Get the Buzz on Bees

Learn Nutrient Management Tips

Check out these Summer Tours
COVER STORY

What’s the Buzz?
If soybeans are self-pollinating plants, how are farmers allegedly killing off the bee industry? Is there a relationship between soybeans and bees? The short answer is yes.

FREEDOM TO OPERATE

Illinois Farmers Learn Nutrient Management Lessons
Illinois soybean farmers must prepare for a new approach to managing crop nutrients and to working more closely with consultants to build recommendations and meet increased recordkeeping requirements. That is the advice given during an April tour of the Delmarva Peninsula. Find out more about how to farm with nutrient management regulations.

MANAGEMENT MATTERS MYTHBUSTER

Can Cover Crops be Profitable?
Even though lower grain prices can affect farmer decisions, cover crops can remain a key practice for improving yields and profits by reaping soil health benefits. Check out this expert advice if you are considering planting cover crops in 2015.

YIELD, QUALITY, PROFITABILITY

Back to School – Field Days Offer Learning Opportunities
ISA is hosting and collaborating on meetings and in — field demonstrations this summer to help farmers learn from soybean experts and see new tools, technologies and best management practices in action. Take a look at the scheduled activities, and see where you can attend.

ANIMAL AGRICULTURE

Livestock Farmers Worldwide Face Similar Issues
As the global livestock industry evolves, different decisions impact production. Sometimes it’s consumers and the food industry. Sometimes it’s the impact of disease outbreaks. Read more about what the Illinois and Scottish livestock industries — both soybean meal consumers — face.

TRANSPORTATION

Biodiesel Training Enhances Biodiesel Use
Advances in biodiesel have made the renewable fuel a reliable, year-round energy source. Learn how training can help delivery truck drivers, salespersons and service techs learn more about advances in biodiesel so they can get the most from the alternative fuel.
ISA Takes the Lead on Sustainability

The Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) strives to be a leader across all segments of our supply chain. Our ultimate objective is to create value and drive demand for Illinois soybeans.

As the leading soybean producing state for the second year in a row, our efforts include being proactive on the sustainability front. ISA is bridging the information gap between farmers and the supply chain when it comes to this ever-evolving issue. We’re constantly assessing who the influential decision-makers are, what they need to succeed, and how we can help.

For example, we are gathering data and stories to help stakeholders and consumers understand the long-term commitment Illinois soybean farmers have to sustainability—from a social, an environmental and an economic perspective. Illinois farmers are volunteering to share their background, their stories and their commitment with soybean processors and food companies.

We also are leading efforts with farmers to help them understand how to address the statewide Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLSR), which is expected to be released later this spring or summer. All of us must voluntarily implement best management practices on our farms that help meet the goals of the NLSR and the goals of food companies and other organizations that impact our markets and our freedom to operate. And we must do so profitably.

Finally, ISA farmer leaders and staff invest time in connecting with other groups to promote sustainability, including the Illinois Council on Best Management Practices and Field to Market. We work with state and federal conservation agencies and non-governmental organizations like American Farmland Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation Technology Information Center and soil and water conservation districts. The goal is to provide resources and support at the local level and at national and global levels.

Based on these and other efforts, Illinois is acknowledged as a leader in sustainability. This is a complex issue, but we want to be sure our endeavors are relevant to all farmers and address our profitability, as well as help to keep us in a leadership position.

This issue of Illinois Field & Bean is focused on both sustainability and leadership. Read more about our activities, and visit us on the web at www.ilsoy.org/sustainability.

Bill Raben, ISA Chairman

FACT:

ISA Works with Other Groups to Promote Sustainability

ISA is a member of Field to Market, a diverse alliance which brings together farmers, processors, environmental groups and other interested parties to create opportunities across the agricultural supply chain for continuous improvements in productivity, environmental quality and human well-being. To learn more about this alliance for sustainable agriculture, visit fieldtomarket.org.
Save your Soils with a Conservation Cropping System

> BY JENNIFER FILIPIAK

Here at the American Farmland Trust (AFT), we are busy promoting conservation cropping systems in Illinois. Right away, you may ask yourself, “Well, what is a conservation cropping system?” and “Who the heck is American Farmland Trust?”

Good questions. Let me start with AFT. We were founded in 1980 with the goal of protecting America’s precious farmland from development. We led, and still lead, many successful initiatives. To date, we have protected more than five million acres of American farmland.

In the Midwest, you can drive for hours and see nothing but farmland, so is it really under threat? The short answer is yes. We not only work to save farmland by the acre, we work to save it by the inch. In the U.S., we lose 1.7 billion tons of topsoil each year from wind and water erosion. In Illinois, the average is four tons per acre just from water erosion. That dirty snow you saw in the ditches this winter adds up to more than you might think. Five tons of soil loss is equivalent to the thickness of just one dime across an acre of farmland.

A recent study released by the University of Minnesota sampled the soil they found in ditches along roadways. They found an average of 9.2 tons of topsoil in an acre of ditch. That soil contained an average of 55 lbs. of total nitrogen, 13 lbs. of total phosphorus and almost 37 lbs. of total potassium. At 2014 fertilizer costs, that equates to $55 per acre lost, in addition to the environmental footprint of that soil and its nutrients running into streams come spring.

In order to save our farmland by the inch, we must protect our greatest natural resource: soil.

Healthy soil is a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals and humans, and can be used productively without adversely affecting its future productivity, the ecosystem or the environment. Healthy soil has diverse biology, balanced chemistry and good physical structure. It produces more with less inputs, and holds water and soil particles. Healthy soils continuously cycle nutrients, keeping them in balance, holding them in place, and making them available to plants. There are literally hundreds of “best management practices” approved by the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service that are meant to help farmers address natural resource concerns. But there is no single practice that can do it all and work on every farm.

