What's Next After 2012 Drought?

- Partner with Livestock Producers
- Take a New Look at No-Till
IT’S EASY TO ATTRIBUTE GAPS IN YOUR SOYBEANS TO SOMETHING OTHER THAN POOR ROOTS.

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Sustainability Means Different Things to Different People

When you hear the word sustainability, what comes to mind? For some farmers, it may conjure up images of environmentalists or groups that do not support modern production agriculture. Some farmers may think about conservation or stewardship efforts. Others may have no opinion.

The Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) decided to adopt the International Oilseed Producers Dialogue’s (IOPD) definition: Sustainable agriculture production systems will meet the needs of the present while improving the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by:

- Increasing productivity to meet all future needs while decreasing impacts on the environment.
- Improving access to safe food and feed and the production of fuel that reduces air quality impacts.
- Improving the social and economic well-being of agricultural producers and the global community.

So what does that really mean and why should Illinois soybean farmers pay attention? Because our customers are asking questions about how soybeans are grown, and even considering requesting information that documents sustainable production practices.

That being the case, it is important for us, as farmers, to first have a clear understanding of the term “sustainability” as it applies to customers and the soybean supply chain. That’s why sustainability is one of the key target areas funded by the Illinois soybean checkoff. This issue of Illinois Field & Bean contains several articles that may help you better understand sustainability.

As farmers, we may be asked to document and demonstrate the sustainable practices that already take place on our farms. We also must be sure any additional practices we employ are profitable.

Illinois soybean farmers already have a long history of increasing production while decreasing our environmental impact. People just don’t know about it. Sustainable success in the future will come from addressing environmental, economic and social aspects. By using practices that minimize our footprint and deliver social and economic benefits, we will continue to deliver a dependable food supply and sustainably meet marketplace needs. I challenge you to understand today’s global views of sustainability, and see what you can do to help tell the story of sustainability on your farms.

Bill Wykes
ISA Chairman

Correction: In the September Illinois Field & Bean in the high quality story that appeared on page nine, the Illinois protein and oil data should have been attributed to the U.S. Soybean Export Council.
Weathering the Drought

Six Steps Toward Financial Stability Following a Dry Season

As farmers work to prepare for 2013, there are widespread concerns about the financial impact Mother Nature will have on operations of all sizes. Here are six steps you can take right now to protect your business today and in the future.

1. Contact your crop insurance agent. If you experienced low yields or have damaged crops, your crop insurance agent can review your crop forecast, policy coverage and impact on your current situation. The agent also can give you an in-depth overview of the filing and payment process in the event you need to file a claim.

2. Visit your agricultural banker. In times like these, many farmers worry about credit. An agricultural banker can recommend several short-term banking options to help out until you receive any potential crop insurance disbursements. Remember to invite a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) along for the meeting. Together, the three of you can discuss your current financial situation and plan for the rest of 2012.

3. Take advantage of different options for accounts payables and receivables. Many tools are available to lengthen payment cycles. Paying bills online or using an automatic clearing house (ACH) allows you to set up payments for the day they are actually due. That means you can hold on to cash as long as possible. Online banking and an ACH also are helpful for accounts receivables, whether for regular payments from a local elevator or single payment from the insurance company. Electronic payments usually mean you get paid faster than waiting for a check in the mail. Remote deposit also is a good option.

4. Seek alternative assistance. USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides disaster assistance for drought losses through services like the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP), Tree Assistance Program (TAP) and Livestock Forage Disaster Assistance Program (LFP). Contact your local FSA office to see if these or any other federal funding options are available in your area.

5. Map out annual working capital. Getting a firm grip on annual working capital – the amount of money needed each year to maintain a successful business – helps prepare for rainy and not-so-rainy days to come. Since every farmer operates differently, appropriate levels of working capital vary. Your agricultural banker and CPA can help you plan.

6. Chart a course for the future. Even if consumed with the current drought situation, it makes sense to start thinking about where your operation will be a few months, and a few years, from now. Thinking ahead can help prepare you for the next time weather puts a damper on your business. Start by creating a cash-flow projection for at least the next 12 months. Prepare a balance sheet of your assets and liabilities to determine equity in your property. Calculating your liquidity – how quickly your assets can be transferred into cash – can assist in determining if you need to refinance or sell any assets. Finally, developing a business plan can help you make deliberate decisions about your farm’s future, and ultimately can be used to help you apply for a loan when you’re ready.

