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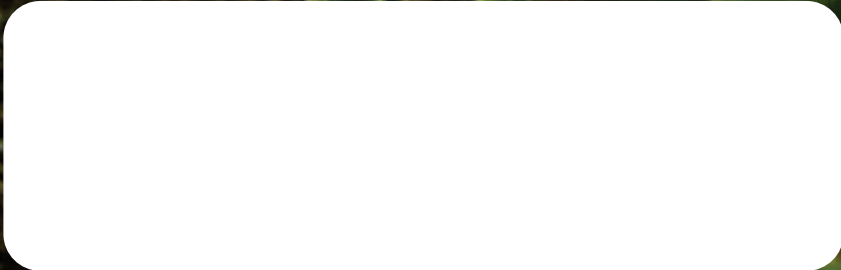
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Successful Ag Career Exploration Fair held in Oregon

OREGON—Over 175 high school and middle school students attended the Ag Career Exploration Fair on Nov. 21 in Oregon. Students met with and asked questions to college recruiters and business representatives who focused on studies and careers in the agricultural field. Colleges shared information on the many majors in agriculture and what it takes to get a degree. Agriculture-related employers had representatives there to offer career knowledge and discuss the skills needed to perform specific jobs.

High schools that participated were from Oregon, Ashton-Franklin Center, and Fulton. Colleges, universities, and businesses that were on hand for the students were Blackhawk College East Campus, Iowa State, Joliet Junior College, Southern Illinois University, University of Wisconsin-Platteville, Western Illinois University, Bayer, CHS, Etnyre, Nachusa Grasslands, and Vita Plus. There were also U of I Extension staff to talk about food science and careers in Extension. John Heisner from FCAE visited with students about ag education as a career path.

Melinda Colbert, University of Illinois Extension Ag in the Classroom Program coordinator, said, “The target audience is high school students, and sometimes ag teachers or guidance counselors bring the students. The home school population that attends continues to grow, along with students that come with their parents.” The event was free and open to the public.

Ag in the Classroom is offered through the University of Illinois Extension in partnership with Ogle County Farm Bureau, Carroll County Farm Bureau, Ogle County Soil & Water, and Carroll County Soil & Water.



(COURTESY PHOTO)

Business representatives from Bayer were available to answer participants questions.

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City of Rochelle tours Pure Flavor hydroponic facility

BY JEFF HELFRICH
MANAGING EDITOR

ROCHELLE — In November, Pure Flavor (formerly MightyVine) invited representatives from the City of Rochelle to Windsor, Ontario, Canada to see a similar facility that could be built in Rochelle. Pure Flavor currently operates a greenhouse in Rochelle and is considering expansion, City Manager Jeff Fiegenschuh told the News-Leader Dec. 18.

City representatives on the Canada trip were City Council Members Rosaelia Arteaga and Ben Valdivieso, Economic Development Director Jason Anderson, Fiegenschuh, Lee County Industrial Development Association Director Tom Demmer, City Building Inspector Geoff Starr and Rochelle Fire Department Chief Dave Sawlsville.

The facility city representatives toured in November is over a million square feet. It includes on-site living quarters and participation in a federal visa program that allows people to come in and live and work there for up to three years to help with packaging and picking of tomatoes.

“They’re thinking about doing something similar here,” Fiegenschuh said, “It’d be a 10-month program. Their property isn’t zoned for it now, so they couldn’t do it here unless the property was rezoned and they haven’t issued any type of application to rezone the property. They bought out MightyVine and wanted us to see their operations there. It was an opportunity for us to meet the ownership and their leadership team and talk about what some of their priorities for Rochelle are going into the future and their



(COURTESY PHOTO)

In November, Pure Flavor (formerly MightyVine) invited representatives from the City of Rochelle to Windsor, Ontario, Canada to see a similar facility that could be built in Rochelle.

expansion plans. It gave us a chance to see their facility and how they operate. I was impressed. It was a very sophisticated operation.”

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From page 4

Fiegenschuh said he believes any type of positive growth is good for the city, and that on-site housing would be up to the city's planning & zoning commission and ultimately the mayor and city council. The city put Pure Flavor in touch with its community development department if it wants to move forward with any type of rezoning or variance and nothing has been submitted yet.

A potential expansion of the greenhouse facility would also impact Rochelle Municipal Utilities, the city-owned electric utility. RMU Superintendent of Electric Operations Blake Toliver said the utility would be able to service an expanded Pure Flavor facility.

With industrial electric load growth in mind, the city is currently in the easement acquisition phase of a new electrical substation project on the west side of town on Illinois Route 38. The project will include 10 miles of transmission line between the new substation and others at Ritchie Road and Twombly Road. The project will cost north of \$20 million.

"That substation is being built to serve the needs of a Pure Flavor expansion as well as some other growth in that western edge of our territory," Toliver said. "The whole point of building that substation is to be able to serve the needs of future industrial growth in that area. Right now Pure Flavor is 25 acres under glass and they'd like to be 50 acres. Right now their usage is around 14 megawatts at full load. We'd expect it to be 25-28 megawatts depending on the lighting they do. That substation would be capable of over 50 megawatts of energy. We'd be able to cover their load and still have some left over for another industrial development."

Toliver said load growth is positive for RMU, the local economy and taxing bodies such as school districts. However, RMU strives



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

Pure Flavor currently operates a greenhouse in Rochelle and is considering expansion, City Manager Jeff Fiegenschuh said.

to be cognizant of the choices it makes when dealing with topics like load growth due to its small customer base of 7,500 to make sure adverse impacts aren't seen on customers.