A conservation cropping system is a suite of practices tailored to a farm that promotes soil health. Components include practices that minimize soil disturbance, keep soil covered and living roots in the system as long as possible and add biological diversity like soil fungi and microbes, more plants through diverse crop rotations and attracting pollinators. This usually in Illinois combines cover crops, reduced tillage and nutrient management/precision technology.

Adopting conservation cropping systems doesn’t happen overnight — it’s a journey toward soil health. You start simple and add or change practices based on the response of your farm, and with the advice of fellow farmers and advisors. Start by contacting your local service center to find out what programs are available, and talk with farmers who already are working with conservation cropping systems, or call me and I’ll get you connected.

“In order to save our farmland by the inch, we must protect our greatest natural resource: soil.”

JENNIFER FILIPIAK, Associate Midwest Director for American Farmland Trust

Jennifer Filipiak is the associate Midwest director for American Farmland Trust. She works directly with farmers and farmland owners, especially women landowners, to incorporate conservation practices like cover crops. She works collaboratively with ag leaders, partner organizations, public agencies, and state, local and federal governments to overcome barriers to adoption and advance common ground solutions for agriculture and the environment.
What’s the BUZZ?

Bee colonies are disappearing in greater numbers. Some responsibility is being laid on agriculture. Here’s what you need to know to protect your crop and the environment.

> BY JAYNE GODFREY

If soybeans are self-pollinating plants, how are farmers allegedly killing off the bee industry? Is there a relationship between soybeans and bees? The short answer is yes.

Iowa State University research shows 2,000 pollinators from 20 bee species carry soybean pollen. According to USDA’s Agricultural Research Service (ARS), honeybees are critical to pollination because they move from location to location as needed. Bees pollinate by transferring pollen grains from the male of one plant to the female of another. Without pollination, crop-bearing plants would not be fertilized for food yields.

Much focus is on honeybees because they are the primary pollinators for agricultural crops, including their relationship with soybean pollen. Honeybees have a $15 billion impact on the food industry and are responsible for about 80 percent of crop pollination.
WHY THE CONCERN NOW?

According to The Nature Conservancy, the number of honeybee colonies has dropped from more than four million in the 1970s to 2.5 million today. Some groups are looking at those numbers and putting the blame on farmers.

And although there is a lot of buzz, this isn’t the first time bee loss has occurred. Colony collapse disorder (CCD) is an unexplained phenomenon where bees die. The difference now is that adult bees are not returning to hives and losses are bigger than ever.

“As a bee keeper, I love soybeans,” says Jeff Tapke, who owns a beehive near Bloomington, Ill. “I don’t know if it was due to CCD, but I have lost colonies before. I don’t know anyone who hasn’t lost colonies. My bee inspector estimates approximately 75 percent loss over the winter in 2013-14 was the average.”

WHO’S TO BLAME?

Colony loss is a complex issue. USDA’s ARS says agriculture is not the only possible contributor. Heavier-than-labeled pesticide use, neonicotinoids and planter dust may play a role, but other reasons for honeybee loss may include globalization or moving hives from place to place, loss of habitat due to population growth and CCD.

Neonicotinoids are a relatively new class of insecticides used as seed-applied insecticides to protect the seed from secondary pests such as white grubs and wireworms. When the neonic treated seed is put into planters and then treated with a planter lubricant such as talc or graphite, the planter can emit a dust that has the potential to be toxic to pollinators.

Eric Ifft, technical sales consultant with Bayer CropScience, says the issue can be fixed with improved transparency. Bayer CropScience has spent several years in an effort to communicate and educate around the bee health issue.

“No one involved in agriculture wants to do anything that would be a detriment to bee health. However, bees are an insect, and there are insecticides being used on row crops. We just need to understand and communicate about what products are being used and when,” he says.

Although harmful to pollinators when used incorrectly, neonicotinoids are useful for farmers. They fight insects such as aphids and root-feeding grubs and improve plant health.

WHAT CAN FARMERS DO?

Ensuring honeybees in your area are protected with proper management plans is beneficial to the farm, the environment and local beekeepers. In fact, sharing the environment with bees can be part of any Illinois soybean farmer’s sustainability plan.

Several different studies show soybeans produce higher yields when visited by honeybees. One study done in Brazil in 2005, which measured soybean seed production in cages with or without bees, saw a 50 percent increase in yield for cages with bees.

Rob Shaffer, soybean farmer from El Paso, Ill., and ISA director, knows the need well. He learned of a beehive near his property and worked with his ag retailer to create a plan.

“I worked with my neighbor, who is a beekeeper, and my ag retailer to create a plan so everyone knows when we are going to spray. Having
a written plan allows for good communication and will prevent any problems in the future. I encourage other farmers to develop a plan, and begin by visiting the website driftwatch.org to learn whether beehives are located near your farm.”

The Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) is working with many groups in the state to promote farm sustainability practices and make conversations like Shaffer’s easier. Bee-friendly steps require little time or money. Bayer, USDA and others suggest:

- Practice integrated pest management (IPM), which includes crop rotation and correctly identifying pests you are trying to control. Before making a decision to use treated seed, evaluate your fields and determine if soil pests are present at threshold levels or if the field has a high pest risk.

- Know what to expect. Varroa mites are the biggest insect culprits for bee health. They are external honeybee parasites that attack adult bees and make it harder for them to feed their young. The mites are reddish brown in color and are flattened ovals. They carry at least 19 bee viruses and diseases.

- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has recognized beekeepers have a need for additional tools to combat these mites, and have approved the miticide oxalic acid, which is already registered in Canada and Europe. If you suspect varroa mites, use the proper product to help stem bee loss in your area.

- Understand neonicotinoids. Simply handle your treated seed with care, and pay attention to weather conditions to reduce dust spreading. Make sure you follow directions exactly with your planting equipment. Clean the equipment regularly, especially the fan housing and hoppers on air-assisted planters.

- Use resources available to you. Create open communication between growers, custom operators and beekeepers on the timing of planting treated seed and hive locations. Websites, such as www.driftwatch.org, show hive locations.

- Learn to recognize pollinator habitat and act accordingly. Bees can collect pollen from flowering crops, trees, weeds, puddles and moist soil.

- Control flowering weeds in fields before planting so pollinators are not attracted to the forage. Mow excessively weedy or flowering field edges before planting. Add bee-friendly plants to help increase the honeybee population in safe areas.

- Look for signs. In 2013, the EPA developed new pesticide labels that prohibit use of some neonicotinoids where bees are present, so something as simple as paying attention to labels can save you trouble. Many treated seed products now come with a bee hazard icon on the bag. Most risky treatments include clothianidin, thiamethoxam and imidacloprid. Follow pesticide application labels and seed tag directions for recommended amounts.

**WHAT’S THE FUTURE FOR BEES AND BEANS?**

Products on the market are safe when used correctly. “If we truly believed these products hurt bees we would remove them from the market. It’s that simple,” says Ifft.

Open communication about the issue is driving change. BASF and others are working on creating polymers that help insecticides stick better to treated seed. Bayer CropScience created Fluency Agency, which replaces talc and graphite in seed lubricants. U.S. farmers last year representing 60,000 acres reported success with it. About 90 percent said the product performed better than talc or graphite, and 75 percent reported less dust.

BASF and Bayer CropScience are not the only companies working on issues. Monsanto is a member of the Honey Bee Health Coalition facilitated by the Keystone Center. The group brings together beekeepers, growers, researchers, government agencies, agribusinesses, conservation groups, manufacturers and brands to improve pollinator health. Syngenta created a program, Operation Pollinator, which focuses on research and partnerships to promote the health and well-being of bees and other pollinators.

“**No matter if you have bees in your area to protect or just want to work to create a healthier habitat, taking any of these steps will have its rewards. With planting and spraying season here, now is the perfect time to start.”**

**ROB SHAFFER**, soybean farmer from El Paso, Ill., and ISA director
By the Numbers

**ten BILLION**
Number of gallons of water used daily in U.S. agriculture.
Source: Seametrics, a flow meter manufacturer for irrigation and other water uses

**74%**
Illinois farmers who have added voluntary best management practices to reduce nutrient losses on their farms.
Source: Illinois Soybean Association

**240 gallons of water**
water needed to produce **1 POUND OF SOYBEANS**
Source: Seametrics

**Two MILLION+**
Number of miles of conservation buffers installed.
Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

**seventy percent**
Amount of fresh water used globally for agriculture.
Source: Seametrics

Soy Talk

A new era of weed control is here

The Enlist™ Weed Control System is an advanced herbicide and trait system that delivers exceptional weed control.

Andy Asbury, an Enlist field specialist with Dow AgroSciences, offers a closer look at the system: Enlist traits, Enlist Duo™ herbicide with Colex-D™ Technology and the Enlist™ Ahead management resource.

**Enlist traits in elite soybean varieties**
Enlist traits give soybeans tolerance to Enlist Duo herbicide, a proprietary blend of new 2,4-D choline and glyphosate. In addition, Enlist soybeans and Enlist E3™ soybeans offer more weed control options in one convenient system, including tolerance to glufosinate herbicides.

In future seasons, Enlist soybeans will be available in elite varieties from Mycogen Seeds. As always, yield performance remains the primary focus for all new products. Dow AgroSciences has many years of yield data showing no yield penalty associated with Enlist™ traits.

**Proven performance of Enlist Duo herbicide**
The two modes of action in Enlist Duo work within a program approach to deliver season-long weed control and help prevent weed resistance. Growers can maximize yields by eliminating nutrient-robbing weeds from their fields.

The innovations introduced with Colex-D™ Technology help growers and applicators address challenges beyond controlling tough weeds. This powerful new herbicide offers four key benefits – ultra-low volatility, minimized potential for physical drift, low odor and improved handling characteristics.

The drift reduction from Colex-D Technology combines with low-drift nozzles to cut drift by as much as 90 percent compared with a tank mix of traditional 2,4-D and glyphosate. In addition, near-zero volatility — up to 96 percent less than traditional 2,4-D — helps keep Enlist Duo™ in place to improve control.

**Enlist Aheads helps manage and prevent resistance**
The system also includes Enlist Ahead, a benefits-based management resource to help growers and applicators get the best results from the Enlist system — today and in the future.

“Ultimately, the Enlist system is going to offer growers peace of mind and a great weed management package to maximize yield potential,” says Asbury.

**Brought to you by:**
Mycogen Seeds

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When all the planting, feeding and protecting grow into more than just your yield. More than a job well done — it’s a realization. That this is what you were meant to do. We’re with you. It’s what Mycogen Seeds is all about. A shared passion for the life of your land. For the life that you love.

Visit Acres of Possibility.com to maximize the potential of your corn and soybeans.
Illinois Farmers Learn Nutrient Management Lessons

Illinois soybean farmers must prepare for a new approach to managing crop nutrients and to working more closely with consultants to build recommendations and meet increased recordkeeping requirements. That is the advice given during an April tour of the Delmarva Peninsula. The checkoff-funded project was designed to provide information about how to farm with nutrient management regulations.

