SMASHING THE 100-BUShEL BARRIER
One for the Record Books

Illinois Farmer Hits Grand Slam with 100-Bushel Beans

Dreams are personal and often elusive. But sometimes there's that one dream that takes root. That one goal you work to make a reality.

From the baseball diamond to the soybean field, or anywhere in between, making it to the “show” requires determination, dogged pursuit of excellence, teamwork and good coaching.

Just ask Dan Arkels, record-breaking soybean grower from Peru, Ill. Arkels understands all about reaching goals and striving for success. From a 160-acre farm in 1980, Arkels has cultivated his family’s efforts into a 3,250-acre corn and soybean farm in LaSalle County.

This spring he set his sights on a new goal — a soybean yield barrier that had yet to be officially broken.

“My goal was to be the first person in Illinois to record soybean yields of more than 100 bushels,” says Arkels. “I always believed it could be done, but I knew I would have to put forth effort if I was going to do it.”

The soybean yield goal he set is just one more target on his quest to improve his agricultural skills and profitable crop production objectives. Arkels has posted several top finishes as the Illinois winner of the National Corn Yield Contest conducted by the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA). He attained first-hand experience and learned what it took to contend in a yield competition.

Even so, Arkels admits that the Illinois Soybean Association’s 100 Bushel Challenge, funded by the soybean checkoff, was formidable. “It’s really hard to raise beans to yield at these high levels,” he explains. “You have to do everything right every step of the way, and you especially need timely rains to make these high yields.”

Despite these challenges, Arkels embarked on his mission. As in baseball, the season is long, and requires careful planning and management to reduce errors and clear the way to victory.
Draft a Dream Team

Like all great seasons, the 2014 plan for Arkels’ test plot was built on key fundamentals and a team strategy of good soils, good genetics and getting plants off to a strong start.

THE FIELD.

He selected a field owned by Diana Schorn with primarily Muscatune and Sable soils, known for their ability to retain moisture in dry weather. An added bonus? Soybeans only had been planted in the field once in the past 15 years. “That’s one of the reasons I chose it,” says Arkels. “There haven’t been a lot of soybeans in it the last few years and that helps to reduce disease and cyst pressure, which I would help us in terms of yield.”

THE GENES.

Arkels believed variety selection was critical to success, so he asked his seed dealer to help choose the Pioneer variety best suited to meet the 100 Bushel Challenge. George A. Lukach, owner of Lukach Pioneer Seed Agency, recommended 34T07RR2 with a 3.4 maturity rating. “It was new for 2014, but the variety had demonstrated tremendous yield potential in plots and in field demonstrations.”

Arkels typically plants a 2.8 maturity variety. The slightly later maturity helped extend the amount of sunlight available to the plant during the growing season.

THE START.

To make the most of genetic potential, Arkels chose a population of 182,000 plants per acre for his plot, which is comparable to what he uses on the rest of his production acres. “We use a planter for 15-inch rows to make sure each seed has its own space,” he notes. “You can’t grow top yields if you dribble seeds out there unevenly.”

Because of his commitment to 15-inch rows, Arkels needed a plant of medium height and width that would provide good standability. “Managing plant height is important if you’re going to produce higher-yielding soybeans,” says Lukach. “When crowded at higher populations, some beans will grow taller and lodge, causing the lower canopy to lose the ability to capture sunlight.”

Arkels planted his field May 8 and the game was on. Arkels planted his other soybean acres by the end of May. Based on what he’s learned, his goal for next year is to have all of his soybeans planted by May 20 and earlier if conditions allow. “If you can get the crops planted earlier and keep diseases out and insect pressure under control, your plants will be taller, bushier and able to capture more sunlight in key parts of the growing season.”

Triple Play

Winning takes both a strong offense and a good defense, and Arkels’ team executed consistently all season with a triple play focus on fertility, weed control and plant health. They responded to changing plant demands and wrangled yield-robbers. All of the in-season decisions focused on one goal: reducing crop stress to save as many blossoms and pods as possible.

FERTILITY.

Arkels recalls speaking with an agronomist early in the year who questioned how he would provide the estimated 600 pounds of nitrogen (N) needed to produce 100-bushel soybeans.

The team used a combination of dry, preplant and foliar nitrogen to add 150 units of N throughout the season.

“Splitting that application is absolutely key, as is the use of a foliar product,” he says. “Without foliar feeding, we wouldn’t have broken 100 bushels.”

Using HarvestMax, a foliar nutrition product from Grainco FS, they provided a mix of nitrogen, sulfur, manganese, iron and zinc. Meeting all of the crop’s macro and micronutrient needs was an important goal for the team. “You can’t grow 100-bushel soybeans using maintenance fertilizer rates or just relying on what’s left from the previous year,” Arkels clarifies. “You must fertilize for your yield goal because you can’t mine the soil and not put down what the plant will need to get through the growing season.”

WEED CONTROL.

Effective weed control also contributed to the success of Arkels’ dream beans. He described the field as absolutely clean with no weed pressure.

The team’s program? Start with Verdict preplant herbicide, spray with Abundit Extra when beans are two to three inches tall and repeat the application two weeks later.

Arkels does not have issues with herbicide-resistant weeds on his farm, and credits lack of weeds to the use of 15-inch rows and a commitment to spraying early.

PLANT HEALTH.

Another key to high yields is ensuring soybeans are as healthy as possible. Arkels estimates that despite record-breaking yields, the dry weather in July cost him about 10 bushels per acre in yield. “Beans were starting to moisture-stress because July was so dry,” he says. “They were flowering and setting pods, so any stress at that time meant aborted pods.”

Arkels says that research has shown stressed soybeans will abort about 75 percent of their flowers, so working to keep even a few of those can make a big yield difference. Arkels credits StollerUSA products he applied throughout the season, including Bio-Forge and Stimulate, with helping his plants optimize plant hormonal balance, reduce plant stress and retain more flowers and pods through the dry spell.

“We think in-season applications helped keep them from aborting,” he says.

Verifiers Jeff Townsend (left) and John Garrity (right) were at Arkels’ LaSalle County farm as he harvested his 100 Bushel Challenge plot.
IT HAPPENED.

