

SEPTEMBER 2021

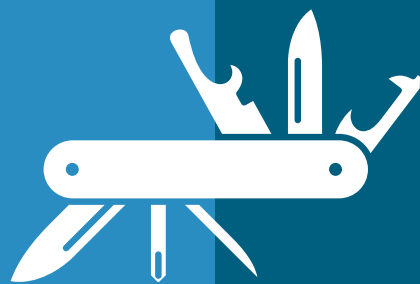
Illinois **Field & Bean**

A PUBLICATION OF THE ILLINOIS SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION



On topic,
On time,
Online: The
ILSoyAdvisor
Issue





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COVER: It's harvest time! This issue of Illinois Field & Bean magazine is devoted to ILSoyAdvisor: your on-time, on-topic, online agronomic resource for pre and post harvest season.



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FROM THE BOARDROOM

Leading by Listening



STEVE PITSTICK | Chairman | Illinois Soybean

Earlier this summer I had the chance to hear from Congressman Glenn “GT” Thompson, the House Agriculture Committee Chairman. He spoke about a lot of important issues – things that matter to farmers like me – but there was one comment in particular that stayed with me.

He said, “We are given two ears and only one mouth, which means we should listen twice as much as we speak.”

With 45 years of experience in farming and agribusiness, I do have some strong feelings and opinions on the direction of agriculture – opinions that were developed through a lifetime of industry experiences, challenges, and successes. But the idea that I need to listen more, and maybe talk less, is a concept I needed to hear. As I think back to the leaders I’ve admired over my personal and professional life, each of them have something in common: they were great listeners. They didn’t just wait to respond; they listened. Really listened.

Our agronomic industry is a fast-moving, constantly changing landscape. There aren’t a lot of things that remain the same for very long. New technologies, early adoptions, conservation best-practices, and carbon market conversations change as we learn more information, gain new insights through research, and continue to impact global exchange. We are required to stay nimble, move faster, adapt quickly, and anticipate the most profitable returns on our efforts.

During these dizzying days, it’s important to double down on the things we can control, like listening to each other and appreciating each other’s perspectives.

As I step into the role of Chairman of the Board for Illinois Soybean Association – a role I assume with honor and purpose – I am excited to listen to stories from our growers across the state. I want to know what it’s like to farm your operation. I want to hear about your kids and what kind of music you’re listening to. I want to know what you’re most excited about, what you most worry about, and what ISA can be doing to help you rest a little easier at night.

As an organization, we have ambitious work ahead. We have a bold strategic plan, a committed board of directors, a talented staff, and an Illinois-specific energy that is being perceived by the rest of the country. We are poised for significant growth and new opportunities, working for the best interests of our hard-working farmers who are the authors of Illinois’ success story.

And we’re going to be listening. *Really* listening.

Worth its Salt

I still remember fondly the sage advice a farmer friend gave me when I was a young man starting out in the soy industry:

"John, any farmer organization worth its salt doesn't forget that our work always begins and ends in the field."

I've always found a lot of truth in that statement. Between the many demands on a checkoff organization – from trade, to advocacy, to education and all of the work in between – there's a reason why we exist as an organization. And it's all because of that work that begins and ends in the field.

At ISA, our utilization committee is tasked with keeping farmers educated about best management practices in the field. That's why we continue to see our board investing in ILSoyAdvisor, ISA's agronomic platform that brings you current agronomic insights and expert advice. We take a lot of pride in the breadth of in-season advice that we are able to offer through ILSoyAdvisor.

Have a question on weeds, insects, or research? We've got an answer, and thanks to our Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) Soy Envoy team of writers, it's advice from experts working in Illinois soybean fields every day. ILSoyAdvisor is also behind some of our most beloved farmer-centric offerings – our ongoing webinar series and our annual Soybean Summit that takes place every winter. It's a rich platform full of farmer resources, and I think you'll find that it will leave you well prepared for your field work every season.