An irrigated field on the Hans Schmidt Farm in Maryland serves as a research site for work being done by the U.S. Geological Service to understand how water through aquifers and the impact changing management practices can have on groundwater.

Hans Schmidt, center, who farms with his family near Sudlersville, Md., explains how nutrient management regulations have changed the way he farms, including the crops he raises.

Independent consultant Jen Nelson, left, talks with Carrie Winkelmann, ISA director from Tallula, Ill., about working with farmers to develop annual nutrient management plans.

Jonathon Thompson, Robert Thompson & Sons Farm, Harty, Del., leads participants on a tour of the family cattle, poultry and row crop operation and shares farmer perspectives on regulations regarding manure management in the sensitive Chesapeake Bay watershed.

ISA directors meet with Ed Kee, Delaware Secretary of Agriculture and Larry Towle, Nutrient Management Program administrator, as well as Richard Wilkins, farmer from Greenwood, Del., and first vice president of the American Soybean Association. Their advice for Illinois growers — be proactive in working with state and local officials to shape the future of nutrient management requirements in Illinois.
TRUE or FALSE?
Can Cover Crops be Profitable?

Cover crop acres are increasing every year. According to the Conservation Technology Information Center’s 2013-14 survey, cover crop acreage nationwide tripled during the last five years, as farmers who experimented with the practice continued to get profitable returns. Even though lower grain prices can affect farmer decisions, cover crops can remain a key practice for improving yields and profits by reaping soil health benefits.

- **COVER CROPS IMPROVE SOIL HEALTH, BUT NOT NECESSARILY YIELD.**

  **FALSE:** While more farmers recognize the soil health benefits of using cover crops, some question whether improvements translate into higher soybean yields.

  Dave Robison, forage and crop manager for Legacy Seeds, says farmers often see increased yields in the first year following cover crops from the reduced soil compaction. “Soybeans planted into a cover crop typically get between a 10 and 12 percent yield advantage over soybeans not planted into a cover crop,” he explains. “That usually results in a four to seven bushel per acre improvement.”

- **THE YIELD INCREASE MAY OFFSET ANY COST ASSOCIATED WITH COVER CROPS.**

  **TRUE:** Like any other crop, cover crops come with expenses, including the cost of seed and planting. Although farmers won’t harvest most of their cover crops for a profit, Robison argues that increased soybean yields pay for cover crop costs, and then some.

  “It takes around three bushels per acre to get your investment back from cover crops,” he says. “Most growers see at least a four bushel increase, meaning that cover crops pay for themselves and still make an additional profit.”

**MYTHBUSTERS**

**FARMERS NEED TO INVEST A LOT OF MONEY TO SEE A RETURN FROM COVER CROPS.**

**FALSE:** Hans Kok, Ph.D., independent conservation consultant based out of Indianapolis, Ind., explains that farmers don’t need to spend a lot of money on cover crops to see a financial and agronomic return.

“Most farmers don’t need to spend more than $25 per acre on cover crop seed. They can plant themselves or pay for custom application, usually costing between $10 and $15 per acre,” he says. “Realistically, farmers should not have to spend more than $40 per acre when planting cover crops, and I’ve seen many people do it for less.”

Kok adds that growers should start with a small field. “I recommend farmers who are trying cover crops for the first time start with a small field, so they can see results on a small scale before expanding to more acres,” he says.

**FARMERS CAN SEE PHYSICAL SOIL IMPROVEMENTS WITH COVER CROPS.**

**TRUE:** While cover crops don’t always look impressive above ground, Robison recommends farmers look closer at the changes happening in the soil.

“The average compaction layer on most farms is at six inches, so most soybean roots are in that depth,” he says. “Cover crops cut through the compaction layer, so future soybean crops will have deeper roots and access to more soil. That delivers a big boost to soybean stress tolerance.”

Kok says farmers should take a shovel to the field to see soil improvements firsthand. “Farmers might only see an inch of cereal rye grass or annual rye grass above ground, but it is not uncommon to find roots three to four feet deep underneath,” he says. “They also can plant cover crops in strips, alternating with cover crops and no cover crops to compare results in the next growing season.”

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Checkoff FACT:

Mike Plumer, conservation agriculture consultant who works with the Council on Best Management Practices (C-BMP), which is supported by the Illinois soybean checkoff, has advice for farmers considering cover crops:

1. Take advantage of online resources – Check out the Midwest Cover Crops Council (www.mccc.msu.edu), Illinois C-BMP (www.illinoiscbmp.org) and Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program (www.sare.org).
2. Attend field days.
3. Start by splitting a smaller field.
4. Choose the right cover crop for your environment.
5. Plant on time – The Midwest Cover Crop Council’s online Selector Tool can help make informed planting decisions.
FARM PROGRESS SHOW
Double-Crop Demonstrations
Decatur, Ill. – Sept. 1-3
Farm Progress Show (FPS) returns to Decatur this fall. About 600 exhibitors and thousands of farmers attend each year to explore the latest tools and technologies and learn from industry researchers and other farmers. New for 2015, FPS has an Illinois soybean checkoff-supported double-crop demonstration plot that will give an up-close look at the latest double-crop best practices.

“We worked with Syngenta and Growmark to establish a wheat-soybean double-crop site comparing different wheat maturities and varieties to show how farmers can get the best yields for both crops,” says Kelly Robertson, independent crop consultant and Encirca-certified service agent with DuPont Pioneer, who is working closely with ISA on the plot. “We will share tips for double-crop planting, management and weed control, and answer questions so farmers are ready when it comes time to plant winter wheat.