Dan Arkels of Peru, Illinois, has broken the 100-bushel barrier. Illinois Soybean Association is proud to celebrate this milestone in agricultural history with Dan and his entire team.

Arkels believes the game plan was wildly successful. He recorded a final yield of 103.95 bushels per acre on a 3.73-acre plot, as verified by Jeff Townsend, 1st Farm Credit, Ottawa, Ill., and John Garrity, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ottawa. That marks the first-ever verified soybean yield to top 100 bushels per acre in the ISA Yield Challenge program. Last year’s average yield in Illinois was 49 bushels per acre.

While the main goal of Yield Challenge projects is to push the yield limits of a crop, profitability plays a key role in all farm management decisions. Arkels says that the extra investment he put into his Yield Challenge plot yielded 25 more bushels per acre than what his normal production acres produce. “Growers interested in the profitability of a high-yield management system will need to do the math to see what will pay on their farms,” he says. “Even at today’s prices, we made money on the project, because it paid to invest in the extra trips to keep the plants healthy.”

Don Stork, regional manager for Stoller USA, says it seems counterintuitive, but one of the team’s goals was not to compel Arkels to spend money. “If we invested money to treat the plant, it was for a specific purpose. We all agreed on it and had science to back up how it contributed to return on investment (ROI).”

Turning in record-setting yields isn’t the end of the road for Arkels and his team. With four different treatment zones in the same 114-acre field, Dave Callan, Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) and specialist with Grainco FS, says that the postseason will include some additional analysis.

“We’re hoping to see some differences in the yield map. We’ll sit down together this winter to sort out what truly is giving us the best bang for the buck,” he notes. “After we’ve sorted out the most effective treatments, we’ll move those to Dan’s production acres.”

As for Arkels, his bucket list is now a little shorter. “In my world, this is like winning the World Series,” says Arkels. “Someone needed to be the first to prove it’s possible to raise 100-bushel soybeans in Illinois. I was lucky I had the right team and the right growing season to do it.”

Arkels harvested his Yield Challenge plot on Oct. 10 with two ISA-approved verifiers on-site to check final yield.

Funded by the ILLINOIS SOYBEAN CHECKOFF

Post-Season Recap

Arkels harvested his Yield Challenge plot on Oct. 10 with two ISA-approved verifiers on-site to check final yield.
Manage Record Production Wisely

PLAN TO CUT 2015 COSTS
MARKET CROP FOR A PROFIT
It’s time to take a stand against soybean cyst nematodes.

As soybean cyst nematodes have adapted to the most widely used source of genetic resistance, you increasingly need additional protection against SCN to maximize yield potential. Take back control with Clariva™ Complete Beans, the only seed treatment proven to offer effective, season-long protection against SCN through direct and lethal activity. Clariva Complete Beans helps minimize hidden and costly damage from SCN independent of environmental conditions, and builds on the unsurpassed early-season insect and disease protection that growers trust from market-leading CruiserMaxx® Beans with Vibrance® seed treatment.

Contact your Syngenta representative or visit ClarivaCompleteBeans.com and take back your fields.
COVER STORY
It’s a Bin-Buster
Soybean supply, demand and price projections suggest profitability during the next few years will require a sharp pencil. But there are risk management tactics Illinois soybean farmers can employ this fall to improve the odds.

YIELD, COMPOSITION & PROFITABILITY
Time to Rethink Soil Sampling
Farmers may want to evaluate more frequent soil tests and even a seasonal switch to sampling soils in the spring versus fall to boost fertilizer returns.

TRANSPORTATION
Manage Fuel Costs Wisely as Margins Narrow
As soybean prices drop and margins narrow, every decision counts. That includes farm fuel and oil use. Farmers can plan ahead now and take steps during the growing season to reduce costs.

ANIMAL AGRICULTURE
Manure an Economical Fertilizer Option
Potential record crop production means farmers need to pay particular attention to fertility needs and replenish soils. Manure is one economical option Illinois farmers can consider.

MANAGEMENT MATTERS MYTHBUSTER
Are Soybeans after Soybeans a Recipe for Disaster?
Farmers may understand the pros and cons of continuous corn, but planting soybeans after soybeans has never really caught on in Illinois. Yet, there may be times to consider the rotation. Learn what university research indicates is best for this less-common rotation strategy.

I’M A LEADER
More Women Stepping into Leadership Roles
While women always have played an active role in agriculture, for the first time ever, the Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) has five female directors on its board. See what they have to say.
Underlying Theme for 2015

Risk Management an Underlying Theme for 2015

Soybean prices have plummeted back into the single digits this year. As a result, many of us will regroup after harvest to determine how best we can manage profit potential in 2015. The Illinois soybean checkoff invests in programs and projects that help farmers manage risk. Nearly every project where we invest has the underlying theme of increasing profitability through risk management. Even the Illinois Soybean Association’s (ISA) vision is to enable Illinois soybean producers to be the most knowledgeable and profitable around the world.

We have dedicated many of the pages in this issue of Illinois Field & Bean to risk management topics. That includes tips for managing a potential record soybean crop for profitability, crop rotation options, minimizing fuel costs and maximizing fertility investments.

I encourage you to watch for details about our checkoff-funded “Profitability Matters” campaign, which will kick off this winter. You may already be familiar with our “Management Matters” project, which has included a column in the magazine about busting soybean production myths. Hopefully, you also have taken the opportunity to explore ILSoyAdvisor.com, which is dedicated to helping farmers make the most of soybean production management.

Our risk management efforts expand beyond our own fields, too. In the coming year, we will continue to assist the Illinois livestock industry with profitability through manure management, expansion opportunities and soy-based animal feed research. Animal agriculture remains the top customer for Illinois soybean farmers as the leading source of protein for animal feed.

Finally, if you are not a member of Illinois Soybean Growers (ISG), our legislative and regulatory support arm, I suggest you visit www.ilsoygrowers.org and join. ISG membership provides you with opportunities to have a say in our legislative actions, as well as provides a direct means to reach legislators with your input on critical issues that affect freedom to farm.