This September issue showcases the agronomic expertise that makes up ILSoyAdvisor, and I hope it leaves you more informed on one of the best educational resources you have available as an Illinois soybean farmer. But don't just take my word for it, dive on in at ILSoyAdvisor.com and check out all that it has to offer. Enroll in an upcoming webinar, listen to the latest CCA Soy Envoy podcasts, and sign up for weekly email updates while you are there.

At ISA, you can continue to count on us for making agronomic resources a key priority of our organization. In fact, over the past 12 months, we've been staffing up our in-house expertise by adding two CCAs to our team – Michael Gill, Director of Conservation Agriculture and Abigail Peterson, Conservation Agronomy Manager. Michael and Abigail both bring tremendous experiences to our team. It's exciting to watch them strengthen the agronomic offerings we have available.

Great things are happening at ISA and we are bringing it to a field near you. After all, that's where your work starts and ends, and we want to be a farmer-led organization worth its salt.

On behalf of all of us here at ISA, have a safe harvest season.



JOHN LUMPE | CEO | Illinois Soybean Association





Exploring Soil Microbial Activity

An experiment to gauge soil health takes CCA Soy Envoys underground.

Healthy soil is full of bacteria, fungi, algae, protozoa, arthropods, earthworms, and more.

By Claire Weinzierl

The ILSoyAdvisor Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) Soy Envoys have kept busy this summer providing actionable information, agronomic advice, and in-season updates to soybean growers across the state through writing blogs for ILSoyAdvisor.com. In addition to contributing their experiences and insights, the Envoys have also been conducting an experiment where the eyes can't see: underground.

In an effort to gauge soil health, each of the six Envoys buried two strips of 100 percent cotton material four to six inches underground. One of the cotton strips was buried in a field with good soil health, and the other was buried in a field with poor soil health.

M&M Service Company Seed Specialist and CCA Soy Envoy Jason Boehler chose to bury a cotton strip in a field with conventional tillage and the other in a no-till, cover crop field.

Based on the results, both fabric strips were tattered and

left in shreds, although the no-till strip was significantly more damaged than the conventional.

"We've had adequate rainfall and good growing conditions this year which equates to really good microbial activity," says Boehler. "The fabric strips were incredibly thin when I dug them up; they just tore to shreds. Both were rotten as well. In the no-till field, I found very little remains of the fabric."

For four years, that field has been no-till and has had a cover crop on it in the off-season. Boehler has utilized many

different cover crops including oats, radish, clover and cereal rye depending on the year.

"The soil microbes sequester nitrogen out of the soil to break down high carbon material such as the fabric strip. A slower, season-long release of nitrogen out of a no-till, cover crop field than a conventional till field, leads to more sustained microbial activity all year," adds Boehler.

One key concept when discussing microbes and nutrient cycling is the balance between residue added versus residue

breaking down. The type of organic material, field practices, soil type and structure, plus a multitude of other factors can influence the rate of breakdown. The goal with adding diversity, improving soil structure, and reducing disturbance will help this microbial community run like a powerhouse. Understanding the difference between no-till/cover crop systems and conventional tillage systems regarding the carbon cycle within the soil helps to better explain nutrient cycling and residue management. Make sure to apply agronomic principles that avoid nitrogen tie up and increase the diversity of organic materials added.

A first-timer at conducting an experiment like this, Boehler noted that if he ever decides to try it again, he will use taller flags to mark the spots where the fabric is buried.

Healthy soil is full of bacteria, fungi, algae, protozoa, arthropods, earthworms, and more. The cotton material is broken down and consumed by soil microbes as a food source. The amount of fabric that disappears can be an indication of a healthy, active microbial community within the soil.

"To start thinking about how to increase microbial activity, consider what practices are contributing to their survival," says Abigail Peterson, Illinois Soybean Association Conservation Agronomy Manager. "Reducing soil disturbance and providing a continuous living root are two of the main ways to start addressing the limiting factors within a conventional corn and soybean rotation. The environment these living microorganisms thrive under can in turn create a system to better serve your needs in the long run. We often associate these best management practices with patience and time to really achieve long term soil health success."