Mark Bellis is an agricultural banker for PNC Bank in Illinois. PNC Bank is part of The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc., one of the nation’s largest diversified financial services organizations. PNC operates in 19 states and the District of Columbia. For more information about agriculture banking needs, visit www.pnc.com/agriculture.
Time to Deal with Drought Aftermath

By Kenna Rathai

How many times have you heard the phrase, “You can’t control Mother Nature”?

This year was certainly one for the record books – a very early spring, excellent stand of crops, then the worst drought in 50 years, all within a matter of months. Mother Nature held all the cards, and now soybean farmers have to deal with the hands they’ve been dealt.

“You roll with it. You take what Mother Nature gives you,” says Rowen Ziegler, soybean farmer from LaHarpe, Ill., and ISA Production Committee chairman. “I learned this year how valuable crop insurance can be. It reassured me that I made the right decision.”

Crop Insurance a Critical Tool

Illinois Farm Business Farm Management Association Adviser Bruce Burk’s best guess is that as many as 20 percent of farmers don’t buy crop insurance. “We assist farmers with management decision-making. If they decide insurance is something they need, I recommend buying at a high enough level to really offer protection – about 80 percent of expected yield,” he says.

Only one of the active farmers Burk advises (out of about 100 in Champaign County) does not purchase insurance. “He’s never had it. I met with him recently and he’s very serious about crop insurance now,” says Burk. “We’ve started to look at the numbers and what will make sense.”

“We use crop insurance as a marketing tool. It’s part of our risk management efforts,” says Dean Campbell, soybean farmer from Coulterville, Ill., and past ISA director. Campbell also previously was a crop insurance adjuster. “In the last 10 years, I figure I would have gone out of business at least twice without crop insurance. Although I’d much rather have something in the bin to market versus collecting an insurance check, it will keep us farming. When you buy fire insurance for your house you don’t plan on it burning, but it can happen.”

Campbell was able to harvest his winter wheat a couple of weeks early due to the warm spring, and planted his double-crop soybeans by early June. “We had good early stands of soybeans, but then it turned into the ‘Sahara Desert’ and there wasn’t enough water to sustain some,” he says. “We had several patches in the field that just died.”

While Hurricane Isaac damaged many areas in its Gulf Coast path late summer, it brought relief to parts of the Midwest. “The late-season rains from that storm blessed us. Our full-season soybeans were able to survive,” says Campbell. “Although the rains didn’t add much to the physical bean count, they added considerably to the size of the beans we harvested. We may even have better soybean yields from some of those fields than our corn.”

Herbicide Carryover Possible

As Campbell looks toward 2013, he is concerned about potential herbicide carryover from the dry 2012 growing season. “The jury is still out,” he says. “I’ll do some test plantings before I’m confident I can plant 900 acres without injury.”

Campbell says longer residual herbicides are great for extending the window of weed control. But stressful environmental conditions may affect their rate of degradation in the soil. A risk of pro-
longed persistence in the soil and injury to subsequent rotational crops exists.

“We encourage farmers who may be at risk for herbicide carryover to either send a soil sample in to a certified laboratory or conduct a bioassay on their own,” says Monty Webb, field agronomist for Southern FS in Marion, Ill. Many herbicides are primarily degraded by microbial organisms in the soil. However, microbes are most effective when soil moisture ranges from 50 to 100 percent of field capacity. Extremely low moisture may slow herbicide degradation and increase carryover risk. Farmers should follow recommended label rates and crop rotation intervals.

Webb offers other recommendations regardless of the weather, but adds they are especially important under poor conditions. “Some things you should consider long before planting to give your crop the best chance possible, and that includes starting with seed choice,” he says.

When looking at field data, Webb advises reviewing not only multiple sources, but also looking at multiple years of a soybean variety’s performance. You can’t base opinions on how well a certain variety did in a drought year, he explains, and farmers should plant a range of maturities to spread risk and consider agronomic characteristics that fit the needs of specific fields.

Evaluate Cover Crops

The right nutrition also is important. Webb says depending on the situation, farmers may want to consider preserving nitrogen by planting a cover crop this fall. Cover crops will pick up nitrogen that went unused by drought-struck crops. Cover crops add organic matter to the soil, improving soil and environmental quality while reducing the risk of leaching between harvest and planting.