If you have questions or any input about how ISA can help you manage profitability in 2015 and beyond, please contact me or the ISA office. Enjoy your upcoming holiday season.

BILL RABEN
ISA Chairman

Checkoff FACT:
Consider Winter Education Opportunities
The Illinois soybean checkoff has funded successful educational seminars and meetings over the years, and the 2014-15 winter season will be no different. Watch www.ilsoy.org for information about our Soybean Summits, Illinois Commodity Conference and more. The calendar included on our Partner News page highlights additional opportunities.
All Farmers Have Something to Contribute

> BY LYNN ROHRSCHEIB

Being a female leader in the agriculture industry is something I do not take lightly. I consider myself to be in an elite group of agriculturalists who strive to improve farming conditions for all; whether it be to lessen governmental regulations, implement new money-saving technologies, improve the land as good stewards, or to ensure that farming and agriculture will still be around for the next generation.

I want to make sure everything I do is something that makes a positive difference for those around me, and to hopefully show other young women who want to pursue a career in farming or agriculture that it can be done.

Women role models in agriculture can be few and far between. As a young girl, there were not many female farmers or agriculturalists in my local area. I pulled a lot of strength from my Grandma Brooks who farmed her whole life, 91 years. She did everything and was determined that if a man could do it, so could she. She was bound to her family’s land and felt more at home in the field than in a kitchen. She persevered through setbacks which made her more determined and stronger. The same can be said of my experiences. I, too, feel at home in a field.

I try not to draw attention to the fact that I am female even though the agriculture industry is historically dominated by men.

“I want to make sure everything I do is something that makes a positive difference for those around me, and to hopefully show other young women who want to pursue a career in farming or agriculture that it can be done.”

LYNN ROHRSCHEIB, Fairmount, Ill., farmer

Lynn Rohrscheib farms near Fairmount, Ill., as part of a family operation that also includes a custom application business. She has a degree in plant and soil sciences from Southern Illinois University Carbondale. She is an at-large director for the Illinois Soybean Association and serves as the ISA secretary.
It’s a Bin-Buster
Manage Record Production for Maximum Profitability

> BY BARB BAYLOR ANDERSON

While it’s great to produce a bin-busting soybean crop, it’s even better if you have a handle on managing the risk that comes with that big crop. Soybean supply, demand and price projections suggest profitability during the next few years will require a sharp pencil.

“I am looking for ways to protect the bottom line as much as I can, including forward contracting at profitable prices as much as possible,” says Duane Dahlman, soybean farmer from Marengo, Ill., and Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) Marketing Committee chairman.

The potential for a record soybean crop has weighed on prices all season. The University of Missouri’s Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute (FAPRI) says soybean prices this fall could be the lowest since 2009. Large U.S. and global supplies caused soybean prices to drop below $10.00 per bushel for the 2014 crop and may average $9.04 per bushel for the 2015 crop.

USDA’s September Crop Production report forecast the 2014 U.S. average soybean yield at 46.6 bushels per acre. That exceeds the previous record yield of 44 bushels in 2009. Illinois yields are estimated at an average of 56 bushels per acre — the highest in the nation — resulting in a record 562.8 million bushels. That would make Illinois soybean production tops in the nation again this year.

PRICES UNDER PRESSURE

The old market adage that “big crops get bigger” could lead to even more production increases prior to the January report. University of Illinois ag economists note the final USDA estimate of the 2014 U.S. soybean yield will have obvious implications for prices for an extended period.

Mike Zuzolo, president, Global Commodity Analytics & Consulting, LLC, Lafayette, Ind., agrees. Based on the potential size of the U.S. 2014 soybean crop and potential size of the 2015 South American crop, he suggests soybean farmers should have 20-25 percent of 2015 sales locked in now. He will likely recommend increasing that share to 50-60 percent before January, he says, using paper hedges instead of cash-related hedges.

“With corn and soybeans competing for the same bin space on farm this winter and South American producers moving toward more oilseeds, it would seem to me that more downward pressure on soybeans is likely as we head into early winter, compared with corn,” he says. “The November-March soybean carrying charge is only 45 percent of the full carry (as harvest is underway), so that may entice farmers to market soybeans before corn.”

The market structure and tighter basis this fall also have been telling farmers to sell their 2014 soybeans, says Zuzolo. Commercial storage for soybeans appears too expensive.

University of Illinois ag economist Darrel Good says soybean prices have declined faster and to lower levels than generally expected. As a result, he believes some farmers may think current prices are “too low” and may choose to “own” some soybean production beyond harvest.

“The goal of producers will be to select the lowest cost form of ownership that is available,” says Good. “And the magnitude of those costs will provide some guidance on the magnitude of price increases needed to make ownership profitable.”

HOLD ONTO SOYBEANS

Good and his colleagues recently evaluated three alternatives to sales: on-farm storage, off-farm storage and replacing harvest cash sales with a long futures position.

“Owning soybeans beyond harvest this year will not be
inexpensive,” he says. “The cost of retaining ownership could vary considerably by form of ownership. Long-term costs for retaining soybeans could range from $0.355 to $0.66 per bushel.”

Not surprisingly, Good says use of existing on-farm storage facilities is likely to have the lowest cost for short-term ownership, but by a relatively small margin. On-farm storage is the lowest cost form of ownership by a much wider margin in the longer-term; $0.24 cheaper than off-farm.

The cost of owning futures contracts consists of a small commission fee for trading futures and the potential basis appreciation that is foregone by having ownership in futures rather than cash. The most cost uncertainty centers on potential basis appreciation from harvest forward, he says.

“Based on expectations for basis appreciation, the lowest cost form of long-term ownership for soybeans is with futures; $0.31 cheaper than off-farm storage. Off-farm storage appears likely to be the most expensive form of ownership,” he says. “Those costs are elevated for the longer-term due to accumulated interest opportunity costs. For producers without operating loans, the opportunity interest cost might be less, making off-farm storage more competitive with futures.”

Ownership “on paper” in the futures markets is widely considered to be a highly speculative strategy. But Good says if a producer has already decided to own soybeans beyond the end of 2014, it is actually a reasonable alternative. The analysis does not answer the bigger question of whether ownership should be retained after harvest at all, he adds.