Peterson notes that although the long-term benefits do take time, there are immediate responses to these practices that can be exciting to observe.



Left: Before photo of the cotton fabric being buried in a conventional till field. Right: After photo of the cotton fabric uncovered in August.



Left: Before photo of the cotton fabric being buried in a no-till field. Right: After photo of the cotton fabric uncovered in August. Notice how the material is broken down further in the no-till field.



"Physical soil improvements within just one year of either reduced tillage and/or cover crops, when transitioning from a conventional system, can show the potential of the soil. Improved root growth, infiltration, residue breakdown, and microbial activity are just some outcomes of creating an

aggregated soil structure," adds Peterson. "These practices, although can be challenging to adapt, are one of the few tools in the box that provide multiple positive sustainable outcomes."

Funded by the Illinois Soybean checkoff, the CCA Soy Envoy program is a partnership between ISA and Illinois

Certified Crop Advisers. The CCA Soy Envoys commit to a one-year term to contribute actionable information, advice and in-season updates via the [ILSoyAdvisor](#) blog to support Illinois soybean farmers in their goals of increasing yields and profits while minimizing environmental impact.

Pennies and Politics

My grandfather was a great many things. He was a well-respected commercial real estate broker, a beloved servant to his community and neighbors, a devoted family man, a trusted advisor, and a keen observer of people. He looked for the opportunity to engage with others; to listen, to learn, and above all, to respect the feelings and opinions of others no matter how contrary they ran to his own.

He used to say, "Don't throw away the pennies. They add up in the end."

It was my grandfather who encouraged me to travel the world where I would grow in my appreciation for other cultures, people, governments, and traditions. Being in foreign countries, I learned to value customs I didn't yet understand. I learned to be open-minded and adventurous. I had to trust people who were there to help, and get comfortable with being in unfamiliar situations.

The day I told my grandfather I was interested in pursuing a career in the political space, he made arrangements to take me to my very first political action meeting. I was just a kid. But standing in that room, beside my grandfather and his friends, I remember feeling 10 feet tall.

He showed me that politics are a vehicle for giving back; a debt we're called to pay and a mission we're called to serve.

Over the years, I went to my grandfather again and again for professional and personal advice. He saw me through heartbreak and celebration, failure and success. I was confident soliciting his counsel because I trusted him, I knew how much he cared for me, and I knew how much wisdom, perspective, and insights he stood to share.

At Illinois Soybean Association, we have the same opportunity today.

Legislators from across the country, and farmers from across the state, are leaning on our expertise, and making better-informed choices as a result. They've learned that we have their best interests at heart, and they know our perspectives are born from current data, market research, and collective industry knowledge.

Being a source of information is an earned privilege, only possible where there is trust, concern, and genuine connection. There's no objective metric of trustworthiness. This magazine issue, dedicated to the success of ILSoyAdvisor, is representative of the prestige ISA has earned as an information hub and an actionable, results-driven resource.

As an organization, we endeavor to continue to earn your trust and confidence, sharing facts that inform, issues that matter, and stories that inspire. One page, one person... one penny at a time.



MIKE LEVIN | Senior Director of Government Affairs |
Illinois Soybean Association





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Every Farmer Has a Story

Meet Sally Bowman and her blue-eyed, chambray shirt farmer.

By Betsy Osman

Sally Bowman remembers her first day on the job, working at the local grain elevator in Oneida, Illinois.

She had been tasked with doing bookwork for the facility, and weighing the incoming loads. She recalls looking up from her paperwork and being greeted by a kindly-faced gentleman who introduced himself as Ed Bowman.

Ed was warm and gentle, and took an interest in young Sally who was grateful to have a new friend on the job. A few weeks later, Ed brought his son, Lynn, to the grain elevator where he introduced the pair.

"I remember the moment we met," recalls Sally. "He had blue eyes that matched his blue chambray work shirt. He was tall, and kind, and quietly funny, and made me feel instantly at ease. But he moved quickly and was always in a hurry to get back out to the field for another load. I was always happy to see him arrive, and wished he'd visit longer."