Webb also guides farmers in herbicide and fungicide decisions. He is waiting on results of a few trials that will show if applying fungicides in drought conditions made a difference in yields.

“Our goal is to advise farmers on things that improve their profitability and help them grow more bushels,” Webb says. “It has been a very difficult year for most of the farmers in our 12-county area in southern Illinois. We are taking a look at what worked even in these extreme conditions, so farmers can be confident they’ll get a return out of their investments.”

Ziegler says ISA will continue to invest soybean checkoff dollars into long-term production research to help boost profitability under all conditions. ISA also partners with livestock groups to help animal ag producers make efficient use of soy protein during difficult times as well.

“I wish farmers and livestock producers who are hurting the best of luck,” says Ziegler, whose own farm received enough small rains for reduced, but decent, yields. “The drought will leave a big impact. Hopefully we’ll see good rains this fall for a recharge and have a better new year.”

“I learned this year how valuable crop insurance can be,” says Rowen Ziegler, soybean farmer from LaHarpe, Ill., and ISA Production Committee chairman.

Consider Conducting a Bioassay

University of Wisconsin Extension offers the following advice for conducting a bioassay:

- Collect soil from the top two to three inches in several areas of the field and thoroughly mix samples. Sample from areas that may have high residual herbicide, such as in headrow turnarounds and field corners, and analyze these soils separately as a worst-case scenario. Representative, thorough sampling is critical to an accurate bioassay.
- Fill several flower pots or similar containers with sample soil.
- Plant the crop that is planned for the field, or a crop that has a long rotational restriction listed on the herbicide label. Thin plants to one per container after emergence.
- Place pots indoors and provide uniform light and water. Uniform natural light is better than artificial light, if possible.
- About two to three weeks after emergence, evaluate the plants for symptoms of damage from the suspected herbicide.
A Thorough Review

With harvest barely in the rearview mirror, most soybean farmers have turned their attention to planning for the 2013 growing season. Among the first and most important decisions to be made is selecting which soybean seed to put into the ground.

The 2012 growing season presented very different experiences across Illinois. Mycogen Seeds agronomist Brett Craigmyle says many farmers didn’t see as much disease pressure as in previous years, while others were faced with insect problems. For those reasons, he suggests a diversified approach.

“Farmers need to make sure they’re getting several varieties on their farm to spread the risk. Producers should select varieties that fit their farm with the traits they want, whether it is Roundup Ready, Roundup Ready 2 Yield or resistance to soybean cyst nematode, stem rot or other diseases.” He says this year, the later variety maturities performed better than earlier varieties — another factor for farmers to consider.

Craigmyle adds that production practices, including row width, can be a consideration when choosing a variety. Some farmers may want bushier beans to provide an early weed-controlling canopy, while others with narrower rows may not.

Craigmyle suggests farmers do their homework before committing to a particular variety. Poring over local plot data and available university trial information will help producers make informed decisions on which varieties may be best for their operation. For many Illinois soybean farmers, drought conditions impacted seed performance. While 2012 may have been an uncommon year and future planting choices shouldn’t be based solely on one year’s performance, it also shouldn’t be completely discounted.

“Take this year with a grain of salt,” Craigmyle advises. “Don’t base all your decisions on this year. Look at your yield records from last year, review local plot data and university results.”

Craigmyle says it is also important to choose good, quality seed. Because of the drought conditions this year, he recommends making certain the seed farmers buy has good germ, good size and the seeds are mature.

Experts suggest there’s more science than luck when it comes to choosing soybean seed. Finding varieties that offer the right maturity for a particular growing zone, perform well in local soil types and have the necessary disease tolerance increases the likelihood of a successful harvest in the fall.

Voice for Soy Allows Immediate Legislative Action Response

Thousands of advocates were on Capitol Hill pushing for passage of the next farm bill during September. Like most Illinois farmers, Mike Marron, soybean farmer from Fithian, Ill., was combining corn. He received an email alert on his smartphone from Voice for Soy, ISA’s legislative action center. Although busy harvesting, Marron quickly and easily added his input on the 2012 Farm Bill.

“With the regulatory climate and the ag economy as dynamic as it is, we need to be engaged as farmers. Legislators are making decisions that affect our farms,” says Marron.