The city and RMU often meet with current business owners and prospective developers about expansions and new projects that could increase RMU's electric load.

"Looking at so much potential load growth can be very daunting," Toliver said. "And you don't know what's going to stick. We have tons of meetings with developers all the time and they're constantly looking at land. As soon as one sticks, we move to planning on moving forward with getting the infrastructure and making sure we have enough power available. We may get 30 inquiries a month from interested developers. I always preface my emails back to economic development with, 'This is what we have today.' Because tomorrow it might be different."

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Harvest in Ogle County: ‘Overall I think this year went well’

BY JEFF HELFRICH
MANAGING EDITOR

OGLE COUNTY — In an interview with the Rochelle News-Leader and Ogle County Life on Nov. 25, Ogle County Farm Bureau Manager Ron Kern said that harvest should be fully wrapped up locally by the beginning of December.

“There may be small pockets of unharvested crops out there, but for the most part harvest is done and the grain is in the bin,” Kern said. “We had a pretty dry fall, so we didn’t really have any weather pressure with things like not being able to get out into the fields. It was excellent weather for fall harvest. We were able to move and move when we wanted to and needed to without any interruptions.”

Kern said from what he’s seen, bean yields have been “around average.” He said Ogle County farmers hoped for better than average yields on beans, but dry conditions around mid-August likely hampered that. For corn, Ogle County farmers have seen “a little or a lot better than average” yields, Kern said.

Growing season locally saw good rain levels and timely rain, which Kern said was the most ideal the county has seen in a while. However, after a dry fall, there is some concern locally about moisture levels ahead of spring planting in 2025.

“We’re starting to show up on the drought index due to recent low moisture,” Kern said. “But there’s still some months ahead of us before the spring. Overall I think this year went well. We still continue to see very low commodity prices. But I don’t think there were any complaints about the growing.”

Farmers in the region did not encounter the issue of having to



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

In an interview with the Rochelle News-Leader and Ogle County Life on Nov. 25, Ogle County Farm Bureau Manager Ron Kern said that harvest fully wrapped up locally by the beginning of December.

spend money on gas to dry down crops this fall, as most crops dried down in the fields with the weather. After rain did come in recent weeks, farmers were able to do some fall tillage after picking their crops, along with nitrogen application.

The dry harvest time brought with it a number of field fires in the county in recent months.

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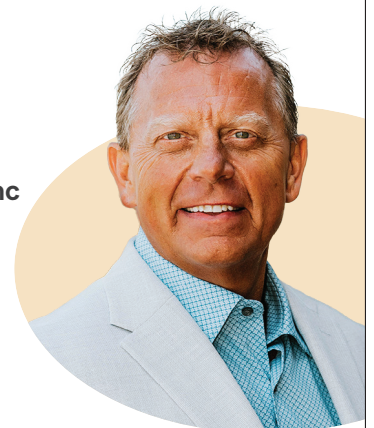
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“Whenever you have a dry harvest season, farmers have to be extra cautious with buildup around the engine compartments of tractors and combines,” Kern said. “This year lent itself to more field and combine fires. Sometimes it’s preventable, sometimes it’s something you can’t anticipate. It’s unfortunate when those things happen. You just have to hope for no injuries and that the fire can be contained within a certain area and move on from there.”

With high anticipated yields due to good weather conditions earlier in the year, some farmers in the industry encountered or feared a shortage of bin space. Kern said local farmers did not encounter that issue, and that farmers have expanded on-farm storage more in the past 30 years to handle crops better and more efficiently.

Dry weather also caused lower levels of the Mississippi River, which is used by the agriculture industry to ship crops.

“The Mississippi River issue depends on where farmers ship to and out of,” Kern said. “When you get to a point where barges are having trouble getting up and down the Mississippi, that is going to start to play into prices people receive back on the farm. I don’t know if the river level is critical right now, but it definitely could use an influx of water.”

Kern said that two large-scale issues facing farmers right now are trade and the need for a new federal farm bill. A new farm bill comes about every five years, and the most recent one was extended a year.

“Our foreign trade numbers aren’t looking all that good,” Kern said. “That weighs heavily on the commodity prices. I think



(PHOTO BY JEFF HELFRICH)

OCFB Manager Ron Kern said that two large-scale issues facing farmers right now are trade and the need for a new federal farm bill. A new farm bill comes about every five years, and the most recent one was extended a year.

domestic use is holding steady and we seem to be hanging in there. We really need to get more aggressive in the trade market and some of these trade agreements if we’re going to try to prop these commodity prices up. And we need congress to get going on crafting a new farm bill and getting it passed and in place to protect things like crop insurance for farmers and those types of things so farmers have the risk management tools they need to continue to try to move forward and profit.”

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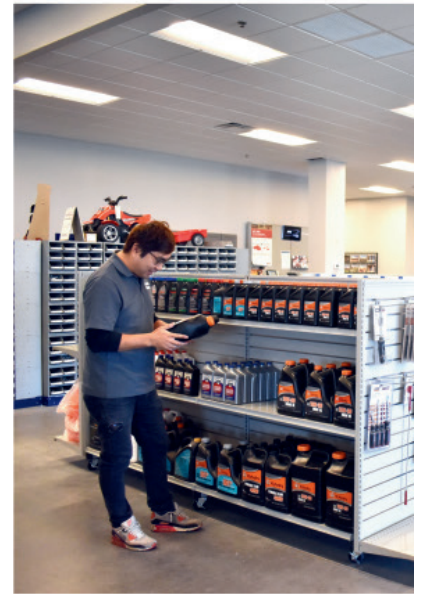
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USMCA dispute decision a win for Illinois corn farmers

BY TAMMIE SLOUP
FARMWEEK

THE United States' victory in its dispute over Mexico's decree to ban genetically modified corn imports is good news for Illinois corn growers.