As time went on, Sally began to notice the blue-eyed, chambray shirt farmer was in less and less of a hurry to get back to his fields, and would instead linger a little longer, often going out of his way to ask her about grain market prices.

"My boss took notice of Lynn's more frequent visits into my office and loved to tease me," laughs Sally. "In fact it was my boss who convinced Lynn to ask me out for our first date."

He finally asked, and she accepted.

"They say when you find the one, you just know," she says. "And I knew from the moment we met."

Lynn and Sally Bowman were married one year after their first date. She continued working at the grain elevator until the birth of their son, Andrew. After that, Lynn began to encourage Sally to take a more active role in the family farm. She began running a grain truck to help deliver loads to the very elevator where she and Lynn first met.

For Sally, the harvest season was a flurry of activity with meals to prepare, broken equipment parts to run for repair, and operational support. In addition to farming, Lynn and his father also sold insurance, a business they conducted from the family farmhouse.

"Between supporting the insurance business and the farm, working side-by-side every day made for a great marriage," says Sally. "We always knew what the other one was doing that day, and together we met our goals."

Their shared lifestyle also enabled the pair to be great parenting partners, and support their children in daily activities. Whatever he was doing, Lynn would stop work early in the evenings to read to the kids before bedtime. During planting season, he wouldn't hear of missing the opportunity to see their daughter before she left for prom. During fall harvest, he never missed his son's football games.

While farming came first in their professional lives, the Bowman's faith and family came before everything else.

It was during the summer of 2003 that Lynn first began to experience health issues.

"I remember noticing that Lynn was having a hard time making the climb up and down the grain bins," recalls Sally. "I started to worry maybe it was

his heart."

But after going to the doctor, the family was told that a virus had attacked Lynn's kidneys. He would need a kidney transplant in order to survive.

"Up to this point, I had only known him as a big, strong, never-get-sick type of a farmer," says Sally. "This was not something we expected, or were prepared for."

Lynn was on the transplant list for a year as his health continued to decline. Dialysis became his only hope. One Sunday, after the family had just returned from church, they were sitting down for lunch and the phone rang. It was the hospital in Peoria saying they had located a kidney for Lynn.

"They told us it was a perfect match and the kidney would be coming from Florida. In that moment, we had to drop everything and race to the hospital to get Lynn prepped for surgery," remembers Sally.

Lynn had a successful kidney transplant and, while he was

never quite as strong as he once was, he was eventually able to get back out and farm.

Three short years later, Lynn was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma, an incurable cancer of the blood that affects plasma cells. Chemotherapy was administered right away, which resulted in the devastating loss of his transplanted kidney. Sally oversaw Lynn's home dialysis for over a year, requiring much medical equipment and upkeep. But despite the pain and discomfort, it was missing out on farm life that proved the most challenging.

"The hardest part for him was having to sit inside and watch as the farming operation continued without him," recalls Sally. "Our whole marriage involved Lynn and I working side-by-side. Every harvest was spent working and then celebrating together as a family. It just didn't feel right without him."

Lynn battled cancer and continued dialysis for nine years until his death. And despite the



Lynn and Sally, working side-by-side at harvest time

physical hardships, his faith and positivity remained steadfast.

"I've never cared for the term, 'lost his battle to cancer,'" says Sally. "Lynn never lost. He won every morning when he got up out of bed, knowing the day was full of needles and medicine and pain, and made the choice to go on. He won each time he smiled and thanked the selfless doctors who helped him along the way. He won each time he met the needs of his insurance clients as I drove him to his medical appointments. He won when he watched our children graduate college, when he walked his daughter down the aisle, and when he met his first grandson."

Continues Sally, "In the end, though his body ultimately failed, his mind and spirit were as strong as ever. Being a man of solid faith, it was fitting that Lynn

went to Heaven on a Sunday morning, with his family surrounding him in love and prayer."