“USDA’s average cash price range is $9-$11.00 per bushel, so more downside could be seen if this crop gets bigger since we are closer to the lower end of that range,” says Zuzolo. “USDA’s World Ag Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) report shows a global stocks-to-use ratio of 24 percent versus 17 percent in 2012-13. That means global ending stocks are going to increase 54 percent while total use for the same period only increases eight percent. There is plenty of competition in place for U.S. farmers in the upcoming marketing year.”

Zuzolo says if the soybean-corn ratio remains elevated next spring and keeps soybeans prices at a premium to corn, farmers may plant more oilseed versus feed grain acres. He anticipates that to be especially true where farmers are pleased with soybean yields from this season’s harvest. Farmers considering soybeans following soybeans should read the article on page 20 as well.

“Without a weather-supply market developing and South American production being cut substantially, I think it would be prudent planning for producers to not expect much more than $10.80 for Nov. 2015 beans — the top-end of my range over the next 12 months,” says Zuzolo.

**ESTIMATED COST OF OWNING SOYBEANS IN EAST CENTRAL ILLINOIS FOR 2014-15**

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Source: University of Illinois

**Checkoff FACT:**

**ISA Weaves Risk Management into Programs**

Duane Dahlman, soybean farmer from Marengo, Ill., and ISA Marketing Committee chairman, says farmer-directors are focused on helping all Illinois farmers manage risk for 2015. With the big crop, soybean checkoff dollars are invested in finding solutions to infrastructure woes that pressure prices and in building demand. In addition, ISA is funding several educational seminars this winter to help farmers focus on ways to reduce risk and enhance profitability. Visit www.ilsoy.org for more.
SOY TALK

Early Season Insurance Policy

Farmers know the importance of getting their crops off to a good start. A healthy, robust soybean seedling is vital for reaching maximum yield potential. It starts in the fall with selecting the right soybean varieties and seed treatments.

“The initial stand really sets the stage for optimal yield,” says Craig Solomon, agronomist for Mycogen Seeds. “Uneven emergence will limit yield potential. Seed treatments serve as a valuable insurance policy.”

Treatments offer protection for emerging seeds in many circumstances, and they really shine when farmers plant early. Planting in cold soils and in fields receiving reduced tillage are ideal circumstances for using seed treatments.

“Since germination is reduced in cold soils, the seedling is exposed to diseases longer,” Solomon adds.

Not all seed treatments are created equal. Farmers can consider many options based on unique circumstances. Treatments typically fall in one of five categories:

- Fungicides: Protect seeds against soil-borne fungi that attack seeds after planting
- Insecticides: Protect seeds against seed-attacking insects
- Nematicides: Protect against soybean cyst nematodes that restrict nutrient uptake
- Plant growth regulators: Support growth and vigor of soybean seedlings
- Inoculants: Ensure proper nodulation and can reduce need for nitrogen fertilizer applications

Seed treatments may be especially necessary when replanting in hail-damaged fields. The presence of damaged tissue in the soil can be ideal for pathogens and pests, so extra protection could be well worth it.

When deciding if seed treatments are the best option, farmers to consider planting date, pest pressure, disease history, tillage practices and cost.

“The way prices are today, inputs should and will be questioned,” Solomon adds. “In most cases, I believe seed treatments are worth the expense.”

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TIME TO RETHINK
SOIL SAMPLING

Advice trumps tradition, and farmers may want to consider more frequent soil tests and even a seasonal switch to sampling soils in the spring versus fall.

> BY JOANIE STIERS

Roy Wendte, Altamont, Ill., checks the seed depth in his double-crop soybeans. As with this routine practice of checking seed depth, farmers should establish a soil sampling pattern with consistency in the time of year and soil moisture level to determine trends over time.
The soil moisture level has been a bigger factor in consistent results than was earlier thought to be 15 to 20 years ago,” says Scott Bowen, client representative for SGS North America’s laboratory in Toulon, Ill. “Historically, there have been people that have always done it in the fall, and we recognize that as important.”

Bowen, who has more than 20 years of laboratory experience, consults with farmers throughout northern Illinois on soil test results and fertility strategies. He prefers spring sampling when soils usually contain more moisture. It also provides more time for fall fertilizer decisions.

“Part of my feeling about spring sampling is it allows you more time to analyze your results and fertility strategies without the pressure of harvest being over you,” Bowen says.

West central Illinois farmer David C. Erickson switched from fall to spring sampling in 1993. He farms in a strictly corn-soybean rotation, and samples ahead of planting soybeans because the farm applies the initial variable rate application of dry fertilizer in the fall ahead of corn.

“It really gives you a chance to study the soil fertility and your nutrient needs,” says Erickson, former president of the Illinois and American soybean associations. “We’re spreading this out over a four- to five-month period instead of doing it in two to four weeks.”

To an extent, Erickson does take into account the soybean crop harvested between the spring sampling and fall fertilizer application. However, his farm’s pattern of routine grid testing at the same time each year provides the most valuable information he needs.

**CONSIDER NARROWING SAMPLING WINDOW**

Time and finances play a factor in sampling timing. But based on soil fertility alone, soil tests at least every two years will provide the best direction for fertility management decisions, says Rachel Cook, assistant professor of soil fertility at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

While every four years represents common practice, testing every two years will help maintain optimum fertility levels, she says. “However, if you are below optimum levels and trying to build up to recommended levels, I would soil sample every year.”

Bowen also sees a trend and need to test more frequently than every four years. He favors a three-year program and notices a small percentage of farmers who have even made commitments to every other year.

“It was pointed out to me quite a few years ago that as yields started progressing, we were getting more change in the pH readings than we had been seeing in the 15 years previous to that,” Bowen says. “As people started looking at their results, there was more change over a four-year period than they liked to see, so they narrowed up that window.”

Cook encourages farmers to establish a soil sampling pattern with consistency in the time of year as well as soil moisture level to determine trends over time.

“Soil testing is by far one of the best investments you can make on your farm,” she says. “If you don’t know where you are starting from, then you can’t possibly know where to go.”

