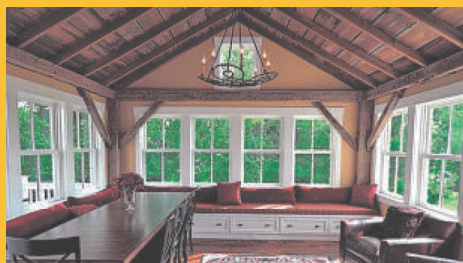
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# 2024 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

(Event times and dates are subject to change)

For more information, call Lee County Fair Association (815) 857-2603. [www.leecounty4hcenter.com](http://www.leecounty4hcenter.com)

## WEDNESDAY, JULY 24

3-8 p.m. Livestock may enter fairgrounds  
 4-8 p.m. Rabbit Department check-in – rabbit barn  
 5-7 p.m. Open Show Project check-in – auditorium  
 6-7 p.m. Horse Department check-in – fair office  
 7-8 p.m. Vet available to stamp health papers – fair office  
 10 p.m. All rabbits must be in place

## THURSDAY, JULY 25

8-11 a.m. Non-Livestock Project check-in  
 Open Show Project check-in – auditorium  
 9-11 a.m. Swine weigh-in – swine barn  
 10 a.m. 4-H Rabbit judging – rabbit barn  
 11 a.m. All livestock must be in place  
 11 a.m.-noon Vet available to stamp health paper – fair office  
 11:30 a.m. Open Show judging begins  
 Noon Gates open to public  
 Junior Show Crops judging – commercial building  
 4-H Healthy Living & Nutrition judging – commercial building  
 4-H Crops judging – commercial building  
 4-H Floriculture/Horticulture judging – commercial building  
 1 p.m. Junior Show Rabbit judging – rabbit barn  
 2 p.m. Goat judging – show barn  
 2:30 p.m. Cat judging – auditorium  
 4 & 4:30 p.m. Learn to Dance w/Starlight Dance Studio – entertainment tent  
 4-9 p.m. Midway open  
 4:30 p.m. Bingo – vendor tent  
 5 p.m. Watermelons w/Wyffels Hybrids – patio  
 5:30 p.m. Starlight Dance Studio – entertainment tent  
 6 p.m. Tractor/Truck Pull w/Back Road Pullers, Inc. – track  
 7 p.m. Big Wheel races – show barn

## FRIDAY, JULY 26

8 a.m. Gate open  
 9 a.m. Swing judging – show barn

10 a.m. 4-H Creative Arts: Visual Arts judging – commercial building  
 4-H Creative Arts: Photography & Communication judging – auditorium  
 4-H Creative STEM: Clothing & Interior Design judging – commercial building  
 4-H Animal Science judging – auditorium  
 11 a.m. Kids' Corner – entertainment tent  
 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Midway opens  
 1 p.m. Petting Zoo opens  
 2 p.m. Poultry judging – poultry barn  
 Dairy judging – show barn  
 Kids' Corner – entertainment tent  
 4 p.m. Pony Rides open – Midway  
 4-7 p.m. Pie Sale by Teen Turf – patio  
 4-8 p.m. Whoop Your Axe Throwing – Midway  
 5-7 p.m. Pork Chop Dinner by Lee Co. Pork Producers – patio  
 5 p.m. Awards Ceremony and Ambassador Announcement – auditorium  
 6 p.m. Farm Scene Contest set-up – commercial building  
 Quality Meats & Baked Goods Auction – auditorium  
 6:30 p.m. Lee Co. Fair & Illini State Pullers Tractor/Truck Pull – track  
 8 p.m. Pin Dodge Ball – show barn

## SATURDAY, JULY 27

7 a.m. Gate open  
 Pancake Breakfast by Teen Turf – patio  
 8 a.m. Horse Performance & Halter judging – arena  
 Junior Show Mechanical Sciences judging – commercial building  
 Sheep judging – show barn  
 9 a.m. Junior Show Visual Arts judging – commercial building  
 Junior Show Woodworking – commercial building  
 4-H Environmental Sciences judging – commercial building  
 4-H Global Civic Engagement, Career & Leadership judging – auditorium