“New varieties and refined management practices are helping double-crop rotations move north,” he continues. “That’s good news, because wheat-soybean double-crop rotations bring in more profits than a single corn crop in many parts of Illinois.”

For more information, visit farmprogressshow.com.

C-BMP
Nutrient Loss Reduction Roadshow
Across Illinois – June
Illinois EPA is expected to release the final Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy by midsummer. To help farmers understand it, the Illinois Council on Best Management Practices (C-BMP), with in-kind support from ISA, Illinois Farm Bureau and other commodity groups, will host several summer events throughout the state. The events are for farmers who want to learn more about best management practices for their area and ideas for on-farm changes.

- June 2 – Carterville, Ill. (Williamson County)
- June 3 – Pontiac, Ill. (Livingston County)
- June 8 – Galesburg, Ill. (Knox County)
- June 9 – Princeton, Ill. (Bureau County)
- June 12 – Shelbyville, Ill. (Shelby County)
- June 16 – Jacksonville, Ill. (Morgan County)
- June 17 – Peoria, Ill. (Peoria County)
- June 18 – Clinton, Ill. (Dewitt County)
- June 22 – Decatur, Ill. (Macon County)
- June 23 – Vandalia, Ill. (Fayette County)
- June 24 – Bloomington, Ill. (McLean County)
- June 29 – Pittsfield, Ill. (Pike County)

For a list of other C-BMP events, visit illinoiscbmp.org/events.

ILSOYADVISOR.COM LIVE FIELD DAYS
Benton, Villa Grove and DeKalb, Ill. – Aug. 4-6
ISA is taking the ILSoyAdvisor.com blog platform to three regional summer field events. The day-long sessions will showcase top production advice.

“ISA’s ILSoyAdvisor.com blog brings together farmers, researchers and agronomists to discuss soybean production in Illinois and work together to make improvements,” says Don Guinnip, ISA Production Committee chair and soybean farmer from Marshall, Ill. “These events will offer hands-on information and allow growers around Illinois to connect face to face.”

“Attendees will leave with the latest information about producing high-yield soybeans profitably,” says Dan Davidson, ISA research and technical coordinator. “These field days will give farmers the opportunity to engage one on one with top soybean and agronomy experts to learn about improving yields and profits. They will leave with practical knowledge they can apply on their own farms.”

Back to School
Field Days Offer Learning Opportunities
Nestled between spring planting and fall harvest, summer offers ample opportunities for learning. ISA is hosting and collaborating on meetings and in-field demonstrations this summer to help farmers learn from soybean experts and see new tools, technologies and best management practices in action.

PHOTO BY JAYNE GODFREY
Wanted! There’s a $5,000 reward to the farmer with the highest soybean yield over 100 bushels. Registration for the 2015 Yield Challenge is open, and it is easier than ever to compete. Throw your hat in the ring and take the prize for your district, or go big and reap the $5,000 reward.

JOIN THE High Stakes Yield Roundup

100 BUSHEL STATEWIDE CONTEST
Achieve the greatest qualifying yield over 100 bushels, and stake your claim on $5,000. The 100-bushel barrier was broken in 2014, so that shows that more farmers can hit the mark and go even higher.

SIDE-BY-SIDE SPONSOR PLOTS
Round up a sponsor, test and identify strategies that increase soybean yields. First place is $500 and second place is $250 in each crop district.

CROP DISTRICT SHOOTOUT
Achieve the highest yield in your district over the county average. First place is $500 and second place is $250 in each crop district. To be eligible, yields must exceed the NASS district yield average published in January 2016.

Three Ways to Win

Winners will be announced at a special recognition dinner the evening before the 2016 Soybean Summit in Peoria, Ill. Sign up today at soyyieldchallenge.com. It only costs $25 to enter. Registration and signup forms for all entries must be submitted by Sept. 1, 2015. Call 888-826-4011 to learn more.

ISA Webinars Offer Agronomy Lessons on Demand
To continue learning on your own schedule, ISA offers a checkoff-funded webinar series for farmers and agronomists on ilsoy.org. The videos highlight best management practices and tips for improving yields and profitability in the 2015 growing season. From nutrient planning to grain marketing to disease management, learn from experts in agronomy and farm management at ilsoy.org/webinars.

Funded by the ILLINOIS SOYBEAN CHECKOFF

Checkoff FACT:

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Livestock Farmers Worldwide Face Similar Issues

> BY AMY ROADY

Whether in the U.S. or in the U.K., livestock farmers share similar challenges and opportunities, even though they may be slightly different.

The reality is that raising livestock is pretty similar in the U.S. and the U.K. All livestock need clean water, they need feed to eat, they need a place to stay, they get sick sometimes, they grow, they go to market and they need someone to care for them.

Livestock people have a lot in common, says Pam Janssen, an Illinois farmer from Minonk who visited Europe in 2013.

“As far as the people themselves, they are no different than you or I,” says the livestock and crop farmer. “They have the same basic care program that we use here. They want the best for their animals. We are the same. We really care.”

CONSUMERS MATTER

As the livestock industry evolves, different decisions impact production. Sometimes it’s consumers and the food industry. Sometimes it’s the impact of disease outbreaks.

For example, McDonald’s announced in March that it will only source chicken raised without antibiotics that are important to human medicine and that its U.S. restaurants also will offer customers milk jugs from cows that are not treated with rbST, an artificial growth hormone. In the announcement, McDonald’s U.S President Mike Andres, said, “Our customers want food that they feel great about eating — all the way from the farm to the restaurant — and these moves take a step toward better delivering on those expectations.”