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**ILSoyAdvisor Provides Management Direction**

If you have questions about soil sampling, the soybean checkoff-funded ILSoyAdvisor.com website offers opportunities to ask experts specific questions, as well as browse through the various soil fertility management tips posted on the site.
What winter education opportunities are useful to your business?

“The best thing I do is catch up on all of the material I put off during harvest. I read magazines and check results from different test plots to see if I want to try new things. This year one of those opportunities was cover crops.”

– Carrie Winkelmann, Tallula, Ill.

“I try to attend at least one marketing seminar every winter and at least one with seed and herbicide updates. I attend the meetings put on by the University of Illinois and the University of Wisconsin. Last year they told me to book at least half of my soybean crop early. I did that, so I am pretty happy.”

– Duane Dahlman, Marengo, Ill.

“I go to different trade and farm shows, including the Farm Machinery Show. I also usually try to hit different county meetings.”

– Tim Scates, Carmi, Ill.

“I go to chemical company meetings, where they talk about their lineups for next year. We also have seed and chemical reps for our company come out to talk to customers about different things that are facing the industry for the next year so everyone can fine tune what they want to change.”

– Lynn Rohrscheib, Fairmount, Ill.

Website Houses Nutrient Loss Tips

The Council on Best Management Practices (C-BMP) has teamed up with several groups, including the Illinois Corn Marketing Board, Illinois Farm Bureau, ISA, Illinois Pork Producers Association, Growmark and the Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association to educate farmers about various initiatives referenced in the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRS) draft, which is planned to be released for comment some time after harvest.

For years, Illinois agriculture has worked to reduce nutrient losses and improve water quality in Illinois and downstream to the Gulf of Mexico. The website (illinoiscbmp.org/nutrientstrategy) gives scientifically sound recommendations on nutrient issues, such as reducing soil erosion with tillage practices and buffer strips, and educates farmers about available tools for NLRS activities.

STC Reps Visit Panama Canal

Several members of the Soy Transportation Coalition (STC) traveled to Panama in August to participate in the 100th anniversary celebration of the Panama Canal. The celebration was intended to coincide with completion of the expansion project of the canal, which started in 2007. However, it was delayed until 2015 with traffic expected to use the canal in early 2016.

Although the project is later than planned Mike Steenhoek, executive director of the STC, says Americans can learn a lot from Panamanians. He believes Panama stakeholders understand the connection between transportation infrastructure and a healthy economy.

In 2011, STC and the Panama Canal Authority signed a memorandum of understanding to exchange information to raise awareness of the canal expansion and its potential impact on U.S. agriculture. STC commissioned analysis and found the expansion will allow vessels along the Mississippi River to be loaded with an additional 500,000 bushels of soybeans, which equates to $6-7 million in additional value per vessel. STC estimates a U.S. soybean customer in Asia could save 35 cents per bushel in greater efficiency with the Panama Canal expansion.

Calendar of Events

Executive Women in Agriculture
> December 4-5 • Chicago

ASA and USB Meetings
> December 9-12 • St. Louis

University of Illinois AGMasters Conference
> December 15-16 • Champaign

ISA Soybean Summits
> January 30 • Effingham and March 6 • Peoria

For more information, visit www.ilsoy.org
Nutrient Management Attracts New Talent to Field

> BY ALISSA KIEDROWSKI

A renewed interest in nutrient management is attracting new talent to Illinois’ agricultural research community. Two new sustainability researchers are putting their scientific shoulders to the wheel to help farmers manage the environmental impacts of their farming practices while helping them to maintain the freedom to run successful businesses.

CATHERINE O’REILLY, PH.D.
Associate Professor,
Department of Geology/Geography
Illinois State University (ISU)

For Catherine O’Reilly, Ph.D., it’s always been about water. Her lifelong passion for water and the critical role it plays in society has grown into a career as a freshwater biogeochemist.

Originally from South Africa, O’Reilly moved to Minnesota in her youth. She attended college in Minnesota, earned her Ph.D. in Arizona, and completed work at a college in New York before accepting her current position in 2011.

Working with Shalamar Armstrong, Ph.D., ISU Department of Agriculture, O’Reilly will help explore the impact of cover crops on water quality at both the field and watershed levels.

“Most cover crop studies have been on small plots,” she says. “While those are important, fully understanding how cover crops impact water quality requires field and watershed level studies.”

O’Reilly adds the watershed-scale study will involve about 700 acres that drain into Money Creek, a main tributary to Lake Bloomington and the reservoir for the Bloomington, Ill., water supply. The project is designed so results will allow farmers to understand how cover crops affect both soil health and water quality.

“We hope to see if we can improve soil quality, reduce nitrogen losses and improve water quality without having to significantly change the way people farm,” she says. “Mandating land use strategies is never the best way to go, so we have provided flexibility in how cover crops can be used as a management practice.”

Cameron Pittelkow, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Agronomy,
Department of Crop Sciences
University of Illinois

A commitment to helping growers improve farming efficiency drives the work of Cameron Pittelkow, Ph.D., who recently joined the University of Illinois Department of Crop Sciences.

Pittelkow earned his doctorate from the University of California-Davis, where he researched sustainability issues affecting the California rice industry and the impacts of no-till farming practices on crop yield. He also has partnered with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines, conducting research on improving efficiency of high-yielding rice production practices. His Illinois work will include applied research grounded in on-farm trials to help farmers discover new approaches to managing nutrients that work with high yields.

“The potential for nitrogen and phosphorous losses from our fields is getting a lot of attention, but we also need to consider that productivity levels in Illinois are extremely high,” he says.

By developing approaches for optimizing fertilizer management that increase efficiency, farmers can have confidence their nutrient recovery is high, he adds. The key is to find ways to ensure that optimum yields can be achieved without adding surplus nutrients.

By working directly with farmers Pittelkow hopes his research will produce results that are useful on the farm, as well as for policymakers. “If we’re going to be serious about the discussion of environmental impacts of crop production, we need to benchmark our current practices to see where we stand and what improvements can be made,” he says.
Manage Fuel Costs Wisely as Margins Narrow

> BY AMY ROADY

As soybean prices drop and margins narrow, every decision counts. That includes farm fuel and oil use. Farmers can plan ahead now and take steps during the growing season to reduce costs.