10 a.m. 4-H STEM: Mechanical Sciences judging – commercial building  
 4-H Woodworking judging – commercial building  
 Beef Show – show barn  
 Farm Scene Contest open – commercial building  
 Cloverbud judging starts – auditorium  
 Kids' Corner – entertainment tent  
 11 a.m. Midway opens  
 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Whoop Your Axe Throwing – Midway  
 Noon-8 p.m. Petting Zoo opens – Midway  
 1 p.m. Kids' Corner: Making Mud Pies – entertainment tent  
 2 p.m. Country Dance – show barn  
 3-6 p.m. Pony Rides open – Midway  
 4 p.m. Magic by Cory – auditorium  
 5 p.m. Awards Ceremony & Cloverbud Graduation – auditorium  
 Watermelons w/Wyffels Hybrids – patio  
 5-7 p.m. Steak Sandwiches by Lee Co. Farm Bureau Young Leaders – foodstand  
 Country Dance – entertainment tent  
 6 p.m. Master Showmanship contest – show barn  
 7 p.m. Rodeo w/T&A Bucking Bulls – track

## SUNDAY, JULY 28

7 a.m. Gate open  
 8 a.m. Horse Novelty classes – arena  
 Shooting Sports w/Rock River Chapter of NWTF  
 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Pedal Pull registration begins – show barn  
 Marketplace Vendor Fair  
 10:30 a.m. Pedal Pull registration begins – show barn  
 11 a.m. Petting Zoo, Pony Rides & Midway open – Midway  
 Pedal Pull begins – show barn  
 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Whoop Your Axe Throwing – Midway  
 Noon Release time (Open Show only) – commercial building  
 1 p.m. Donkey Basketball – show barn  
 2 p.m. Release time (Farm Scene only) – commercial building  
 3 p.m. Release time (non-livestock 4-H & Jr.)  
 4 p.m. Release time (livestock & small animals 4-H & Jr.)

\*\*County Fair Speedway & Barrel Train running daily.

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## Steps farmers can take to combat climate change

Climate change is a challenge the world must confront together. Though people from all walks of life and in all corners of the world will be affected by rising global temperatures and the ripple effects of such increases, the impact of climate change on the agricultural sector figures to be especially significant.

Farmers have been on the front lines in the fight against climate change for decades. When storms strike and climate patterns shift, farmers must find ways to adapt or

potentially lose their livelihoods. Experts warn that the planet is warming at a pace that could prove devastating. For example, one assessment conducted under the World Climate Research Programme and published in 2020 in the Reviews of Geophysics concluded that the warming range of the planet will be between 2.6°C and 3.9°C.

Everyone must do their part in an effort to avoid the more drastic outcomes associated with climate change. Farmers can ex-

plore these ways to combat climate change as they look to protect their personal and financial futures.

- Curtail methane emissions. The European Environment Agency notes that capturing methane from manure is one way for farmers to reduce agriculture-related greenhouse gas emissions. The California Climate & Agriculture Networks notes that more than half of the state's agricultural emissions come from livestock in the form of methane. The nonprofit

organization Foodwise reports that holistic, pasture-based livestock management utilizing practices like rotational grazing can help mitigate methane emissions from livestock.

- Emphasize efficient use of fertilizers. The EEA recommends efficient use of fertilizers as another means to reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture at the U.S. Department of Agriculture notes that the greatest efficiency typically comes

from the first increment of added fertilizer/nutrients, with each additional increment thereafter resulting in lower efficiency. Making every effort to make the most of initial applications can save farmers money and reduce the impact on the environment.

- Participate in and help promote local farmers markets. Foodwise notes that food in the United States travels an average of 1,500 miles before it ends up on consumers' plates. Trans-

porting foods that far contributes to more greenhouse gas emissions. Farmers who can sell to local farmers markets can help reduce such emissions. Promoting those efforts via social media pages or other public platforms can increase consumer awareness of the availability of fresh, locally grown foods.

The challenges posed by climate change are not going away. Farmers can take various steps to overcome those challenges.



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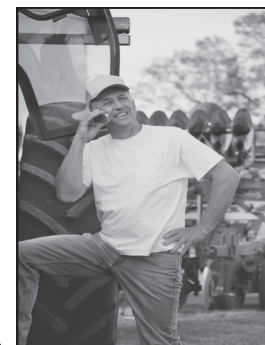
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The nonprofit organization Foodwise reports that holistic, pasture-based livestock management utilizing practices like rotational grazing can help mitigate methane emissions from livestock.



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## NASA launches 'out of this world' partnership with U.S. agriculture

By HANNAH SPANGLER

FarmWeek

Working with NASA might seem out of this world, but a new program aims to show the public that NASA is in agriculture on Earth, not just in space.