From Janssen’s perspective, U.S. farmers are becoming more open about telling their stories and having input on decisions that affect them.

“We want people to understand why we have to do things this way,” says the Illinois Farm Families volunteer and mother of three. “We want to explain that every farm is unique in its own setting; that we care about what we do.”

In the U.K., Janssen observed that, “Everything is based on the consumer, not what’s always good for the animal or the farmer.”

ANIMAL HEALTH PLAYS ROLE

Major disease outbreaks are one challenge Scottish beef producers have faced that Illinois and U.S. farmers to date have mostly avoided.

When BSE infected Scottish beef farms in 1996, beef herds took a real hit, says past National Farmers Union (NFU) Scotland President Nigel Miller, who stepped down in February after serving for four years.

In 1996, then-NFU President Sandy Mole said, “The Scottish NFU is doing everything possible to have the worldwide ban on U.K. beef lifted. Scotland’s beef industry cannot live with the ban — it will have a catastrophic effect — it will destroy our beef industry.”

PEDV has affected U.S. and Illinois pork producers. Since PEDV is widespread in many countries, it is not a trade-restricting disease, but rather a production-related disease, says the National Pork Producers Council. In a May 2014 report, Purdue University Extension economist Chris Hurt said, “Analysis of the (last USDA Hogs and Pigs) report numbers suggests the nation’s baby pig death loss over the past six months was about 5 percent. In contrast, one widely circulated report from an investment firm had predicted an 11 percent loss for pigs coming to market in 2014, with peak losses exceeding 20 percent for late summer marketings.”

FUTURE GROWTH

Scotland’s Miller and Illinois’ Janssen say their children’s interests in returning to the farm is one reason they still have livestock and are making long-term investments, despite challenges.

In the long-term, Miller says that beef prices can make money. One of the challenges beef producers in Scotland face is that investing in infrastructure is expensive. He says cattle growth will need to come from existing producers who will raise more cattle. Miller, whose farm supports 175 cows, invests in his facilities because his sons want to be part of the operation.

**Checkoff FACT:**

Adding Livestock can Enhance Profitability

With funding from the Illinois soybean checkoff, ISA is sharing information with farmers about the value of adding livestock to their operations. Adding livestock can create a reason for family members to return to the farm, spread production risk and reduce fertilizer costs. For more information and resources to add another income stream, visit www.ilsoy.org/animal-agriculture.
Biodiesel Training Enhances Biodiesel Use

> BY HOLLY SCHNITZLER

Advances in biodiesel have made the renewable fuel a reliable, year-round energy source. That’s what Jeff Lynn, soybean farmer from Oakford, Ill., and ISA director has learned from his experience. He has used biodiesel on his farm for 15 years.

After participating in the National Biodiesel Board’s Big Apple Bioheat Tour last December, Lynn realized he could use higher blends of the fuel during winter months.

“I toured the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and learned they used B20 year-round in their fleets,” says Lynn. “I thought if they can do it, I can do it, too.”

Lynn consulted closely with Rebecca Richardson, ISA biodiesel lead, to make the transition. He is pleased with how the fuel performed during the winter.

“I used it on the farm and my wife ran it in her car all winter with no issues,” he says.

Lynn can attest that biodiesel has come a long way from its first days of commercial production in the late 1990s. The industry’s thorough fuel testing and strategic growth have led to a sustainable, clean, powerful, simple-to-use product gaining widespread acceptance and use.

To support biodiesel’s growing momentum, Lynn recently hosted a checkoff-funded biodiesel training at Prairieland FS in Jacksonville, Ill. The event brought in more than 30 fuel delivery truck drivers, salespersons and service techs to learn about advances in biodiesel.

“These trainings are a good investment because they educate those who work directly with farmers and other customers,” says Lynn. “Local fuel delivery truck drivers and service techs play a critical role in relaying biodiesel management and fuel storage advice.”

“You’re either in it or you’re not. If you’re in it, you need to invest in infrastructure to keep it up,” says Miller, a former veterinarian who raises Angus/Shorthorn crossbred cattle and sells his steers through an auction ring.

BRING FAMILY HOME

Janssen and her husband, Bob, face a similar situation as they look to the next generation to join the farm. Their two sons and daughter, are the sixth generation to work on the family farm. The Janssens know that if the kids want to join the farm, they need to create income opportunities to support more families, just like generations ahead of them have done. The farm includes 200 head of feeder calves, 220 sows in a farrow to finish system plus corn, soybeans, wheat and hay.

“We are able to add more hogs and finish more animals. We aren’t as limited because we have the cropland to produce enough grain,” says the Illinois Pork Producers Association secretary.

“Our farm is growing and expanding to add the kids. It is how the farm has changed over time,” she says. “We’re proud we’ve been here this long, and we want to remain for a long, time, too.”

Mark Johnson, technical specialist at MEG Corp, visually inspects a biodiesel sample during a fuel tank sampling demonstration at the Prairieland FS biodiesel training.
Hoon Ge, president, MEG Corp, offers advice for farmers to get the most from biodiesel:

Conduct routine tank checks. Every fall and spring, check tanks for water. If free water is found, the fuel should be tested for microbial contamination.

Keep tanks full. Fill them up after planting and after harvest. Tanks that are empty are half air, which can cause condensation, leading to free water at the bottom of the tank and an array of possible problems.

Contact the Biodiesel Help Line. For answers to your biodiesel questions or fuel-related problems, contact the checkoff-funded Biodiesel Help Line at 800-929-3437.