Voice for Soy (www.voiceforsoy.org) makes responding to critical legislative issues simple. After taking a few minutes to register at www.voiceforsoy.org, farmers receive email alerts when an issue is hot and action is needed.

“Today’s tools and technology keep us very connected, even from the field. We’re in a global business and we need to stay in touch with what’s going on,” says Marron. “When farmers see an email from Voice for Soy, it should trigger a reaction that ‘I need to weigh in and reach out to my legislators.’”

Voice for Soy provides that nudge to respond and the tools to do so. Farmers can send an easy pre-written (which can be personalized) email, or make a call to their congressional offices.

Voice for Soy is specific to the legislative interests of the Illinois soybean industry. The tool is supported by ISA membership dollars. Visit the site to add your Voice for Soy.
YOU HAVE ENOUGH TO WORRY ABOUT. OUR SOYBEAN SEED ISN’T ONE OF THEM.

With crop production full of uncertainties, there’s one thing you can count on — Mycogen® brand soybeans. Our seed offers a unique combination of strong genetic performance and innovative technology. Add a dedicated agronomy support team with more than 300 years of experience, and you have what you need to help unleash your farm’s true potential. Discover what our soybean seed can do for you at Mycogen.com.
Recycle Nutrients for Crop Production Success

Sustainability Comes Naturally with Livestock Production

Livestock farmers are the ultimate recyclers, according to Utica, Ill., hog and grain farmers John and Kate Hagenbuch. Last November, they expanded their hog operation and opened new buildings to raise replacement gilts for sow farms.

“Hogs produce manure that enriches our soil to grow crops we send to the local elevator,” says Kate. “We buy our feed from two local elevators. The feed grows our hogs. They produce manure that goes back into the ground, and we keep the cycle going.”

Like most livestock farmers, the Hagenbuchs employ best management practices to get the most from their farm, with a focus on nutrient management.

“We test the soil in fields that will receive manure,” explains John, who serves as ISA’s animal agriculture vice chairman. “Our containment pit stores manure for a year. We test it for nutrient value. Once a year, we will spend a few weeks injecting those nutrients six to eight inches deep into the soil.”

Variable rate application technology allows John to put manure where it is most likely to benefit the crops. He applies their hogs’ manure to their own fields, as well as ground farmed by extended family. He says yields are comparable to commercial fertilizer and anhydrous applications, but costs are significantly less.

Efforts Promote Efficiency and Value

Nic Anderson, livestock business developer for the Illinois Livestock Development Group (ILDG), which is funded in part by the Illinois soybean checkoff, says best management practices used by livestock farmers work with government regulations to promote long-term efficiency and land value.

• Nutrient management plans, like the one employed by the Hagenbuchs, analyze soils and manure for optimal placement.
• Landscaping, especially tree buffers, disperse dust and odors, while adding aesthetic and property value. Programs can help establish these natural buffers.
• Composting aids in nutrient use from mortalities and establishes a long-term, sustainable system to manage resources. The Hagenbuchs are adding a system.
• Construction projects include careful evaluation of site locations to fit regulations of the Illinois Livestock Management Facilities Act (LMFA). Because water quality is a top priority, drainage is designed to maintain the integrity and complement existing systems.

Take Time to Be Neighborly

The livestock industry is the top customer for Illinois soybeans. Here are a few ways information from various industry sources suggest farmers can support neighbors:

• Talk and listen. What challenges do your neighbors have? What concerns do you have? Share and work together to resolve conflicts.
• Landscape. Vegetation makes a great natural noise, dust and odor filter. Trees and shrubs on your land, downwind from neighbors’ barns, can help those barns fade into the background. You also can support their landscaping efforts.
• Fertilize. Do your neighbors have extra nitrogen nearby? Discuss an agreement to trim your commercial fertilizer bill and their transportation costs.
• Speak up. Animal agriculture adds value to your community. In Illinois, raising livestock plus meat and dairy processing accounts for $1 in every $20 of the economy. That business provides a grain market, jobs and tax base for your community, so it pays to speak up on the behalf of local livestock producers.
YOU INHERIT THE PAST BUT CONTROL YOUR FUTURE.

You’re the next generation of farming. The choices you make will affect the legacy you leave. Choose the soybeans that have a legacy all their own: FS HiSOY®. The first proprietary soybean brand, HiSOY has been a part of the land for nearly 50 years. Offering the latest in trait technologies and elite genetics, HiSOY varieties continue to be the choice for industry-charting yields. So grow proud and pass it on.