On April 23, farmers, researchers and other stakeholders met at the University of Illinois for the inaugural NASA Acres Symposium.

"When you think about NASA, you think about launching rockets or launching satellites, but one of the biggest NASA programs is Earth Science," said Kaiyu Guan, founder of the Agroecosystem Sustainability Center at U of I.

In March 2023, NASA Acres was established to bridge the gap between space and farms. The program aims to strengthen U.S. agriculture by answering some of the most pressing challenges facing the industry.

NASA Acres works with agriculturalists throughout the U.S. to see how NASA's resources can be used to help farmers.

Guan, who is also the chief scientist for NASA Acres, said the satellite Earth Observation based data can be used to track and predict the impacts of weather and climate, pest damage and soil tillage.

NASA satellite data can also be used to monitor nutrient loss and deficiencies and help farmers understand the impacts of practices like planting cover crops.

"We've been extensively working on crop nitrogen concentration," Guan told FarmWeek. "We've started to have confidence that we can sense how much nitrogen has been absorbed by crops."

Guan said that by integrating all available data, farmers can determine optimal management practices for rotation patterns, cover crop adoption and tillage methods. "This can help the whole system reduce nitrogen loss," he said.

Alyssa Whitcraft, NASA Acres executive director and associate research professor at the University of Maryland, said although NASA has been involved with agriculture since the 1970s, there has been a disconnect between the data and the farmer.

But throughout the past decade, Whitcraft said NASA has focused more on connecting with farmers to find the data that helps them.

Whitcraft said one of the main objectives of the program is to ensure NASA Acres' data can be integrated into some of the tools farmers already use. More than 30 agriculture and research groups, including Illinois Farm Bureau and U of I, are helping the program achieve this goal.

"Whether farmers use a preferred system for visualization when they're inside their combine or their sprayer, we would like our data and our tools to enrich that," Whitcraft said.

The next step is to inform farmers that they can access findings, data and tools and continue to provide their input through [NASAacres.org](https://NASAacres.org).

"We know that success is predicated on farmer involvement," Whitcraft said. "Our mission, paid for by public dollars, is to support farmers in having a productive, sustainable and resilient system to support their rural communities for decades and generations to come."

## Peach output looks to be variable again this season

By PHYLLIS COULTER

FarmWeek

The 2024 peach season is shaping up to be similar to last year.

In some parts of Illinois, there will be virtually no peaches because of a cold snap earlier this year. In others, peach farmers expect to harvest about half their normal crop, and one farm expects an "above average" crop.

All in all, there will be peaches this summer around the state, and growers expect them to be early.

"Pretty much everybody in Calhoun County lost most of their peaches this year," said Sandy Odelehr of Odelehr's Roadside Market in Brussels. Peaches are one of their main crops.

"We'll power through," she said of the setback. It is the second year of major losses for some peach growers. "Last year we had half a crop," she said.

"We do have lots of other crops," Odelehr noted. Their 150 different crops include many types of berries and other fruits and vegetables. They also make their own jams, pies and products that will keep their market in Calhoun County busy.

So far, Rendelman Orchards near Alto Pass in Union County looks like it will have "a good peach crop." It came through the winter pretty well, said Wayne Sirles, fifth generation of the family farm.

In Union County, things are looking "pretty good" at Flamm Orchards, said Mike Flamm, who is expecting an "above average" peach harvest.

"We got lucky," he said. Temperatures stayed about 2 degrees above freezing in his area, while other parts of southern Illinois sustained temperatures below freezing long enough to destroy a crop.

"All you can do is hope and pray when temperatures get that low," he said.

"Lucky 13" is one of Flamm's unlucky varieties this year. "We've got some but not a full crop."

Flamm expects the peach season to start earlier than the typical July 4, maybe in June in his area.

This year, it will be easier for central and northern Illinois residents to get Flamm peaches with the introduction of their new mobile truck that will make stops at designated Tractor Supply Co. locations.

"It's a completely new thing," Parker Flamm said of the effort to get more local



**Peaches at the Flamm Orchard in Cobden are maturing well. At this rate, peach harvest should start around the first week of July in Union County, Parker Flamm said. (Photo courtesy of Parker Flamm)**

peaches to consumers. Starting in mid-June, people can pre-order on Flamm's website, and in July, an ad with details will run in FarmWeek.

The Flamm mobile peach truck plans to visit Geneva from July 28 to Aug. 17; Kankakee from July 27 to Aug. 18; Springfield from July 20 to Aug. 4 and Bloomington from July 21 to Aug. 3.