United States Trade Representative Katherine Tai announced the U.S. prevailed in its dispute under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) challenging certain Mexican biotechnology measures concerning genetically engineered (GE) corn. The USMCA panel agreed with the U.S. on all seven legal claims, finding that Mexico's measures are not based on science and undermine the market access that Mexico agreed to provide in the USMCA.

"The panel's ruling reaffirms the United States' longstanding concerns about Mexico's biotechnology policies and their detrimental impact on U.S. agricultural exports," Tai said. "It underscores the importance of science-based trade policies that allow American farmers and agricultural producers to compete fairly and leverage their innovation to address climate change and enhance productivity. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the Mexican government to ensure a level playing field and provide access to safe, affordable and sustainable agricultural products on both sides of the border."

The dispute challenged two sets of measures reflected in Mexico's February 2023 presidential corn decree, including an immediate ban on the use of GE corn in dough and tortillas, and an instruction to Mexican government agencies to gradually eliminate the use of GE corn for other food uses and in animal feed. The U.S. established the panel in August 2023.

Illinois Farm Bureau President Brian Duncan called the decision an "important victory."

"It was a strong ruling on behalf of U.S. corn growers and a vital export market that we need to remain open," Duncan told RFD Radio. "It's also a victory for rules-based trade."

IL Corn Growers Association (ICGA) President and Waterloo farmer Garrett Hawkins said the panel's decision is positive news for Illinois corn farmers and Mexican corn importers.

"As the largest corn export state in the union, Illinois corn farmers are proponents of free trade agreements and of making free trade agreements work," Hawkins said in a statement. "ICGA and the National Corn Growers Association had a significant role in fighting this unscientific Mexican government overreach and



(PHOTO BY CATRINA RAWSON OF FARMWEEK)

A bountiful harvest resulted in this corn pile in Amboy (Lee County) last fall. Illinois exports more corn than any other U.S. state, so growers here recently welcomed a key decision concerning trade with Mexico.

urging the U.S. Trade Representative to challenge the ban that would limit Mexican buyers' choices and reduce U.S. market access. We are so happy to see the ruling issued in our favor and look forward to building our trade relationship with our top export customer for all types of corn."

From January through October 2024, the United States exported \$4.8 billion of corn to Mexico — the United States' largest export market for the grain.

The panel issued its final report on Dec. 20. Under USMCA rules, Mexico has 45 days from the date of the final report to comply with the panel's findings.

The panel, in its report, wrote that while Mexico is seeking to address genuine concerns in good faith, such concerns should be "channeled into an appropriate risk assessment process, measures based on scientific principles and in dialogue among all USMCA parties to facilitate a constructive path forward."

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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OCFB's Kern: Cash rents may be decreasing

IT'S that time of year where I start fielding calls from landlords curious about what cash rent for farmland should be. There's no magic formula as coming to a cash rent is a negotiation. However when looking at the economic impact of grain farming last year I would caution those landlords that cash rents may be decreasing, particularly if you want to keep a good tenant on the farm. A mindset of less is more may be appropriate.

Let's look at AFBF economic outlook for agriculture and you will see what I mean.

USDA's December 2024 farm income forecast confirms just how tough a year it's been for American agriculture, with slightly revised projections offering little relief to farmers, who are losing nearly a quarter of their income in two years. Net farm income is now projected at \$140.7 billion for 2024, down \$6 billion (4.1%) from 2023 and \$41.2 billion (22.6%) from the \$181.9 billion peak in 2022. The December revision does little to alleviate concerns about the financial pressures farmers face heading into 2025, and the overall figure masks the dramatic decline in returns for crop farmers.

When adjusted for inflation, the drop in net farm income becomes more pronounced, with a projected decline of \$9.5 billion (6.3%) from 2023. Although the updated 2024 figure remains above the 20-year average, the metrics paint a challenging picture, particularly for crop producers, who face substantial revenue declines. While some sectors, most predominantly livestock, are seeing stronger receipts, the December forecast underscores that agriculture remains in the red.

Crop producers will continue to bear the brunt of the economic downturn. Total crop receipts for 2024 are now projected to decline by \$25 billion (9.2%) from 2023 to \$246.2 billion. This marks the

second straight year of significant declines in crop cash receipts, reflecting weaker global demand, falling prices and increased competition from international markets.

Corn receipts are expected to fall \$16.6 billion (20.8%). Soybean receipts are likewise forecast to fall \$6.9 billion (12.3%).

Livestock producers are faring comparatively better, with total receipts for animal and animal products expected to grow by \$21 billion (8.4%) to \$270.6 billion in 2024. Cattle and calf receipts, bolstered by higher prices, are projected to rise by \$7.3 billion (7.2%), exceeding earlier predictions. Milk receipts are expected to grow by \$5.3 billion (11.5%), also outpacing the 9.4% increase forecast in September. Pork producers are projected to see receipts increase modestly by \$1.5 billion (5.7%), driven by both higher prices and quantities sold.

Egg producers, who initially faced grim projections earlier in the year, continue to see significant gains, with receipts now expected to rise by \$7 billion (39.4%), reflecting higher prices and increased demand.

USDA's metric, Farm Business Average Net Cash Income by Commodity Specialization, offers valuable insights into the financial performance of farm businesses based on their primary commodity focus.

Farm businesses specializing in soybean production experienced a significant 44% decline in net cash income, while those focused on wheat saw a 43% decline, and corn-focused operations experienced a 42% decline.