“Prairieland FS has handled biodiesel for 15 years. This training will help keep our team educated and knowledgeable about biodiesel,” says Tonya Crow, energy marketing manager at Prairieland FS, who helped organize the training. “We enjoy selling farmers back their own commodity, and supporting the product through sales to commercial fleets.”

Similar trainings took place earlier this year at Wabash FS in Fairfield, Ill.; South Central FS in Effingham, Ill.; and another is scheduled for Evergreen FS in Bloomington, Ill.

> TAKE A LOOK AT TODAY’S BIODIESEL

Biodiesel is defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as an advanced biofuel because it reduces greenhouse gases by more than 50 percent compared to petroleum diesel.

According to the United Soybean Board, more than 5.5 billion pounds of U.S. soybean oil went into biodiesel production last year. Illinois is one of the top biodiesel producers and leads the nation in sales, thanks to an abundant soybean supply, seven biodiesel production facilities and a sales tax credit and exemption on B11 and higher blends. The tax policy has created job growth, contributed to the state’s gross domestic product (GDP) and increased diesel fuel sales.

“So much has changed with biodiesel over the years. The industry is continuously reviewing and tightening specifications to ensure consistent and optimal performance. Farmers shouldn’t let any previous concerns keep them from running equipment on today’s biodiesel,” says Hoon Ge.

> GET THE MOST FROM BIODIESEL

Hoon Ge, president, MEG Corp, offers advice for farmers to get the most from biodiesel:

Conduct routine tank checks. Every fall and spring, check tanks for water. If free water is found, the fuel should be tested for microbial contamination.

Keep tanks full. Fill them up after planting and after harvest. Tanks that are empty are half air, which can cause condensation, leading to free water at the bottom of the tank and an array of possible problems.

Contact the Biodiesel Help Line. For answers to your biodiesel questions or fuel-related problems, contact the checkoff-funded Biodiesel Help Line at 800-929-3437.

Checkoff FACT:

Biodiesel Increases Soybean Prices
The biodiesel industry has increased the price of soybeans by 73 cents per bushel, according to a recent soybean checkoff-funded study from Informa Economics. That equates to an additional $40,790 in profit each year for an Illinois grower with a 1,000-acre soybean farm.
C-BMP Announces New Board of Directors

The Illinois Council on Best Management Practices (C-BMP) recently announced its new board of directors. David Droste, soybean farmer from Nashville, Ill., and ISA district director, was elected treasurer. He joins other farmers who now make up the entire executive committee. C-BMP’s goal is to promote enhanced nutrient stewardship and implementation of voluntary agricultural best management practices. The organization was formed in 1998, and works to enhance natural resources and sustainability in agriculture in Illinois.

Members include ISA, Illinois Corn Growers Association, Illinois Farm Bureau, Illinois Fertilizer & Chemical Association, Illinois Pork Producers Association, Syngenta Crop Protection, Monsanto and GROWMARK.

Sustainability Certification Planned for Certified Crop Advisers

The United Soybean Board (USB), American Society of Agronomy (ASA) and the International Certified Crop Adviser (ICCA) Program have partnered to develop training for a specialty certification focused on sustainable agricultural practices.

“Programs such as this will help to create credible resources for farmers who are looking to implement more of these practices on their farms,” says Bill Beam, USB farmer-leader and soybean farmer from Elverson, Penn.

For more information about the program, visit: www.certifiedcropadviser.org

Education Event Teaches Farmers about Soy in Aquaculture

The Global Soy in Aquaculture Program of the U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) recently brought together farmers from seven states, including Illinois, to expand their knowledge of the growing market potential of soybean use in feed for global aquaculture.

The Aquaculture Educational Opportunity helped raise awareness and understanding of aquaculture as the fastest growing food production sector. The group attended Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute, made visits to a hatchery and working marine farm, and toured Pacifico Aquaculture at Isla Todos Santos to see the grow-out process in ocean net pens of white seabass, striped bass and California yellowtail fish species.

USSEC Celebrates 10th Anniversary

USSEC marked its 10th anniversary in March, noting that a decade later the group provides services in more than 70 countries. Milestones include the celebration in 2006 of U.S. soybean farmers’ partnership with the Japanese soybean industry. Next year, U.S. farmers will mark their 20th anniversary in China, now the biggest U.S. customer.

USSEC’s mission remains optimizing the utilization and value of U.S. soy in international markets by meeting the needs of stakeholders and global customers. To learn more about past successes, current projects and future goals, visit www.ussec.org.

Illinois Beef Producers Approve Checkoff

The Illinois Beef Association (IBA) this spring received an overwhelming positive vote for re-introducing the Illinois Beef Checkoff. About 88 percent of voters approved the 50 cent-per-head assessment. The checkoff is expected to begin July 1, since collection points are still being decided. The checkoff will be a voluntary program, so beef producers will have the option to request a refund. Reid Blossom, IBA executive vice president, says the checkoff could raise $300,000 for Illinois beef programs next year.

Calendar of Events

**ILSoyAdvisor.com Field Days**
> Aug. 4-6 · Benton, Villa Grove and DeKalb, IL

**ISA International Biotech Symposium**
> Aug. 31 · Bloomington, IL

**Farm Progress Show**
> Sept. 1-3 · Decatur, IL

For more information, visit www.ilsoy.org.
Advocacy Means Being Active

Advocacy. You may hear that word and either run toward it or away from it.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines advocacy as “the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal.” While that energizes some, others want nothing to do with it. When it comes to agriculture advocacy, soybean farmers do not have a choice but to run toward it.