"Margins are tighter this year because grain costs have gone down," confirms Brad Zwilling, farm business analyst for Illinois Farm Business Farm Management (FBFM). "Farmers need to evaluate all costs and control costs wherever possible."

For 2014, fuel and oil costs were projected to remain about the same. However, gross revenue per acre for soybeans was projected to drop by at least $170 across Illinois, according to a Farm Business Management report published in June 2014. As a comparison, the report illustrated that in 2013, fuel and oil costs per acre for soybeans were between $21 and $27 per acre. That accounted for about 19 percent of power costs and six percent of non-land costs per acre.

Like other farm decisions, such as buying seed and selling grain, the key to buying fuel is to think ahead. “Don’t just buy when demand is high and when you have to have it, such as the middle of harvest,” Zwilling says. “Try to buy fuel when you think you have an advantage.”

Lessons learned from buying fuel and oil for soybeans apply to corn, too. FBFM estimates costs per acre for corn are about $3-$7 acre more, with a bigger difference in higher productivity areas.

Regardless of crop, farmers can look at different tillage options along with fuel purchasing options to reduce fuel and oil costs for 2015.

“It is the simplest things to take a close look at, such as how many trips you need across a field,” says Steve Ayers, educator for the University of Illinois Extension’s Champaign/Ford/Iroquois/Vermilion Unit. “You still can get fantastic yields without working it four times over.”

> POWER COSTS RISE, GROSS REVENUES DECLINE

When it comes to tillage, not only do no-till and strip-till save on fuel, they also are good for the environment and reduce soil runoff. Steve Ayers, educator for the University of Illinois, has a few other tips for farmers:

• Look at tillage depth and consider not going more than three or four inches.

• Reduce trips across a field by combining fertility and herbicide applications into one trip.

• Consider hiring a custom applicator with bigger booms that can cover more ground in fewer passes than a smaller sprayer.

• Take a look at tractors and equipment to make sure your farm’s equipment is not over—or under—powered and that it is properly sized for what you want to do.

• Change fuel tank filters every six months.

• Clean out transfer fuel tanks at least once a year.

• Monitor all tanks and tractors for algae growth, especially if they have been sitting awhile.

For more information on managing fuel and other costs, visit farmdoc.illinois.edu, talk to your fuel supplier or visit ilsoy.org.
IT MAY BE PART OF A DEEPER STORY.

Do you want to increase profit margins?
According to Laura Pepple, University of Illinois Extension, a nitrogen limiting application of hog manure at a rate of 3,500 gallons/acre has a cash value of $171/acre. Replacing commercial fertilizer with manure can decrease input costs.

"With the N-P-K in livestock manure, you have the potential to replace all of your commercial fertilizer costs." –Ted Funk, extension specialist, University of Illinois

Would you like to improve your soil and increase yields?
Manure returns organic matter to the soil, bringing added benefits to your crops that cannot be achieved through commercial fertilizer. Farmers tend to see higher yields in fields that utilize manure.

"Manure provides so many advantages to your soil. It provides micronutrients, increases organic matter and improves soil’s water holding capacity.”
–Ted Funk, extension specialist, University of Illinois

Are you planning to bring a family member home to farm?
High land prices and capital investments deter many young people from crop farming, and expanding your farm may not be feasible. Diversifying a grain operation with livestock creates income and labor opportunities for the next generation to join the operation.

"I was a banker for 7-8 years ... and decided I wanted to come home to farm. Putting a pencil to it and comparing it to the high price of land and cash rent ... we really thought this was the way to do it.” –Wes Strode, cattle and crop farmer, Marietta, Illinois

Visit ilsoy.org/animalag to learn more about the opportunities of livestock manure.
Illinois farmers will need to rely on fertilizers to replenish soils after the record 2014 crop. Brothers Brad and Brian Thomas farm together near Oakdale, Ill., and they prefer to use hog manure from a neighbor’s barn to enhance soil fertility and profitability.

“We don’t have to use any commercial fertilizer on ground that gets manure, and we get more organic matter and other benefits from manure,” says Brad Thomas. “We just pay manure application costs, so we get cost savings compared to commercial fertilizer.”

About 15 years ago, a neighbor built a hog barn. The hog farmer didn’t have enough local ground to take the building’s manure, so the Thomas family jumped at the opportunity to use it on nearby fields.

“We raised hogs until the early 1990s, so we understood the value of manure as fertilizer,” Thomas explains. “We were tickled when he offered enough manure to cover between 100 and 120 acres of our ground.”

Thomas says applicators analyze the manure for nutrient value and apply it at rates to meet nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium requirements, just like urea or anhydrous. In addition, manure adds micronutrients and organic matter that improve soil quality.

“The application is split between fall and spring. We usually plant corn after manure, followed by wheat and then double-crop soybeans,” he says. “We get three crops with manure before the corn and a half-rate of liquid 28 before the wheat.”

A local retailer injects manure, placing it six to eight inches deep in the soil where it stays available for the crop and minimizes odor.

University of Illinois Livestock Extension Specialist Laura Pepple says those higher yields likely come from improved soil quality and the complete nutrient package manure offers.

“Research at the University of Illinois Morrow Plots consistently shows higher organic matter in soil with manure, although yield response varies,” she says. “Higher organic matter helps retain soil, which is especially valuable in southern Illinois.”

When compared to market value of anhydrous, DAP and potash, Illinois hog manure applied at nitrogen-limiting rates is typically valued at $180 to $200 per acre plus application costs. Thomas just pays about $115 per acre for application.

With high fertilizer prices and potential for future price increases, Pepple says manure is growing in popularity as a fertilizer source. “Iowa hog farmers have been selling manure for profit as primary fertilizer for years. I know an Illinois hog farmer who had trouble finding ground for manure five years ago. Now he wishes he had more to sell due to increased demand,” she says.