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From page 10

In stark contrast, farm businesses specializing in cattle and calves achieved a remarkable 154% increase, while those focused on poultry saw substantial growth, with net cash income rising by 31%. Income for dairies dropped starkly between 2022 and 2023 but rose dramatically in 2024 – up 19% over 2022. These trends illustrate the dramatic variability in financial outcomes across commodity sectors, influenced by shifts in market conditions, input costs and revenue streams over the observed timeframe.

Farmers are expected to spend slightly less on production in 2024, with total production expenses forecast to decline by \$8 billion (1.7%) to \$453.9 billion. Lower costs for feed, fertilizer and fuel contribute to this reduction, with feed expenses projected to fall \$10.5 billion (13.2%), fertilizer expenses down \$3 billion (8.4%) and fuel costs declining by \$2 billion (11.3%). Given low crop prices, drops in expenses most closely associated with crop production are not unexpected.

Rising costs in key categories like labor and interest continue to offset these savings. Labor expenses are expected to rise by \$3 billion (6.1%), while interest expenses climb \$1.8 billion (4.1%), reflecting higher debt levels and sustained high interest rates. These rising costs add to the financial strain on farmers, who are already grappling with shrinking margins and limited liquidity.

Despite declining net farm income, USDA projects farm sector equity — the difference between assets and debt — to rise by 5.2% to \$3.68 trillion in 2024, reflecting growth in real estate values. Total farm sector assets are expected to increase by 5.1% to \$4.22 trillion, with real estate comprising 84% of this total. Meanwhile,

farm sector debt is forecast to climb 4.5% to a record \$542.5 billion, with increases in both real estate and non-real estate debt. While solvency metrics such as the debt-to-asset ratio are expected to improve slightly, reduced liquidity — indicated by a 6.9% decline in working capital — points to ongoing financial strain, particularly as debt levels continue to grow.

USDA's December report underscores the volatility of the U.S. farm economy as farmers face their second consecutive year of declining income. Net farm income in 2024 remains nearly 25% below its 2022 peak, and the minimal upward revisions since September offer little reprieve from the financial pressures farmers are enduring.

Crop producers, in particular, face dramatic declines in cash receipts, with little hope for immediate relief as global supply chain disruptions continue and prices for key commodities remain depressed. Livestock producers enjoy higher prices at the moment, but gains in this sector are uneven. Rising production costs threaten to erode profitability across the board.

With government payments shrinking and the income safety net failing to keep pace with the realities of modern agriculture, farmers are left to navigate an increasingly precarious financial landscape. As policymakers continue overdue farm bill discussions, these figures serve as a reminder that the targeted reforms that could address our farmers' unique challenges remain stuck in the legislative process.

"The first lesson of economics is scarcity: there is never enough of anything to fully satisfy all those who want it. The first lesson of politics is to disregard the first lesson of economics." -Thomas Sowell
Ron Kern is the manager of the Ogle County Farm Bureau.



Ron Kern

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URBANA — Across the state, more than 650 University of Illinois Extension employees work to serve the communities where they live and help tackle local issues with research-based solutions. Illinois Extension honored 11 outstanding individuals whose efforts demonstrate significant public value and impact on staff, volunteers, program participants, and partners at its annual conference in November.

These exemplary staff members have served varying lengths of time, from just a few years to several decades, working on campus, in local offices, and across various program areas. Among those honored was Johnna Jennings, a 4-H youth development educator from DeKalb County.

With over 31 years of service at Illinois Extension, Jennings exemplifies the 4-H motto of “Making the Best Better.” She serves communities in Boone, DeKalb, and Ogle counties and leads impactful programs such as “Health Jam,” “Chick Incubation and Embryology,” conducts Teen Teacher Cooking Schools to promote healthy cooking skills, and she works to support 4-H community club programs. Additionally, she has played a key role in the Northern Illinois 4-H Camp by training teen counselors and enhancing the experiences of participants. For 24 years, she has also contributed to the State 4-H Volunteerism Committee. Jennings recently received the National 4-H Meritorious Service Award.

Illinois 4-H empowers youth to tackle the challenges facing



(COURTESY PHOTO)

Extension 4-H Youth Development Educator Johnna Jennings (right) received the Individual Excellence Award from Amanda Taylor, associate director, Workforce Development (left).

Illinois by developing the leaders, innovators, entrepreneurs, stewards, and builders needed for the future. To learn how to get involved with 4-H in your community, visit extension.illinois.edu/bdo/4-h-clubs or call the office at 815-758-8194.



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OREGON—Get ahead of an expired pesticide license by signing up for one of the in-person training and testing clinics happening in Oregon and Sycamore in February and March. The University of Illinois Pesticide Safety Education Program understands that putting experience, safety, awareness, and knowledge to the test helps ensure a safer application.

Those interested in attending an in-person training clinic should register early, as seating is limited with some locations already close to full. Find the 2025 training schedule and options at go.illinois.edu/PSEP. In-person testing for all exams will occur at the Ogle County Farm Bureau, 421 W Pines Rd in Oregon, on Feb. 19 and 26 and March 5 and 19 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Private Applicator Exam sessions will occur at the DeKalb County Farm Bureau, 1350 W Prairie Dr in Sycamore on Feb. 12 and March 12 from 9 a.m. to noon. The pricing is \$45 for General Standards or Private Applicator and \$25 for each category, including Field Crops, Rights of Way, Mosquito, Turfgrass, and Ornamentals.

