

# THE FARMER'S REPORT

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Wednesday, May 28, 2025



# USDA makes \$10 billion in economic aid available

**By TAMMIE SLOUP**  
*FarmWeek*

Applications are open for a piece of \$10 billion in economic assistance available through a new USDA program.

The Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP) provides payments to help farmers mitigate high input costs and low commodity prices from the 2024 crop year.

Authorized by the American Relief Act of 2025, payments are based on planted and prevented planted crop acres for eligible commodities. To streamline the process, Farm Service Agency (FSA) will begin sending pre-filled applications to farmers who submitted acreage reports to FSA for 2024 eligible ECAP commodities. However, farmers do not have to wait for their pre-filled ECAP application to apply and can visit [fsa.usda.gov/ecap](https://fsa.usda.gov/ecap) to apply using a [login.gov](https://login.gov) account or contact their local FSA office to request an application.

Farmers must submit ECAP applications to their local FSA county office by Aug. 15.

Eligible commodities include wheat, corn, sorghum, barley, oats, upland cotton, extra long staple cotton, long grain rice, medium grain rice, peanuts, soybeans, other oilseeds, dry peas, lentils, small chickpeas and large chickpeas.

Initial ECAP payments will be factored by 85% to ensure total program payments do not exceed available funding. If additional funds remain, FSA may issue a second payment.

ECAP assistance will be calculated using a flat payment rate for the eligible commodity multiplied by the eligible reported acres. Payments are based on acreage and not production. For acres reported as prevented plant, ECAP assistance will be calculated at 50%.

FSA has calculated a payment rate for each eligible commodity, including \$42.91 per acre for corn, \$29.76 for soybeans and \$30.69 for wheat.

For payment estimates, farmers can visit [fsa.usda.gov/ecap](http://fsa.usda.gov/ecap) to use the ECAP online calculator.

Eligible producers must report 2024 crop year planted and prevented planted



**Applications are open for a piece of \$10 billion in economic assistance available through the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program, which provides payments to help farmers mitigate high input costs and low commodity prices from the 2024 crop year. (Photo by Catrina Rawson, Illinois Farm Bureau)**

acres to FSA on an FSA-578, Report of Acreage form. Producers who have not previously reported 2024 crop year acreage or filed a notice of loss for prevented planted crops must submit an acreage report by the Aug. 15 deadline.

ECAP payments will be issued as applications

are approved, with farmers receiving direct deposits typically within three business days.

"The state of the economy is suffering, but we're excited to work with you to chart a new course for American agriculture, this is just one step in that direction," Brooke Appleton,

deputy under secretary for farm production and conservation, said during a March 18 press briefing.

Payments are capped at \$125,000 if less than 75% of the average gross income of the person or legal entity for the 2020, 2021 and 2022 tax years is derived from farming. Otherwise, the cap

is \$250,000.

For more information,  
visit [fsa.usda.gov/ecap](http://fsa.usda.gov/ecap) or  
visit your local FSA office.

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

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## Ninety-six percent of Illinois wetlands could be at risk; Illinois Wetlands Protection Act needed to protect them

CHAMPAIGN — The Trump Administration has announced that it is drafting a new rule that will drastically narrow the scope of water bodies protected by the Clean Water Act. In Illinois, the consequences could be catastrophic.

Under the most damaging scenario outlined in a new Natural Resources Defense Council report, up to 96% of Illinois' remaining wetlands—more than 970,000 acres—could lose federal Clean Water Act protections. These wetlands, which filter drinking water and buffer our communities from floods, could be drained, bulldozed, or paved over with no federal oversight.

Illinois lawmakers are already considering action. Senate Bill 2401—the Wetlands Protection Act (Senator Laura Ellman)—would create a state permitting program to protect wetlands that are no longer covered by federal law. It's a vital step toward preserving the natural infrastructure that keeps our communities safe, especially as federal protections collapse.

"If Illinois wants to call itself a safe harbor from the threats coming out of the Trump administration, then we need to act like it," said Robert Hirschfeld, Director of Water Policy at Prairie Rivers Network. "Wetlands shield our communities from flooding and filter our drinking water. Destroying them is both reckless and expensive."

The new EPA rule will interpret the U.S. Supreme Court's 2023 Sackett v.

***"If Illinois wants to call itself a safe harbor from the threats coming out of the Trump administration, then we need to act like it. Wetlands shield our communities from flooding and filter our drinking water. Destroying them is both reckless and expensive."***

—Robert Hirschfeld, Director of Water Policy at Prairie Rivers Network

EPA decision, which held that wetlands can only be federally protected under the Clean Water Act if they have a "continuous surface connection" to a traditionally navigable lake or river.