See your local FS Member Company or visit www.fshisoy.com
Soybeans are one of the most no-tilled crops in Illinois, and for good reason. Greater yields and environmental benefits have been documented for decades.

Agronomists and researchers began to popularize no-till management practices in the 1960s with test plot experiments, which led to farm bills and incentives calling for conservation farming. One such initiative put into place was the Illinois Erosion and Sediment Control Law, or “T by 2000.” The program’s goal was to reduce soil erosion to tolerable levels (T) by the year 2000.

In the early 1980s, as a recent college graduate and member of the Kendall County Soil and Water Conservation District, Bill Wykes helped lead the county’s T by 2000 program. Wykes, a soybean farmer from Yorkville, Ill., currently serves as ISA chairman.

“Soil erosion is a big problem,” says Wykes. “Heavy rain breaks up soil particles so they are more easily suspended in water, leading to runoff and soil loss.”

**Proof in the Plots**

As part of the program at that time, side-by-side test plots on Wykes’ land demonstrated the effects of no-till soybeans versus conventional till. Until then, he was aware of no-till farming from college courses but still used a moldboard plow on much of his acreage.

“It was really educational and made sense to me,” he says. “By leaving the previous crop residue undisturbed on the surface, it protects the soil from erosion and conserves soil moisture.”

Another difference in those early plots was that no-till soybeans yielded the same or higher than conventional plots. After seeing such results, Wykes switched to 100 percent no-till.

“By far, the benefits and savings have paid for any investments I made to make the switch,” he notes. “It all leads to sustainability; conserving resources and doing more with less.”

Wykes says he has saved on machinery costs (upkeep and purchase), fuel and labor, in addition to reducing erosion and retaining soil moisture.

**Multiple Benefits**

“Farmers choose no-till for many reasons: to reduce soil erosion, retain moisture or save money and time,” confirms Emerson Nafziger, University of Illinois crop sciences professor. “Reduced tillage, combined with rapid canopy development, protects soil moisture by shading the ground and keeping residue and soil in place – especially valuable in dry or drought-stricken areas.”

In fact, the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST) says conservation tillage practices, including no-till on soybean acres, has resulted in significant reductions.

No-till farming leaves crop residues undisturbed to retain organic matter, moisture and nutrients. “Most of the time if we can place seed well, it is not necessary to disturb the soil to establish the soybean crop,” says Nafziger.

Factors such as crop rotation, seed selection, weed control and planting date can affect the outcome of no-till, but a study conducted by DuPont Pioneer scientists found the same results as Wykes. No-till soybean yields can be higher than those in conventionally tilled settings.

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**Yield**

**Production Edge Still Makes No-Till a Top Choice**

**Today, conservation tillage is used on more than 65 percent of U.S. soybean acres, and results in the following achievements:**

- 93 percent decreased soil erosion
- 31 percent decreased wind erosion
- 70 percent decreased pesticide runoff
- 80 percent reduction in phosphorous contamination of surface waters
- An annual soil moisture evaporation loss reduction of 5.9 inches
- Greater than 50 percent reduction in fuel use

Source: Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST)
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VAULT® HP plus INTEGRAL® biological fungicide delivered 4 bushels more per acre yield than non-inoculated soybeans and 1 bushel per acre more than seed treated with a major competitive product in independent field tests over two years and 60 locations in 11 states.

The triple BioStacked® VAULT HP system includes patented performance-enhancing technology and ensures that millions of fresh, nitrogen-fixing rhizobia are delivered onto every soybean seed. And the INTEGRAL biofungicide helps enhance nutrient uptake, root vigor and extends protection from key soil-borne diseases. With VAULT HP plus INTEGRAL you’ll discover more yield potential from every soybean acre.

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Prop 37 was on the ballot this month in California. If passed, the proposed legislation would require state food label rules for biotech ingredients, and could open the door for other states to do the same.

“Setting up a California-only labeling measure would set a bad precedent for the rest of the nation. If Prop 37 passes and other states decide to follow suit, we may find ourselves in a situation where there are 50 different laws governing food labeling. Not only would that be confusing for consumers, but it would be a compliance nightmare for retailers, food companies and growers,” says Kathy Fairbanks, spokesperson for the “No on 37 Coalition against the Deceptive Food Labeling Scheme” (www.NoProp37.com). The group is sponsored by the Grocery Manufacturers Association and supported by the American Soybean Association.