Registration and payment are required before attending a clinic and can be completed at go.illinois.edu/PSEP or by calling (800) 644-2123. Official publications should only be purchased from the official Illinois Extension Distribution Services webstore or at the Ogle County and DeKalb County Extension offices with an inventory available. These materials may be purchased online at go.illinois.edu/PesticideSafetyPublications or by calling (217) 333-2007.

For questions or if a reasonable accommodation is needed to participate in this program, contact PSEP Program Facilitator Jean Miles at jmiles1@illinois.edu or (217) 265-0670.



Horst named Fair Volunteer of the Year

At its annual meeting on Saturday, Nov. 9, Ogle County Fair Board President Tom Simpson, presented the Volunteer of the Year award to Lukas Horst. Lukas was at the fair all week helping with anything we asked of him. The board would also like to thank everyone who supported and volunteered with the Ogle County Fair this year. The Ogle County Fair Association Is a Tax Exempt 501c-3 Non-Profit Organization that is totally run by volunteers, so it would not be possible to operate without your help, support, and donations.

(Courtesy photo)

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Ogle County 4-H'ers honored for outstanding achievement

OREGON—Eighty-nine Ogle County 4-H'ers were honored for their achievements during the 2024 4-H year at club programs this fall. The 4-H Experience Award allows 4-H'ers to be recognized for their work in Project Learning, Participation, Community Service, and Leadership. Three levels can be earned: Bronze 4-H Clover Award, Silver 4-H Clover Award, and Gold 4-H Clover Award. All awards were distributed at the member's 4-H Club awards banquet.

BRONZE 4-H CLOVER AWARD WINNERS: These 4-H'ers completed at least one experience in each of the four dimensions. These include project learning, participation, community service, and leadership.

They include: Kerrigan Becker, Pine Creek Valley. Adrien Booker, By-Y-Badgers. Delaney Byers, Summerhill Huskies. Aleeya Dykstra, Pine Creek Valley. Emily Harbaugh, Carefree. Hayden Harvey, Summerhill Huskies. Annaliese Koziol, Ogle County Clovers. Edward Koziol, Ogle County Clovers. Leo Koziol, Ogle County Clovers. Nicolette Koziol, Ogle County Clovers. Zeb Yocum, Pine Creek Valley.

SILVER 4-H CLOVER AWARD WINNERS: These 4-H'ers completed at least two experiences in each of the four dimensions. These include project learning, participation, community service, and leadership. Also, at least two of those experiences were at the county, regional, state, or national level.

They include: Kayden Barndt, Pine Creek Valley. Alex Booker, By-Y-Badgers. Hayden Capes, Hub Hickory Nuts. Bristol Clark, Ogle Jolly. Gregory Dorwaldt, Ogle County Clovers. Kamryn Feltz, Mighty Clovers. Trinity Feltz, Mighty Clovers.



(COURTESY PHOTO)

Paisley Harbaugh, Carefree 4-H Cloverbud, was recognized.

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Tylar Groth, Summerhill Huskies. Jenna Heller, Grand Detour Greens. Jacob Hickman, By-Y-Badgers. Lauren Hickman, By-Y-Badgers. Kenzie Hongsermeier, Leaf River Busy Beavers. Lily Hongsermeier, Leaf River Busy Beavers. Grant Johnson, Leaf River Soaring Eagles. Elizabeth Kennedy, Hub Hickory Nuts. Kaylee King, Mighty Clovers. Mallory King, Mighty Clovers. Aubrey Kusnierz, Mighty Clovers. Madeline Kusnierz, Mighty Clovers. Haven Marks, Summerhill Huskies. Savannah Marks, Summerhill Huskies. Lucy Miller, Leaf River Soaring Eagles. Sophia Palmer, Mighty Clovers. Noah Richardson, Ogle County Clovers. Katelyn Rockwood, Pine Creek Valley. James Runte, Pine Creek Valley. Madisyn Ruthe, Mighty Clovers. Owen Smardo, Ogle County Clovers. Joshua Snow, Blackhawk Crossing. Heidi Westfall, Blackhawk Crossing. Addison Yordy, Leaf River Soaring Eagles.

GOLD 4-H CLOVER AWARD WINNERS: These 4-H'ers completed at least four experiences in each of the four dimensions. These include project learning, participation, community service, and leadership. Also, at least two of those experiences were at the state or national level.

They include: Kaitlyn Adams, Ogle Jolly. Nolan Adams, Ogle Jolly. Immanuel Arellano, Blackhawk Crossing. David Bagwell, Leaf River Soaring Eagles. Nicholas Cassens, By-Y-Badgers. Harmony Coy, Blackhawk Crossing. Ali Danekas, Pine Creek Valley. Alayna Doane, Mighty Clovers. Bruce Gehrke, By-Y-Badgers. Colton Gehrke, By-Y-Badgers. Luke Gehrke, By-Y-Badgers. Shelby Harbaugh, Carefree. Andrew Hickman, By-Y-Badgers. Kodi Hubbard, Carefree. Kaden Lingbeck,

Leaf River Soaring Eagles. Anna Marquardt, Carefree. Allissa Martin, Carefree. Kailee Miller, Carefree. Kaeden Motszko, Leaf River Soaring Eagles. Alyse Rogers, Ogle Jolly. Braden Rogers, Ogle Jolly. Lydia Sherburne, Leaf River Soaring Eagles. Kathryn Snow, Blackhawk Crossing. David Wehler, Leaf River Soaring Eagles.