Wetlands are our first line of defense. They absorb billions of gallons of floodwater, saving billions in disaster costs. Illinois has already lost more than 85% of its original wetlands. Without SB 2401, the remainder could be wiped out.

Southern Illinois, home to some of the state's most extensive wetland systems, is particularly vulnerable. In Gallatin County alone, nearly 1,700 individual wetlands critical for reducing floods could be destroyed without consequence. These systems protect some of the most flood-prone areas of the state.

This year, the Mississippi River was named the most endangered river in the country, driven by increasing floods and a dangerously inadequate federal response. Flowing through 10 states—including Illinois—the river provides drinking water for 20 million people and sustains

hundreds of communities. But decades of levee construction and wetland destruction have disconnected the river from its natural floodplains, making floods more frequent, more intense, and more damaging. In 2019, one flood event persisted for over 100 days, costing \$20 billion and claiming a dozen lives.

And yet, just as this threat grows, the federal safety net is shrinking. The Trump administration is moving to cut FEMA funding and scale back disaster aid. In a future where federal support is uncertain by design, natural flood infrastructure like wetlands become indispensable to preventing catastrophe.

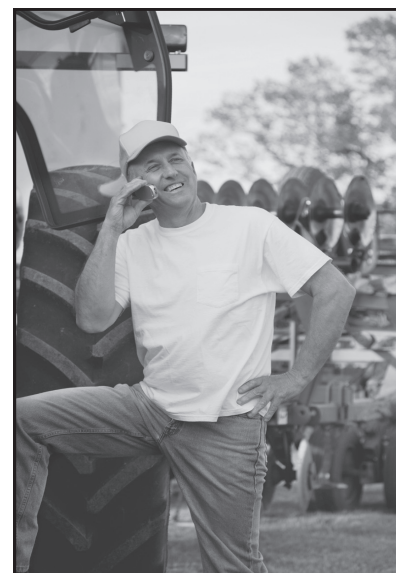
"While the Supreme Court narrowed what EPA can do, the agency still has tools it could use to protect wetlands and streams. But let's be honest: under this administration, it won't," said Hirschfeld. "That's why states like Illinois have to step in. We can't sit around hoping a federal agency bent on deregulation suddenly finds its backbone. Our communities—and our water—deserve better."



Under the most damaging scenario outlined in a new Natural Resources Defense Council report, up to 96% of Illinois' remaining wetlands—more than 970,000 acres—could lose federal Clean Water Act protections.



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## Expert tips for managing tomato diseases in Illinois

By PHYLLIS COULTER  
FarmWeek

Tomatoes are growing in popularity as a crop in Illinois.

"It's becoming a tomato state," said University of Illinois Professor Mohammed Babadoost.

While Illinois is known as being the No. 1 state for soybean, pumpkin and horseradish production, few people know that tomatoes are such a big crop in Illinois. Tomato production in Illinois is greater than apples or peaches, Babadoost said.

With that in mind, the plant pathologist recently discussed common tomato diseases at the Stateline Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference at Northern Illinois University in Rockford.

Some tomato diseases were more prevalent last year than in the past.

"It was a little surprising," Babadoost said of the higher incidence of septoria leaf spot in 2024. "For 10 years, we haven't had any because it is easy to control."

Two other fungal diseases, early blight and anthracnose, are also significant diseases in Illinois tomato fields. All three can be sprayed with Quadris alternated with chlorothalonil (Bravo Weather Stik) to effectively control these diseases, he said. Anthracnose is more commonly seen on ripened tomatoes if harvest is not timely.

As for tomatoes grown in high tunnels, leaf mold can be a problem. It is caused when there is water on the plants or high relative humidity but can be controlled when growers open the side of the high tunnels to lower humidity, so it is no longer a serious problem, Babadoost said.



Verticillium wilt was a serious problem for growers with indoor production in southern Illinois last year. It was notable late in the season. Because the pathogen starts in the soil, growing

plants in big pots may help. Grafting susceptible scion onto resistant roots, or steam treating the ground and crop rotation are options to control the disease.

Babadoost said he saw

only one case of root-knot nematode in a high tunnel last year. He's not sure if nematicides will help or if grafted tomatoes or steam treatment could be effective in the future. More study is needed.

For three years, Babadoost has studied bacterial spot in tomatoes monitoring fields in south, central and northern Illinois. His team studied 12 cultivars and didn't find any that were resistant to the disease.