Today, the Bowman family's sixth generation farm in Oneida, Illinois is being successfully maintained by Lynn and Sally's son Andrew, and his wife Karlie, and their daughter, Elizabeth, along with her husband Matthew. Sally continues to run the grain truck in honor of the life she and Lynn built those many years ago.

"It's bittersweet to watch as our kids continue to grow the farm," she says. "I am so proud of them and all they do, but I find myself constantly wishing Lynn was here to experience it with me."

Harvest was always the Bowmans' favorite time of year. Sally says she is grateful each fall when it comes around again and she is still strong and healthy enough to help.



"Superman" Lynn and Sally Bowman are joined by their son, Andrew, and his wife, Karlie; their daughter, Elizabeth, and her husband Matthew.

"I'm grateful for my children and their spouses and two little grandsons who represent the future," she says. "I'm grateful I had the opportunity to meet the mother of the young man whose

organ gave Lynn several more years of life. "And most of all, I'm grateful for 32 years spent with my blue-eyed, chambray shirt farmer, who captured my heart across the scales."



Lynn and Sally Bowman on their family's sixth generation farm in Oneida, Illinois

Fan Mail

We're almost a year into the "new" Illinois Field & Bean magazine, and we're hearing from farmers after each issue. Some of you email us, some write, but my absolute favorite messages are the phone calls where we have great conversations about your reactions to the words on these pages.

The conclusion from Illinois farmers is that you like the new format and the stories we're telling about soy from Illinois. As editor of this magazine, I hope you can tell how much fun we are having bringing this publication to life, and the pride we put into each issue that hits your mailbox.

A few recent reader comments:

"Illinois Field & Bean has brought me valuable information and as a landlord helps keep me become better informed in today's complex agriculture industry."

"Loved the changes to the magazine. The new version has a clean, crisp look! The articles that I have read so far have been informative."

And my personal favorite – "keep up the great work!" from my husband's 95-year-old grandfather, a lifelong farmer here in Central Illinois.

Valuable information, and stories that help you better understand and navigate the industry in which we work is exactly why we do what we do. We hope to keep hearing from farmers after each issue so that we can always do better, and cover stories that matter to our farmer audience.

This month we decided to dive into the depths of ISA's agronomic efforts by dedicating an issue entirely to our *ILSoyAdvisor* agronomic platform. As you prepare to enter the harvest season, we know there's no better time to bring you some reporting on actionable, agronomic topics that you can learn from and immediately put to use on your farm.

On page 6, read all about a unique soil health experiment our CCA Soy Envoys performed on acres across Illinois this growing season. Interested in double crop soybeans? We've got some tips on page 14 on how to find success. We also have a piece on post-harvest action steps on page 20 that will get you thinking about how to end this season on a strong note. These stories only scratch the surface of all that *ILSoyAdvisor.com* offers and I encourage you to check out that resource often so that you don't miss our weekly updates and new content.

As you embark on these early September mornings and late nights harvesting yet again another great crop of Illinois soybeans, I hope this issue of Illinois Field & Bean finds its way to the field along with you. From your number one fans here at your state checkoff association, thank you, Illinois soybean farmers, for all that you do. Drop us a line anytime at ilsoy@ilsoy.org.



RACHEL PEABODY | Editor | Illinois Soybean Association





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Doubling Up

Planting wheat as a cover crop provides profit and conservation benefits.

By Jill Parrent

While driving by crops south of Interstate 70 in mid-June, you may see large equipment in the field with one combine harvesting wheat followed by a planter putting soybean seeds in the ground. All this rumbling may look chaotic, but there is a method and a reason behind it. Because of the early warmer spring weather in the southern part of the state, double cropping soybeans with fall wheat

is an easy planting decision every year.

Many growers that utilize winter wheat enjoy the two-fold benefits of a cover crop through the winter and early spring plus additional profit as they follow the wheat with soybeans.

As both farmers and Certified Crop Advisors (CCA), Scott Eversgerd and Joshua Tool-ey are advocates for double cropping soybeans in Illinois. In addition to advising other farmers, they practice what

they preach by implementing these methods on their own operations.