CLOVERBUDS are 4-H'ers between the ages of 5-7. The following Cloverbud members will also be recognized by their clubs: Camila Bonne, Ogle Jolly. Jude Bruns, Carefree. Evalynn Chapman, Summerhill Huskies. Jordi Collins, Ogle Jolly. Zaelia Daniels, Hub Hickory Nuts. William Dorwaldt, Ogle County Clovers. Rowen Eckerstrom, Ogle Jolly. Jack Feldhaus, By-Y-Badgers. Declan Franks, By-Y-Badgers. Briella Franks, By-Y-Badgers. Paisley Harbaugh, Carefree. Remington Harvey, Summerhill Huskies. Stella Hauch, Ogle Jolly. Julia Herring, Hub Hickory Nuts. Macklin Hubbard, Carefree. Emilia Janoski, Ogle Jolly. Zeke Janoski, Ogle Jolly. Ty Johnson, Ogle Jolly. Calvin Kloster, By-Y-Badgers. Jack Kusnierz, Mighty Clovers. Ainslee Logan, Carefree. Auden Logan, Carefree. Lillian Miller, Carefree. Emma Rasmussen, Ogle Jolly. Harper Rockwood, Pine Creek Valley. Liam Roose, Hub Hickory Nuts. Natalya Ruthe, Mighty Clovers. William Safranek, By-Y-Badgers. Emma Schier, Carefree. Alana Smith, Summerhill Huskies. Allan Smith, Summerhill Huskies. Hewyt Westfall, Blackhawk Crossing. Hayley Windland, Hub Hickory Nuts. Reminton Zabran, Carefree.

4-H is an informal youth education program conducted by University of Illinois Extension. U of I Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment. If you need reasonable accommodations to participate in 4-H, contact the Ogle County Extension staff at 815-732-2191.

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Ogle County 4-H Achievement Celebration winners named

OREGON — Ogle County's top 4-H members and clubs were honored for outstanding achievement at a special program held Sunday, Nov. 17, in the Byron Civic Theatre.

Top county honors went to 4-H teens Aylivia Danekas, Polo, and Nicholas Cassens, Byron. Danekas, Pine Creek Valley 4-H Club, and Cassens, By-Y-Badgers 4-H Club, were the recipients of the Co-op Watch Awards sponsored by Ogle County Farm Bureau and its affiliates. Watches are awarded yearly to the two 4-H'ers with the most impressive records of long-term leadership and service at the club level and beyond.

Bruce Gehrke, Byron, received a \$50 cash award sponsored by the Ogle County 4-H Foundation. The Foundation Award is presented annually to a single 4-H'er who has shown leadership skills and a willingness to help with 4-H activities. It has also served as a positive example to younger members.

Four youths were challenged to greater leadership and service as the "I Dare You" Leadership Award recipients. New owners of William Danforth's inspiring book, "I Dare You," these youth were selected based on their previous leadership, citizenship, and project work. Winners included: Alayna Doane, Mighty Clovers 4-H Club; Colton Gehrke, By-Y-Badgers 4-H Club; Shelby Harbaugh, Carefree 4-H Club; and Addison Yordy, Leaf River Busy Beavers 4-H Club.

Other special award winners included:

Outstanding Club President: Aylivia Danekas, Pine Creek Valley and Kaden Lingbeck, Leaf River Soaring Eagles.

Outstanding Club Vice-President: Courtney Bushman, Pine Creek Valley and Grant Johnson, Leaf River Soaring Eagles.

Outstanding Club Secretaries: Haven Marks, Summerhill Huskies



(COURTESY PHOTO)

Blackhawk Crossing 4-H Club won Club of the Year. Members pictured left to right: Hunter Kreams, Eli Lotz, Harmony Coy, Adelaide Zimmerman, Raiden Zimmerman, and Immanuel Arellano.

and David Wehler, Leaf River Soaring Eagles.

Outstanding Club Treasurers: Isabelle Blumhoff, Pine Creek Valley and Kaeden Motszko, Leaf River Soaring Eagles.

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From page 17

Outstanding Club Historians: Aubrey Kusnierz, Mighty Clovers and Kaden Lingbeck, Leaf River Soaring Eagles.

Outstanding Club Reporter: Shelby Harbaugh, Carefree.

Ogle County Club Recreation Chairperson: Kayden Barndt, Pine Creek Valley.

Outstanding Club Junior Leaders: Aylivia Danekas, Pine Creek Valley.

Electricity Achievement Award: Cora Herring, Hub Hickory Nuts.

Illinois Holstein-Friesian Association Award: Shelby Harbaugh, Carefree.

Several awards were distributed to community clubs throughout the county for outstanding community service, educational programming, and promotional efforts. Additionally, one club's leadership team was recognized for their outstanding efforts to work together to effectively meet the needs of and coordinate the work of their club. Congratulations go to all the following club winners:

Window Display Promotion Award: First Place – By-Y-Badgers 4-H Club (Byron). Second Place – Leaf River Soaring Eagles 4-H Club (Leaf River). Third Place – Mighty Clovers 4-H Club (Monroe Center).

Ogle County 4-H Club-of-the-Year: First Place – Blackhawk Crossing 4-H Club (Oregon). Second Place – Mighty Clovers 4-H Club (Stillman Valley). Third Place – Ogle County Clovers 4-H Club (Rochelle).

Top Leader Team Award: Carefree 4-H Club (Oregon): Amanda Harbaugh, Annette Martin, and Wacey Sassaman.



(COURTESY PHOTO)

Co-op watch award winner Aylivia Danekas with presenter Stan Eden.

Alumni Award: Sara Blume.

Hall of Fame: Annette Martin.

4-H is an informal youth education program of University of Illinois Extension. For more information or to get involved, call 815/732-2191 or visit us online at <https://extension.illinois.edu/bdo>. This is the best time of year to join!

If you need reasonable accommodations to participate in programming, contact the Ogle County Extension office at 815-732-2191. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet your needs.