Fairbanks says Prop 37 would ban the sale of thousands of common grocery products only in California unless they are specially repackaged, relabeled or made with higher cost ingredients. The coalition calls the proposal a “deceptive, deeply flawed food labeling scheme that would add more government bureaucracy and taxpayer costs, create new frivolous lawsuits, and increase food costs by billions, without providing any health or safety benefits.”

Here are key points from the Nov. 6 vote that could prove useful to Illinois soybean farmers and others within the agriculture industry, should similar legislation be proposed elsewhere:

• Uneven playing fields are possible. Prop 37 requires special labels on soy milk, for example, but exempts cow’s milk. Dairy products, eggs, meat and poultry are exempt. Fruit juice requires a label, but alcohol made with the same ingredients is exempt. Food sold in a grocery store requires a label, but the same food in a restaurant is exempt. Food imported from foreign countries is exempt if sellers claim they are biotech free.

• Red tape and food costs could rise. Prop 37 forces the state to administer complex requirements by monitoring tens of thousands of food labels at grocery stores, retail outlets, farms and food companies. No limit is set on how much would be spent on the process. Prop 37 also forces farmers and food companies to implement new labeling, packaging, distribution, recordkeeping and other operations that could cost billions of dollars. Or, companies must switch to non-biotech ingredients. The coalition says that could increase average family food costs by $350-400 per year.

Ripple Effects Likely

Repercussions could extend beyond California’s borders. Under the terms, anyone providing ingredients for food products sold in California – including Illinois soybeans – could be exposed to “shakedown lawsuits” filed with no proof of violation or of damages.

“Growers can be sued, whether they are in California or not,” says Fairbanks. “It subjects farmers, grocers and food companies to huge litigation costs and lawyer payouts.”

Mike Marron, soybean farmer from Fithian, Ill., and ISA vice chair for market access and advocacy, says, “Prop 37 is one of those biotech-related issues we monitor on behalf of Illinois soybean farmers because of the effects it could have on our industry. We need to be aware of the damage such proposed laws can have on our business, whether in our state or not.”

Photo by Ken Kashian, Illinois Farm Bureau
Leadership

Building Consumer Relationships Fosters Trust in Farming

Farmers who build relationships with consumers are investing in their future freedom to farm. At least that is what Illinois soybean farmers are finding through participation in the Illinois Farm Families (IFF) initiative. Today more than ever, consumers are interested in what is in their food and how it is grown.

Soybean farmers find that honest conversations and personal relationships can curb misunderstandings that can lead to distrust in farming practices and unneeded regulations.

“Moms feel like they don’t know how their food is grown, leaving them with unanswered questions,” says Deb Moore, soybean farmer from Roseville, Ill., and IFF farm mom hostess. ISA supports IFF through checkoff funding, providing opportunities for farmers to connect with consumers.

“The IFF Field Moms program gives urban moms the chance to see Illinois farms for themselves.”

Firsthand Experiences

Moms appreciate the Illinois farmer open-door policy. After touring a sow center in Maple Park, Ill., Field Mom Farrah Brown from Glendale Heights, Ill., shared with followers on her personal blog, “They are not trying to pull anything over on the public in the name of personal financial gain. They are families, doing the best they can to produce food that is safe and nutritious and in enough quantities to feed the greater population of our planet. They feel a duty to care for the animals and the earth and their consumers. They are up front about what they do, never shying from questions.”

Field Moms planted soybeans at their own homes in containers this year, and followed the progress of a representative soybean acre (the “Field Moms’ Acre”) grown by Moore in western Illinois. The Field Moms watered their suburban soybeans when it rained at the farm, and kept in touch with Moore through video chats and pictures. The Field Moms and their families personally experienced the effect of this year’s drought when their urban soybeans didn’t survive the summer.

Amy Rossi, Field Mom from Naperville, Ill., realized this was the first year she had thought about farmers during summer heat and drought. Rossi posted to Twitter in June, “Ever since Saturday, I am also praying for rain for all you guys out there growing our food.”

One Conversation at a Time

From a children’s museum in central Illinois to a Chicago zoo, Illinois soybean farmers are raising awareness of IFF and soybeans among thousands of Illinois consumers.