Want Access to Manure?
Rob Shaffer, El Paso, Ill., farmer and ISA director, says manure options offer benefits beyond just the farmers involved. Expanding animal agriculture grows the local market for soybean meal and trims transportation costs for soybean and livestock farmers and elevators. Livestock farms bring income, jobs and tax revenue to rural communities.

For more information about checkoff-funded programs and accessing manure for fertilizer, contact Lindsey Henson, ISA animal ag lead, lhenson@wideopenthinking.com or 217-219-1779, or Nic Anderson, Illinois Livestock Development Group Livestock Business Developer, NAnderson@ilfb.org or 217-622-7491.
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Join your fellow Illinois soybean farmers on Voice for Soy and be part of the effort to affect legislative decisions that impact your farm and the Illinois economy. If you haven’t registered yet at www.voiceforsoy.org, click “Join Us” on the home page.

Advocate for Ag in Two Easy Clicks
The easiest way to connect Illinois farmers with state and federal legislators and regulators, Voice for Soy:

- Only sends you an action alert email when there’s a topic important to agriculture.
- Provides links in the email to a customizable letter for your lawmakers.
- Lets you make your voice heard with two clicks from a computer, tablet or smartphone.

“As we become fewer in number, it’s important that growers use all the tools we have to advocate for the agriculture industry.”
— Mike Marron

ISA vice chairman and fifth-generation farmer Mike Marron farms 2,500 acres with his father, Pat Marron, in Fithian, Illinois. Mike also is one of the most active members on Voice for Soy – the Illinois Soy Action Network from Illinois Soybean Growers.

Why advocate for Illinois agriculture?
“Growers are becoming a smaller minority of the population. So it’s essential for our industry that we let decision-makers know what’s important to us, and how their actions affect us and the state’s economy, because we’re the nation’s food source.”

Why not leave advocacy to the American Soybean Association (ASA)?
“Some growers may think that ASA or another group will handle advocacy. But in the general population, the biggest problem is apathy – and I don’t think it’s any different in production agriculture. People are fed up with the system and disengaged. That’s a struggle when you’re trying to get your voice heard. That’s something that we definitely have to change.”

Why should Illinois farmers take the lead?
“It’s an interesting dynamic in Illinois. The northeast corner has the population, so that’s where the political power is. But agriculture has been the driver of the state economy for years. Especially in the last few years, agriculture has been over-performing most other segments. To keep it a strong, vibrant part of the economy, we need favorable policies. Yet a large number of lawmakers probably don’t really understand our industry. That’s why it’s so important that we go above and beyond to communicate with our lawmakers so they understand the importance of agriculture – how ag affects the overall state economy and those people living in urban areas.”

Why use Voice for Soy?
“At the end of the day, legislators do care about what their voters think. I try to take action whenever we get an alert from Voice for Soy, because the alerts are pretty targeted. When you get one, it’s probably about something pretty important that needs to be acted on.”

Voice for Soy Advocate: Mike Marron
Served on ISA board: 3 years
Issues advocated in 2014: EPA overreach on Waters of the U.S., RFS biodiesel, Farm Bill
Illinois Soybean Growers’ Legislative Issues to Watch

Illinois Soybean Growers (ISG) keeps a finger on the pulse of federal and state issues in Washington, D.C., and Springfield, and mobilizes when a response is needed.

- **Renewable Fuel Standard** – This program regulates the amount of renewable fuel that must be included in the United States’ supply of transportation fuel. The Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) initial proposal for 2014-15 would have held the biodiesel RVO (renewable volume obligation) at the 2013 level – 1.28 billion gallons a year. The proposal also would have reduced the total Advanced Biofuel requirement from 3.75 to 2.2 billion gallons a year. The proposal met stiff resistance from agriculture, renewable fuel supporters and lawmakers. In August, EPA hinted that it might raise those levels, and submitted its final rule to the Office of Management and Budget for review. The final rule has not been made public as of press time, and may not be until after the election.

- **Waters of the United States (WOTUS)** – WOTUS, proposed by the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers, would further define protection for streams and wetlands under the Clean Water Act. Many in agriculture believe the proposed rule will expand agencies’ jurisdiction over ponds and ditches important to farming. In August, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Waters of the United States Regulatory Overreach Protection Act of 2014, which would prohibit implementation of WOTUS. Similar legislation has not been introduced in the Senate. The White House has threatened a veto.

- **Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy** – The Illinois Statewide Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy provides a framework for reducing nutrient losses to improve Illinois water quality. The strategy will cover both point and nonpoint losses and focus on reducing nutrient losses to the environment, not on reducing nutrient use for Illinois agriculture. Several Illinois ag groups have been directly involved in developing this document. ISG will provide members with more information as it becomes available.

- **November Elections** – ISG will monitor results and the potential impact on agriculture. Should a party shift occur, ISG will analyze any possible impact for Illinois soybean farmers. Visit Voice for Soy to stay up to date on election results at www.voiceforsoy.org.
TRUE or FALSE?
Soybeans After Soybeans are a Recipe for Disaster

MANAGEMENT MATTERS MYTHBUSTERS

FALSE: Farmers may understand the pros and cons of continuous corn, but planting soybeans after soybeans has never caught on in Illinois. Yet, there may be times to consider the rotation.

For Frank Legner, soybean farmer from Odell, Ill., and ISA Soy Ambassador, planting second-year soybeans seemed worth the risk in 2009. “They were forecasting lower prices that year, and it was rented ground. I didn’t want to risk putting corn on that ground,” he explains.

- **Second-year soybeans always yield poorly.**

FALSE: Results from a long-term study conducted by Emerson Nafziger, University of Illinois Extension agronomist, suggest the opposite. Nafziger included continuous soybeans in a long-term rotation study at two sites in western Illinois in the mid 1990s.

“We expected continuous soybeans might do poorly in our trials, but we aren’t finding that,” he says. “Farmers can have some reassurance that if they need to adjust their rotation, soybeans after soybeans will work, though it’s a little riskier than rotated soybeans, and so it should be done for a good reason rather than as a routine practice.”