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TFP25

Tight global supply keeping fertilizer prices elevated

BY RHIANNON BRANCH
FARMWEEK

AS farmers enter another year of predictably tight margins, it does not look like fertilizer prices will grant much relief to the balance sheet.

“The problem is we’re starting 2025 with nitrogen and phosphate values looking fairly firm on tight supply and demand,” Josh Linville, vice president of fertilizer at StoneX, told FarmWeek. “We’re worried about what that means for our prices going into the spring.”

Chinese exports and European production of urea are both falling, which means global prices could push higher.

“That should result in a situation where we have to start doing a lot of work to get the imports coming in that we very desperately need,” Linville said. “We’re going to have to move our price up quite a bit to make that relationship happen.”

He said prices for urea ammonium nitrate and anhydrous ammonia, which are more commonly used in Illinois, usually follow the urea market.

One fertilizer that is well supplied globally and therefore mildly priced is potash, but that could change after President Donald Trump takes office this month.

“We have to worry about the threat of 25% tariffs against Canadian goods,” said Linville, who noted Canada is the world’s largest producer and exporter of potash. “These tariffs will have real effects on the farm side if they get implemented.”

Linville said Trump is known for using tariffs as an “economic



(PHOTO BY ILLINOIS FARM BUREAU)

Declining production of urea in China and Europe could pressure prices for fertilizer, including anhydrous ammonia, in the U.S. in the months ahead.

weapon,” but for a commodity market like fertilizer the benefits aren’t likely to outweigh the consequences.

“A lot of times, the farmer of the country that implements the tariff is really the one that pays the price,” he said. “We are going to have to watch that because it could have an adverse effect on our pricing.”

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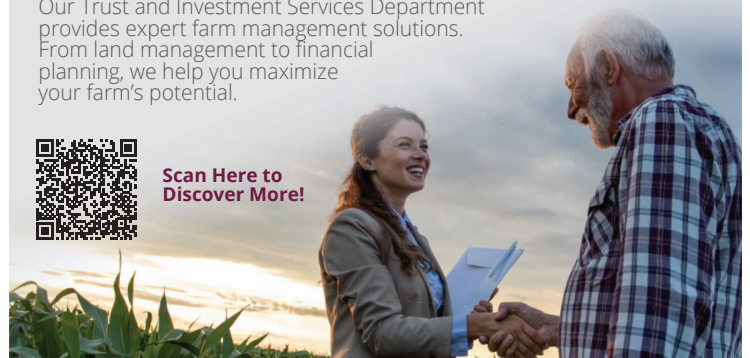
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On the other hand, Linville said the world “enjoyed a sense of peace” during Trump’s first term with fewer wars and global conflicts from 2016 to 2020, compared to recent years.

“On the flip side, I am very hopeful that if he can bring back a period of tranquility, we can see markets start to calm down, trade flows return back to normal and get prices back to historic norms,” he said.

Linville said as always it will be important for farmers to convey their fertilizer intentions to suppliers in 2025 so they can plan accordingly.

“I understand it’s easy to want to bury your head in the sand in these kinds of times, but we need to have more information flowing than less,” he said.

And despite a hefty delay to the fall 2024 fertilizer application season, Linville expects the number of spring applications to be about normal.

“It was probably one of the most unorthodox fall application seasons we’ve ever seen,” he said. “The first several weeks of November, hardly anybody across the Midwest turned a wheel.”

But he said the weather opened a window around Thanksgiving and Midwestern farmers took advantage of it.

“We surveyed the industry, and I think we hit about 90% of what our expected fall run was,” Linville said. “So that is fortunately keeping that horror story that we were talking about for springtime off the table.”

Fertilizer prices in Illinois averaged between \$650 and \$775 per ton for anhydrous ammonia as of Dec. 27, up an average of \$9.46 from the previous two weeks, according to the Illinois



(PHOTO BY CATRINA RAWSON, ILLINOIS FARM BUREAU)

As farmers enter another year of predictably tight margins, it does not look like fertilizer prices will grant much relief to the balance sheet.

Production Cost Report. Prices ranged from \$679 to \$760 per ton for diammonium phosphate (up \$3.33), \$400 to \$525 for potash (down slightly) and \$525 to \$554 for urea (unchanged) as of the same date.

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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FARM2017

OCFB's Kern: My plan for the new year, and scholarships

THREE weeks into the new year and I've finally stopped writing 2024 on my checks. They say life happens in threes so hopefully with these three weeks behind me I'm looking for smooth sailing.

2024 was an interesting year for me both personally and professionally. I can't say that it was all fun, because it was not. But I can say that I persevered, and in the end, getting to the end is the goal. So, mission accomplished. Now to lay out my excellent plan for the New Year to watch it blow up in my face. There are some things that never change; I am living proof.

The Ogle County Farm Bureau is pleased to announce that applications for their 2025 Scholarship Program were available beginning Jan. 5 to graduating high school seniors, or those enrolled at an accredited university. Farm Bureau members may pick up or have applications mailed. Applications can also be downloaded from the Ogle County Farm Bureau website at www.oglefb.org

This year the organization will award nine total scholarships each in the amount of \$2,000.

The Don Bybee Memorial Scholarship is jointly funded by the Bybee family and the Ogle County Farm Bureau. Mr. Bybee served for many years as a director on the Ogle County Farm Bureau Board and offering this scholarship recognizes his passion for offering opportunities for Ogle County youth to advance their education.

Also available is a scholarship funded jointly by the Ogle County Pork Producers Association and the Farm Bureau. The Mark Detig Memorial Scholarship will be awarded annually. Mr.