“If consumers have positive experiences with Illinois farmers, we become more credible than misguided information often found online. We want to be a trusted resource when consumers are making food decisions for their own families, or forming opinions about agricultural practices,” says Moore.

All soybean farmers are invited to start their own conversation. Visit www.WatchUsGrow.org.
Ensuring Illinois soybean production is sustainable is a bigger issue than simply producing more with less. It also means having access to multiple markets and delivering soybeans efficiently.

Illinois’ more than 4,000 deficient and obsolete bridges are decreasing efficiency and potentially limiting future competitiveness, finds a recent study funded by the Illinois soybean checkoff. The study examined 12 Illinois bridges vital to soybean transportation, and concluded for every $1 spent to repair sample bridges, an average of $10.24 would be returned to the local economy.

“Right now people can cross these bridges, but our food (subject to truck weight limits) cannot,” says Paul Rasmussen, soybean farmer from Genoa, Ill., and ISA transportation committee vice chair. “Investing now ultimately will strengthen local economies fueled by agriculture and help maintain competitive advantage.”

The study revealed fixing many bridges is not a priority because weight limits are high enough for vehicles like ambulances and school buses to cross. However, weight limits are insufficient for the agriculture industry, which needs bridges that can withstand much larger vehicle loads. Read more from the study’s results at www.ilsoy.org/isa/transportation/.

ISA released the study results during September at a press conference in Stockland, Ill. The event was held at the bridge researchers deemed in most need of repair because of its 22-ton weight limit and proximity to Stockland Grain Company. Local ISA directors Mike Marron, Fithian, Ill., (left) and Wendel Lutz, Dewey, Ill., (center) discussed with media how repairing bridges now will help sustain the soybean industry long-term and raise profits for the entire industry.
Watch for Scholarship Information

ISA, with funding from the soybean checkoff, will offer up to 10 scholarships worth $4,000 each for the 2013-14 school year. Scholarships will be awarded to students entering their junior year and majoring in crop sciences at Illinois State University, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, University of Illinois and Western Illinois University.

All applicants must be current or transfer students beginning their junior year in 2013-14:

- Students interested in applying must plan to follow an agricultural course of study with a major in crop production or a crop science discipline, including breeding, biotechnology, plant pathology, weed management or crop management, with an emphasis on soybeans.
- Recipients will be encouraged to find on-campus employment in soybean research, attend graduate school and choose a career in soybean research.
- Awards are based on exceptional academic ability, leadership and financial need.

The IAA Foundation administers the scholarship program. Guidelines, applications and an activities template are available at www.iaafoundation.org, beginning Dec. 1, 2012. Direct any questions to the program administrator at the IAA Foundation at 309-557-2230 or charms-garman@ilfb.org. Completed applications must be postmarked on or before Feb. 1, 2013.

Pork Power Surpasses One Million Servings

The Illinois Pork Producers Association (IPPA) launched Pork Power to help fight hunger in Illinois. Since its inception in 2008, Pork Power has generated more than 266,000 pounds of pork, which is the equivalent of more than one million servings of pork provided to families throughout Illinois. During September and October, more than 38,000 pounds of ground pork were donated to eight regional foodbanks associated with Feeding Illinois.

Pork Power provides an opportunity to promote pork and educate families about how to prepare and incorporate pork into menus. Families receive information on nutritional, mental and physical benefits of including protein in the diet.

Livestock producers are the No. 1 customer of Illinois soybean farmers. IPPA partners in the Pork Power Program with the Illinois soybean checkoff, Illinois Corn Marketing Board and Illinois Association of Meat Processors.

IBA Names New Executive VP

Reid Blossom is the new executive vice president for the Illinois Beef Association. Blossom was raised on a diversified livestock farm in Mississippi and was active in 4-H showing cattle and sheep and also participated in various competitive judging events. After graduating from the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science, he attended Mississippi State University to receive a degree in communications with a focus in journalism.

For the last eight years, he’s worked as director of industry relations and youth programs for the Alabama Cattlemen’s Association. Uniquely, Blossom’s grandfather and family originated from the Decatur, Ill., area. He is a second generation cattle producer, and owns and operates Blossom Hill Farms, a small commercial cattle herd based in Simmental-influenced genetics.
Report Gives Farmers Fodder for Global Food Discussion

Illinois soybean farmers already know they are increasing yields and reducing off-farm impacts with modern production practices. Now, the July 2012 Field to Market report from the Keystone Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture quantifies how those practices build bottom lines and benefit society, giving farmers facts for sustainability discussions with global food companies.