To manage both bacterial speck and bacterial spot, commonly found in tomatoes in Illinois, growers should choose only pathogen-free seed, or certified disease-free transplants,

follow a crop rotation with non-host plants and use effective weed control. Spraying can also manage bacterial spot with Kocide-3000, Manzate PRO Stick and Regalia become effective compounds. Recommended sprays include Kocide-300 and Manzate PRO Stick, except during harvest. Kocide-3000 and Bravo Weather Stik can be alternated with Regalia and Kocide-3000 during harvest.

(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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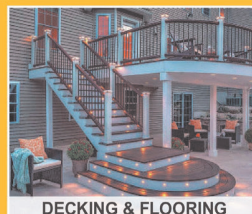
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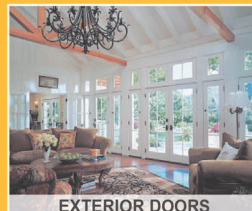
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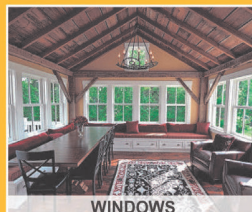
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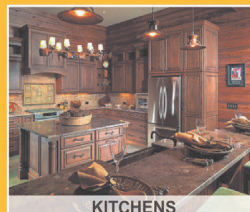
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## Farmland values see 'softening,' rent prices dipping

BLOOMINGTON — Farmland values are “softening” with “some downward pressure on rental agreements” according to the 2025 Illinois Farmland Values and Lease Trends Report released at the recent Illinois Land Values Conference. It is sponsored annually by the Illinois Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers (ISPFMRA).

The survey is conducted annually by members of the ISPFMRA. The state is divided into 10 geographic regions and team members collect and summarize sales activity and other factors occurring in the individual regions during the year. The is a summary of all the regional entries.

According to Luke Worrell, AFM, ALC, with Worrell Land Services, Jacksonville, and overall chair of the annual Land Values and Lease Trends survey by the ISPFMRA, “2024 was a year of transition. We did finally see some softening in the land market and some downward pressure on rental agreements.”

“As you will read in (the Report), the last quarter of 2024 was especially telling. That is the point at which we truly saw the most softening and it became apparent the market was beginning to shift. The overall 2024

results would have looked drastically different if we had only looked at the last quarter of the year.

Using Excellent Productivity land with a Productivity Index of 133 and above, the average sales price of completed sales across the state in general dropped by 3.29 percent from \$16,359 in 2023 to \$16,359 in 2024 while the average price for Average Productivity land with PI of 100 to 116 actually increased by 4.45 percent from \$9,544 in 2023 to \$9,978 in 2024. However, this compares to an upward jump of 14.82 percent for the same type of property from 2020 to 2024.

According to Worrell, “Those changes have continued here in the early stages of 2025. Many areas have seen continued unpredictability in the land market. Sure, there will always be those strong sales that get the neighborhood talking, but by and large, the market has continued to be erratic and slowly work its way downward.

“There have been more ‘no sales’ in the auction world over the last 6 months than we saw in all of 2021-2023 combined. Commodity prices, rising interest rates and other macro-economic factors have all played a part in this changing market.”



### Expectations for 2025

According to a simultaneous and allied survey by Gary Schnitkey, Ph.D., University of Illinois, most respondents expect farmland prices to remain the same or decline in 2025, with only 5 percent expecting farmland prices to increase. In total, 31 percent of the respondents expect farmland prices to remain the same, while 64 percent expect prices to decline. Almost half (49 percent) of the respondents expect a decline of less than 5 percent, whereas 13 percent expect a decline between 5 and 10 percent. Only 2 percent of the respondents expect a decline of over 10 percent.

Schnitkey says the 2025 outlook is remarkably similar to that at the beginning of 2024. The percentage for

decreases in 2024 and 2025 are the same at 64 percent. More than 50 percent of past respondents expected declines from 2015 to 2019, a period in which farmland prices remained relatively stable, with price declines in some years. The percentage of respondents expecting declines then decreased from 2020 through 2022, reaching a low of 3 percent in 2022. Corresponding to the low percentage of participants expecting price declines, farmland prices increased dramatically in the early 2020s. In 2024 and 2025, percentage of respondents who expect price declines is on the rise again, reaching similar levels to those in 2018 and 2019.

### Rent prices declining

According to Schnitkey's survey, “Results show

that incomes for rented farmland was lower in 2024 than in 2023. Cash rents decreased heading into 2025, with expectations for further declines into 2026.