Detig served as past president and director on the pork producers association board of directors and was involved in 4-H youth activities in Ogle County.

These scholarships are in addition to the Del Flessner Memorial Scholarship, honoring the former manager of the Ogle County Farm Bureau; and two \$1,000 General Farm Bureau Scholarships.

George R LeFevre Memorial Scholarship is a scholarship funded by the Jeff and Joyce Tremble Family and the Farm Bureau. It recognizes Mr. LeFevre for his lifetime of service to agriculture and youth education in Ogle County. It will be awarded to a recipient studying in a field of agriculture.

Mary R LeFevre Memorial Scholarship is a scholarship funded by the Jeff and Joyce Tremble Family and the Farm Bureau. It recognizes Mrs. LeFevre for her dedicated service in the healthcare profession and involvement with youth education. It will be awarded to a recipient studying in a healthcare related field.

The Susan Young scholarship honors her for her years of dedication serving the agriculture community in Ogle County. It will be awarded to a recipient majoring in an agriculture related field of study.

Two general Farm Bureau scholarships will also be awarded to winning recipients.

Finally an Ag Technology Scholarship will be awarded. It will be awarded to students studying in an ag technology field similar to diesel mechanics, crop technician or similar fields of study.



Ron Kern

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(PHOTO BY CATRINA RAWSON, ILLINOIS FARM BUREAU)

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Eligible applicants must meet the following criteria: must be a high school graduate; must be an Ogle County Farm Bureau member or dependent of a member; must be accepted at an accredited university or college and pursue an agricultural or agricultural-related field of study; must be a resident of Illinois; and must demonstrate a financial need.

Applicants can be graduating high school seniors or students currently enrolled in an accredited college or university.

Applicants successfully completed and submitted will be judged on criteria including: academic performance, demonstrated interest in agriculture, financial need and character/personality.

Those interested in receiving a scholarship application should contact the Ogle County Farm Bureau at 732-2231; or stop by their office at 421 W. Pines Road in Oregon. Applications can also be downloaded by visiting our website at www.oglefb.org

All applications and accompanying materials must be received no later than April 1, 2025.

“May all of your troubles last as long as your New Year’s resolutions!” -Joey Adams

Ron Kern is the manager of the Ogle County Farm Bureau.

Illinois soybean farmers achieve record-breaking harvest in 2024

BLOOMINGTON — The Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) is proud to announce that Illinois farmers have set a new soybean production record.

According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Illinois farmers produced 688 million bushels of soybeans in 2024, surpassing the state’s previous record of 666.75 million bushels, set in 2018.

This achievement is driven by a combination of exceptional yields and record harvested acreage. The statewide average yield reached 64 bushels per acre, a slight increase from the 2023 average of 63 bushels per acre.

Additionally, Illinois farmers harvested 10.75 million acres of soybeans in 2024, up from 10.3 million acres the year before.

“We are proud to once again be the No. 1 soybean-producing state in the U.S., and this year’s record-breaking harvest reflects the dedication of Illinois’ high-quality soybean farmers. Despite facing the challenges of low prices and unfavorable weather conditions, Illinois farmers have risen to the occasion,” ISA Chairman Ron Kindred said. “Checkoff investments in research and production have equipped farmers with the tools to unlock soybean yield potential, while the policy work by Illinois Soybean Growers has provided the framework for the success we enjoy here in Illinois. Together, we continue to set the standard for soybean production.”

The record-breaking production reinforces Illinois’ standing as a leader in soybean farming, with the state consistently ranked among the top producers in the nation. Soybeans play a crucial role in Illinois’ agricultural economy, serving as a key export commodity and a driver of innovation in the industry.

“The 2024 soybean harvest is a huge accomplishment for Illinois farmers and a reflection of their hard work and commitment to excellence,” said Bryan Severs, ISA Soybean Production Committee chairman. “Illinois continues to lead the way in soybean farming, setting the bar higher year after year.”

For more information about Illinois soybean production or ISA’s efforts to support farmers, visit www.ilsoy.org.

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The U.S. Department of Energy released an updated model evaluating lifecycle greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for biofuel feedstocks under the 45Z Clean Fuel Production Credit.

U.S. DOE releases updated GREET model for biofuel feedstocks

BY TAMMIE SLOUP
FARMWEEK

THE U.S. Department of Energy released an updated model evaluating lifecycle greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for biofuel feedstocks under the 45Z Clean Fuel Production Credit.

The release of the 45ZCF-GREET (Greenhouse gases, Regulated Emissions, and Energy use in Technologies) model follows the U.S. Department of the Treasury and Internal Revenue Service guidance on the 45Z released on Jan. 10.

Under 45Z, tax credits are provided for the production of transportation fuels with life cycle greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions below certain levels. The credit applies to eligible transportation fuel, including sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), produced domestically after Dec. 31, 2024, and sold by Dec. 31, 2027.

The 45ZCF-GREET model includes feedstock-specific fuel production pathways for SAF and non-SAF fuels. The model is designed specifically to evaluate life cycle GHG emissions to meet the requirements of section 45Z.

DOE also released the 45ZCF-GREET user manual, which describes how the 45ZCF-GREET model characterizes life cycle GHG emissions of transportation fuel production pathways and provides guidance for using the model to determine emissions rates for clean fuels under section 45Z.

The updated GREET model allows certain foreign feedstocks to be used to make U.S. biofuels, including Canadian canola oil and Brazilian sugarcane ethanol for SAF. Under the 45Z guidance previously published, foreign unused cooking oil is currently not allowed.

For more information, visit bit.ly/3E7UPuw.

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