Eckert's in St. Clair County falls somewhere between highs and lows of other counties.

"We're in the middle zone. We will have about half a crop. That's a little better than last year," said Chris Eckert, president and CEO of Eckert's family farm, in Belleville.

"That's raising peaches in Illinois," he said of the weather-related challenges.

*(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](https://FarmWeekNow.com).)*

## From the cockpit to tractor cab: A Navy man's return to the family farm

By ALI PRESTON

FarmWeek

"You can do whatever you want, you just can't come back here."

Chris Gould still remembers those words from his parents when he was told there wasn't an opportunity for him on the family farm after high school.

While he could've chosen any educational or career path, Gould's innate calling to serve, and the lure of financial assistance, led him to apply for a Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) scholarship at the University of Illinois.

After graduating from the U of I in 1991, Gould was commissioned as an officer in the U.S. Navy. He received orders to attend flight school in Pensacola, Florida, before being selected for jet training in Kingsville, Texas. He received his wings in September 1994.

During his 10 years of service, Gould graduated from the "Top Gun" Fighter Weapons School, was a tactics instructor for the East Coast Hornets and served in deployable, warfighting fleets.

But the most impactful moment came on Sept. 11, 2001.

"On the morning of Sept. 11, I was driving to work and was listening to news reports like everyone else. Shortly after I got there,

it was decided a few jets, including mine, would get loaded with live missiles and fly onto the USS George Washington off the coast of New Jersey. We took turns sitting Alert 15 for the next few days, which means we had to sit in our flight gear and be airborne within 15 minutes of the launch order. On the morning of Sept. 12, I woke up and was walking out on the flight deck and we were in New York Harbor watching two pillars of smoke barreling up from downtown New York," he recalled. "That was impactful."

And it was amid the intensity of military life that Gould found ties to his agricultural roots.

The first connection came from his call sign — "Farmer."

"To most people in the U.S., farming is crazy. Like they don't get it. They don't even understand that there are still farmers," he said. "Just that I grew up on a farm was weird for them and they thought it was hilarious. So, I just defaulted to 'Farmer.'"

And while the squadron of F-18 pilots was small, only 18 officers, Gould found himself serving alongside "Grouch," who grew up on a sugarcane plantation in Louisiana.

"It was fun to compare notes with him," Gould said. "But again, very, very

rare to have that many or to have really any farmers that I knew of."

When Gould moved back to Maple Park with his wife, Dana, and three young children in 2001, he didn't have a strong background in agronomy or anything related to the business aspects of farming. But he also didn't have the luxury of time.

His father, Eldon, was appointed administrator of USDA's Risk Management Agency and looked to Gould to take over the farm.

"In about a two-week period, or what seemed like two weeks, I went from being an occasional tractor driver to running a business, which are two totally different things," he said.

Thankfully, his military training instilled in him a sense of confidence in the face of uncertainty.

"When I started to feel intimidated, I always looked at that next guy and said, 'If he can do it, I can do it,'" Gould said. "It's about recognizing that people have figured it out before me, and I can figure it out, too."

He also found support from his local agronomy retailers and grain merchandisers and completed the two-year Illinois Ag Leadership Program and learned by doing.

Now, after being back on the farm for more than 20



Chris Gould's call sign "Farmer" was displayed on the side of his jet. (Photo courtesy of Chris Gould)

years, Gould continues to lean into his military experience as he finds parallels between his two careers.

"The speeds are a lot different, but honestly, there's a lot of the same technology," he said. "It's all about precision, down to the inch."

As Gould guides the family farm into the future, his kids are following in his flight path. His daughter, Vanessa, is returning to the

farm and is starting to take on some responsibilities. His son, Drew, also went through ROTC at the U of I. He recently finished Navy primary flight training and was selected for jets, like his dad, and is soon heading to Meridian, Mississippi, for advanced flight training.

And while his career as a fighter pilot took him to new heights, Gould said there really is no place like home.

"I didn't realize how much I love being here," he said about the Kane County farm. "Waking up on a nice summer morning and looking down the driveway seeing corn growing tall and tasseled. I just love it. And the best part about that is Dana loves it, too."

(Editor's note: This story is part of the Cultivating Our Communities campaign, a collaboration by Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton, Illinois Department of Agriculture, Illinois Farm Bureau and the Illinois Specialty Growers Association to showcase Illinois' diverse farmers.)

(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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