“The July Field to Market report is the first to connect income and social benefits with soybean farm sustainability gains,” says Don Guinnip, soybean farmer from Marshall, Ill., and ISA sustainability vice chair. “The report can help us show and tell about our sustainability progress.”

The report outlines soybean environmental indicator results from 1980 to 2011. Land use, soil erosion, irrigation, energy and greenhouse gases all decreased as production and yield per acre rose 96 percent and 55 percent, respectively. In addition, the nearly 31-year study period finds:

- Real returns over variable costs show dollars per bushel remained at $2 between 1984 and 2011, while dollar-per-acre returns increased about $100.
- Injuries were down 55 percent for all crop-producing farms.
- Labor hours were down 66 percent per acre and 74 percent per bushel.

Guinnip notes that ISA has taken a leadership role in growing sustainability awareness as a market development tool. Keystone’s Field to Market program, which is supported by the soybean checkoff and other commodity groups, helps soybean farmers build relationships across the food system with the ultimate goal of maintaining and increasing soy demand. That A-list of global food chain companies ranges from Monsanto and ADM to global food suppliers like Kraft and Walmart.

Big Improvements Made in Soybean Environmental Impact

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Struggling with Understanding “Sustainability”?

The global food industry uses the term “sustainability” to cover a number of factors: economic, environmental and social. ISA directors hope Illinois soybean farmers can begin to embrace the term, and show that they were practicing sustainability long before it became a buzzword.

“ISA’s sustainability program includes outreach to farm industry groups and programs to encourage our state’s soybean farmers to continue progressing in the areas of social responsibility, environmental stewardship, labor practices and worker conditions, best management practices and good business practices, and share that information,” says Guinnip.

The task is a tall one, adds Guinnip, when you consider the swarm of anti-farm sustainability agendas and definitions swirling in the marketplace. Hundreds of companies are seeking sustainable inputs to improve their performance by increasing their production while decreasing their impact with the ultimate goal of enhancing profitability.

“The term sustainability may make farmers wary. Nobody agrees on exactly what it means,” says Guinnip. “But our definition is simple. Sustainable soybean farming means taking care of today’s needs while making sure future generations can take care of their needs.”

More information about sustainability is available at www.ilsoy.org/isa/sustainability/.
More than 200 farmers took part in the “Make Your Mark” ISA membership barbecue on Sept. 11 in DeKalb, Ill., held in conjunction with the DeKalb County Corn & Soybean Growers field day. An earlier event was held Aug. 30 in Peoria, Ill. More than 30 farmers attended. Both barbecues brought farmers together to interact with current and potential new members.

“We were very encouraged by the turnout at our first event,” says Bill Raben, soybean farmer from Ridgeway and ISA Membership Task Force chair. “Our goal is to encourage farmers to talk to us about important issues. By joining the association, we have an even stronger voice.”

1. The Catherine Lanan Farm was the site of the 2012 DeKalb County Corn & Soybean Growers Field Day, which was hosted by the Ben and Dave Drake families. ISA conducted its second membership barbecue in conjunction with the field day.

2. Preparations were under way as farmers arrived at the field day site near DeKalb. Members of the DeKalb County Corn & Soybean Growers prepared for the overall event.

3. ISA Membership Coordinator Ross Pauli shows a member of the DeKalb County Corn & Soybean Growers the membership package being offered during the field day. Pauli presented information about ISA membership at the events and coordinated door prize drawings. New members received a discounted, three-year membership for $145 and a free t-shirt.

4. Another new ISA member signs up. Nine new members joined the association in DeKalb, while two others renewed their memberships.

5. Pauli helps a new ISA member with registration forms. ISA will continue to seek additional opportunities to share the benefits of membership with the state’s soybean farmers and build a stronger grassroots network that can monitor state and federal legislative issues.

6. Soybean test plots awaited the crowds at the 2012 DeKalb County Corn & Soybean Growers field day. The area received more timely rainfall this year than many other parts of the state.

For more information about how to join ISA, visit www.ilsoy.org or call 309-808-3612.
EVIDENCE

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