According to the U.S. Census, the number of farmers has declined from 6.8 million in 1935 to 2.2 million in 2007. That number is a mere two percent of today’s population. Yet hundreds of influential bills and regulations are proposed every year with little input from that two percent.

The May 2014 Allstate/National Journal Heartland Monitor survey discovered that only one percent of Americans truly participate in civic activities. While our population of farmers is small, imagine the power that voice can have. Ag’s two percent would be double the active voice out there today.

The U.S. government, a representative democracy, was founded on the voice of the people. The Public Affairs Council describes it best, saying, “Representative democracy is driven by the concept of ‘citizen advocacy.’ But the system won’t work unless elected officials hear directly from those they represent. Being an active citizen means voting, but one’s responsibilities go beyond the voting booth. Active citizenship means sharing your concerns and opinions and requesting action.”

Voice for Soy, Illinois Soybean Growers’ (ISG) legislative action center, makes it easy to act. ISG does the work for you by writing the letters to send to your legislators. All you have to do is click the button.

What are you waiting for? Act. And imagine the power your voice — combined with your fellow farmers’ voices — can have.

Be a Part of Something Bigger

When you raise your voice as a member of the Illinois Soybean Growers (ISG), you are supporting your industry and directly impacting the issues that affect you, your families and your livelihood. It is important for farmers to keep involved with the issues that affect freedom to farm.

“I am raising my voice because I want a chance to directly impact how legislation will affect my farm,” says Lynn Rohrscheib, soybean farmer from Fairmount, Ill., and ISG director.

What makes ISG membership valuable?

• A chance to connect with individual legislators.
• Opportunity to meet up with other growers and discuss important issues.
• The long list of member benefits that basically pay for your membership fee.

ISG membership provides a chance to be part of something bigger — to add your voice and power for change to that of other soybean growers throughout the state.

“ISG leadership has an impact in the halls of Congress because we are a credible, respected voice for 45,000 soybean farmers,” says Ron Moore, soybean farmer from Roseville, Ill.

Issues ISG monitors include the farm bill; highways, bridges and infrastructure; transportation; Cuba trade barriers; biodiesel; animal agriculture and more.

Act now to become a member by calling 888-826-4011, or join online at ilsoygrowers.org and watch the new membership video.

Save $50 on a 3-year membership!
Conservationist and Farmer

Terry Bachtold, Strawn, Ill.

“I’m a leader

Conservationist

and Farmer

Terry Bachtold, Strawn, Ill.

Terry Bachtold currently serves as the ag resource coordinator for the Livingston County Soil and Water Conservation District (LCSWCD). He also has been a farmer all of his life. He graduated from Western Illinois University with a degree in animal science, and now operates a cow-calf herd, raising grass-fed beef on a rotational grazing plan.

WHY ARE YOU INTERESTED IN CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES?

Promoting conservation on the land is a focus of my job with LCSWCD. But I also have a personal interest in protecting and preserving our natural resources for future generations.

There are differing opinions on the meaning of sustainability in agriculture. One viewpoint is that the land must return a financial profit. To me sustainability means keeping or improving the value of the resources we use; sustaining the health and life of our soil and water for generations to come. Productive soil is most important. Years of continuous tillage for corn and soybean production have resulted in a reduction of organic matter in our soil. To be sustainable, it is necessary to increase organic matter, improve soil structure, and provide an environment for soil to thrive. Even the newest or best seed genetics cannot overcome soil deficiencies.

WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF YOUR PROGRAM’S SUCCESS?

The Indian Creek Watershed project in Livingston County has been going on for five years with demonstration plots, field days and annual meetings. Information is made available to farmers about current conservation practices and water quality issues. The largest event was a national tour in 2013 that drew more than 200 attendees from various states. The tour was a collaborative effort between LCSWCD, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and the Conservation Technology Information Center and their affiliates.

HOW DO YOU HELP SOYBEAN FARMERS MEET SUSTAINABILITY GOALS?

I continuously and consistently work with farmers to encourage them to implement conservation practices on their farms to improve soil health. Improved soil health will help water infiltration. To achieve conservation goals, we need to use more cover crops and less tillage.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING ILLINOIS AGRICULTURE ON THE SUSTAINABILITY FRONT?

I see two challenges. First, defining sustainability with financial measures can lead to neglecting the environmental impact of certain agricultural practices. This will have a long-term negative effect and will result in non-sustainability. We must care for our natural resources — land, water, air and animals — in order to sustain the business of agricultural production.

Second, we must educate the public about farming practices that protect the environment and the health of consumers. Farmers must meet this challenge by using practices that accomplish such goals, but also by communicating with non-farmers about what they do and why. Filter strips along creeks can reduce nutrient runoff, no-till farming can reduce wind and water erosion, and cover crops can trap nutrients, reduce erosion and improve organic matter in the soil.

“To me, sustainability means keeping or improving the value of the resources we use; sustaining the health and life of our soil and water for generations to come.”

Terry Bachtold,
Livingston County Soil and Water Conservation District
THE POWER OF ZONE CREATION IN YOUR HANDS.

Do-It-Yourself Management Zones

For years, you’ve utilized government generated soil maps to implement variable seeding and nitrogen rates. But what if you could take that a step further? What if you could create your own management zones? Because let’s be honest, when it comes to your fields, you know them best.

FARMserver’s new Management Zone Creation Tool puts you in control of your fields through a simple, secure and cost effective process. Once created, zones can be used to generate prescriptions for planting, fertilizing and spraying. This step-by-step system provides farmers with the tools to maximize yield, control costs, and increase profitability on their operations.

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