Average income was defined as gross revenue less all expenses, including a deduction for property tax.

“For excellent quality farmland, traditional crop shares averaged an income of \$230 per acre, cash rents averaged \$325 per acre, and custom farming averaged \$367 per acre. Custom farming resulted in the highest return among these arrangements. Overall, 2024 incomes dropped from levels reached in 2023 with -\$120 per acre for traditional crop share on excellent farmland and \$25 for cash rents on the same soils.

### Looking Forward

Farm managers were asked about their expectations of cash rents in 2026:

- None expect 2026 cash rents to increase over 2025 levels,
- 50 percent expect 2026 cash rents to be the same as in 2025, and
- 50 percent expect 2026 cash rents to decrease from 2025 levels.

According to Schnitkey, most farm managers expect the agricultural economy to remain the same in 2025: 72 percent expect

2025 to about the same as 2024, while 18 percent expect worse conditions. Few expect conditions to improve.

### Full report available at no cost

Worrell notes that for the first time, the ISPFMRA is making the complete report available immediately and at no charge to those interested in exploring the 114-page document. “All the information, tables, charts, sales by region, timing and land classifications that we’ve been referring to are in the Report. And it’s free of charge.

“Frankly, the cost of mailing the document became so outrageous we determined the best way to get the information out there was to make it available as a free, downloadable PDF at our website [www.ispfmra.org](http://www.ispfmra.org).

“As an extra bonus to readers and advertisers, most ads have a hot link that will take readers directly to the advertisers’ web site. This makes it more convenient for making contact with those companies while you are reading the Report.”

He notes that printed copies are available for order at \$20 per issue, delivered. Order information is available on the site as well. [www.ispfmra.org](http://www.ispfmra.org).



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## It's a win for many as Illinois increases biodiesel blend rate

BLOOMINGTON — A bipartisan bill passed in 2022 to promote the use of higher biodiesel blends is making a significant impact once again in 2025. Effective April 1, biodiesel blend requirements increased from B14 to B17, marking another step toward advancing cleaner fuel options.

Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) Chairman and Illinois soybean farmer Ron Kindred is proud to see the continuation of efforts that support our state's farmers. "Increasing biodiesel blend rates is a win for farmers, consumers and the environment," said Kindred. "Every step forward strengthens our energy security, drives demand for homegrown feedstocks, and supports rural economies."

ISA extends its thanks to the key leaders behind the B20 Bill, including primary sponsors Rep. Eva Dina Delgado (D-Chicago) and Sen. Patrick Joyce (D-Kankakee), co-chairs of the Illinois Sustainable Fuels Caucus. ISA also appreciates the support of the bill's lead Republican sponsor Rep. Charlie Meier (R-Okawville) and Governor JB Pritzker for signing the bill into law.

The B20 bill raises the bar on biodiesel use by increasing the minimum biodiesel blend level eligible for tax exemption. As of April 1, the eligible fuel mixture will jump from the current B14 to B17. This means 17% of every gallon of biodiesel sold in Illinois between Apr. 1 and Nov. 30 will be derived largely from domestically produced, renewable vegetable oil, with soybeans being the top contributor by far.

The impact of increased

biodiesel adoption in Illinois has already been significant. After the first phase of implementation, 97% of diesel gallons across the state contained at least 11% biodiesel, with half of all gallons exceeding 14%.

In 2026, the minimum biodiesel blend levels eligible for a tax exemption jump to 20%. Biodiesel is a cleaner-burning alternative to traditional diesel, significantly improving air quality and mitigating the impact of transportation-related greenhouse gases.

For information about B20 use in Illinois, visit <https://www.ilsoy.org/b20-club/> to learn more about the B20 Club, a partnership between ISA and the American Lung Association that recognizes Illinois-based organizations that fuel their fleets with biodiesel blends of 20 percent or greater.

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The Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) checkoff and membership programs represent more than 43,000 soybean farmers in Illinois. The checkoff funds market development, soybean production and government relations efforts, while the membership program, Illinois Soybean Growers (ISG) and the Illinois Soybean Growers PAC actively advocates for positive and impactful legislation for farmers at local, state and national levels. ISA upholds the interests of Illinois soybean farmers through promotion, advocacy, research and education with the vision of becoming a trusted partner of Illinois soybean farmers to ensure their profitability now and for future generations. For more information, visit [www.ilsoy.org](http://www.ilsoy.org) and [www.ilsoygrowers.com](http://www.ilsoygrowers.com).

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