In Nafziger’s trials, continuous soybeans over the past 16 years averaged 11 percent less than soybeans rotated with corn at their Monmouth, Ill., site and four percent less at their Perry, Ill., location. He found variability in yield differences during that time, but no clear pattern of a higher penalty with stress and lower yields. He also didn’t see the penalty steadily get larger or smaller. He does not think second-year soybeans are safer or riskier than soybeans grown more than two years continuously.

Legner says he got lucky with his crop. “In 2009 our whole farm average was 58 bushels, and the farm with second-year soybeans went 55 bushels,” he says. “It was a year a lot like 2014; cool and wet with a lot of potential for sudden death syndrome (SDS) or white mold.”

“I try to stick with a corn-soybean rotation. But I’m not afraid to turn ground into beans a second year, especially ground I haven’t farmed before.”

- **Diseases will be unmanageable.**

FALSE: Nafziger says the most immediate concern farmers should have regarding diseases when soybeans follow soybeans is soybean cyst nematode (SCN). Many varieties have some level of SCN resistance, but there are different biotypes of SCN in many fields. Nematodes may develop cysts even on resistant varieties. If there are cysts on roots this fall, use a different variety and one with a different source of SCN resistance.

Mark Apelt, Beck’s certified crop adviser, says variety selection helps reduce disease pressure. “Each variety is susceptible to some disease. It could be brown stem rot, white mold, SDS, phytophthora, downy mildew, charcoal rot or a host of other diseases,” he explains. “If you plant the same variety, the risk of having that disease as a problem will be much higher.”

Legner believes variety selection made the difference on his field of second-year soybeans. “I was worried about increased disease pressure in a mono-cropping system, so I chose a defensive variety,” he says. “I ended up changing from a 3.2 maturity to a variety with a 2.8 maturity and a better disease package.”

Despite his success in 2009, Legner rarely follows beans with beans. “I try to stick with a corn-soybean rotation. But I’m not afraid to turn ground into beans a second year, especially ground I haven’t farmed before. It lessens risk without the capital investment of a corn crop,” he says.
Wrapping up 2014 and planning for 2015

Yield is often at the mercy of things we can’t control – weather, disease and pests. Each growing season provides another opportunity to push the envelope and get those top-end yields.

Soybean yields expected to be high

Soybean yields are always hard to predict. Overall, Illinois experienced favorable growing conditions. Diseases came into play later in the season, so the effect on yield potential is expected to be minimal. Yield monitors will tell the story of 2014, but growers can feel confident in the top-end yield potential of Asgrow® products.

“We’ve seen some great new soybean classes,” said Erika Parker, Asgrow® and DEKALB® technical agronomist. “Our breeders have done a great job of maximizing yield potential as well as providing solid defensive traits.”

Focusing on 2015

With the agricultural economy’s bearish outlook, it’s even more critical for growers to work closely with their seed dealer or agronomic adviser to help make decisions that maximize returns.

Weed management

Illinois growers fight four tough-to-control weeds: marestail, waterhemp, Palmer amaranth and giant ragweed. Effective weed management can make or break your success. “Asgrow products are anchored in top-end yield potential and solid agronomics,” said Parker. “Using a residual herbicide can help tackle tough weeds and give soybeans a better environment to thrive.”

Some growers might also benefit from using overlapping residual herbicides to control tough weeds. If weeds are intense, look into applying a residual for pre-emergence, then follow up with an in-crop application of a residual to help control late-emerging weeds. “It was very apparent this year that residual herbicides worked well to manage weed population and protect yield potential. With the amount of pressure we’re seeing, we strongly recommend growers use at least one application of a residual herbicide.”

Planting Asgrow® Genuity® Roundup Ready 2 Yield® soybeans using the Roundup Ready PLUS® Crop Management Solutions can help to provide clean fields and top-end yield potential. For more information, visit RoundupReadyPLUS.com or download the Weed Manager PLUS mobile app for the latest weed management recommendations and available rebates for your area.

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More Women Stepping into Leadership Roles

While women always have played an active role in agriculture, for the first time ever, the Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) has five female directors on its board. Diversifying ISA’s leadership makeup provides an opportunity to discuss issues from a fresh point of view.

Lynn Rohrscheib, Fairmount, Ill.

“More women should get involved in ag leadership because more women are principle operators of their farms. By stepping up and speaking out for agriculture, others will realize how important their points of view and voices really are. Women can more often than not bring a different or fresh perspective on topics. Once involved, they will find a farming community that spans the globe where we all have the same values and goals for our farms. I have gained a great deal of knowledge about how to help and advance the agriculture industry as whole.”

Sharon Covert, Tiskilwa, Ill.

“Most of us involved in various roles in agriculture, either female or male, do so because we have a passion for agriculture. I have participated on other boards, but some of those have had a fairly narrow focus. Soybeans are a very diverse product, being found in many unexpected places. Being involved with ISA and the soybean industry offers a wide variety of opportunities and areas for me to have a positive effect on the soybean industry.”
Carrie Winkelmann, Tallula, Ill.

“As farmers we are leaders on our individual farms every day, but it also is important for us to realize that providing leadership in our local communities, our state, and even our nation helps educate the population and influence decision makers about our issues. I decided to volunteer my time and effort in helping lead ISA because I believe every individual can make a difference in agriculture. More and more every day, we need people out there speaking for us.”

Jenny Mennenga, Le Roy, Ill.

“Farmers make up less than two percent of the population in the U.S. It is an honor to be a female leader in agriculture, as most of the women I get the chance to meet in this industry are incredibly knowledgeable and well-respected in their fields. Women can bring a unique perspective to issues. I currently am farming with my husband and we have a seed dealership. Prior to farming full time, I worked as an agronomist for a major agribusiness company.”

Robertta Simpson-Dolbeare, Nebo, Ill.

“Women are active in agriculture and many hold leadership roles because they are qualified to do so. During the past six years, my husband served two stints on provincial reconstruction teams for USDA in Iraq and in Afghanistan. I was the main decision maker for our farm. I gained a lot of knowledge and confidence in making decisions on my own. We all know the agriculture industry, like many other business sectors, faces a lot of challenges from government regulations and being part of a global economy. I encourage women to view these challenges as opportunities to be part of the solution in working towards a better future.”
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