For Scott Eversgerd, Field Agronomist for Southern Illinois with Pioneer Hi-Bred and an ILSoyAdvisor Soy Envoy, he utilizes double cropping each year on his farm in Clinton County, Illinois. Eversgerd and Tooley believe that at least 95 percent of crop farmers in South Central and Southern Illinois double crop with wheat and soybeans.

"Most farmers follow the prac-

tice for more than monetary value; they also do it to prevent erosion of their thin and fragile soils," Eversgerd explains. "The addition of wheat to a rotation versus continuous full season beans, as we see on some of the lightest soils, adds considerably more residue back to the soil and adds an element of biodiversity."

One of the main reasons for double cropping is to prevent soil erosion as the fields have covers on them almost year-round.

(See Doubling Up, page 16)



Soybeans are planted directly after wheat harvest, without the need for tilling the soil.

Doubling Up

(continued from page 15)

These crop protectors are used as barriers between the nutrients in the soil and the weather that could be harmful to the soil conditions. The crop safeguards can preserve and protect nutrients that the soil needs year-round, allowing the seeds planted to grow in a healthier, more nourishing environment.

"Another big reason double cropping is utilized is that it provides farmers with an opportunity to increase revenue per acre while keeping soil covered 365 days a year," Josuha Tooley, Illinois Ag Program Manager for The Nature Conservancy, explains. "It is a good mixture of net return and conservation practices for farmers."

The double crop rotation incorporates a wheat crop

planted in the fall followed by a late spring harvest then the planting of soybeans. The wheat provides the opportunity for a great planting rotation outside of corn, Eversgerd states. The rotation may include a fall wheat followed by a spring soybean, with a fall wheat then chased by a spring corn crop. Weed control is also easier with double cropped soybeans. Eversgerd explains that by planting soybeans after wheat harvest on June 20 instead of April 20, there are two months of weeds a farmer doesn't have to worry about; allowing them to have one post-planting application with residual rather than multiple applications.

Eversgerd also looks to fertilizer as a positive when double cropping. After planting wheat, and applying fertilizer in late fall, growers will also enjoy the benefits for soybeans — a two for one deal for farmers.

When farmers do not double crop and only plant soybeans in early spring, usually they are planting a seeding rate of 120,000 to 140,000 per acre. Eversgerd advises that planting later after wheat harvest, farmers should consider planting in the range of 180,000 to 220,000 per acre. It can be difficult to get a plant establishment and planning on a 10 to 15 percent loss ensures a profitable harvest population.

Tooley provides short strategies for success while double cropping:

1. Plan for residue management when transitioning from wheat to soybeans or corn. Ensure there is good seed-soil contact whether that includes necessary tillage or the correct planter set-up.

2. Make sure you have a narrow row setting. Tooley believes farmers should have 15-inch rows or narrower because it takes less time for the plants to create a

canopy to assist in weed control.

3. Choose the right seed maturity. By working with a local expert agronomist who is versed in maturities and population needs for your area, farmers can grow better soybeans with the shorter amount of time available.

4. Purchase seeds with trait packages that give you herbicide options for weed control. Having an herbicide plan in place is essential for soybean growth.

5. Make your plan during the fall when planting wheat. The earlier you plan, the better a farmer is set up for success.

Double cropping may seem like it's not worth the work, but the ultimate rewards of economics and conservation come out on top.

One final piece of advice from Eversgerd for all farmers regardless of their planting: "Every day that wheat harvest can be pushed on the early side, that's more yield opportunity for the soybeans on the backside."



After the wheat is harvested, it will immediately be planted with another crop in late June, often soybeans.



(you)

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Mid-to-late summer, when saturated soils allow toxins to be produced by the fungus in the roots of the plants, SDS symptoms begin to manifest.

A Fungus Among Us

How to identify SDS in soybean fields.

By Betsy Osman

Sudden Death Syndrome (SDS), a soil inhabiting fungus, is a source of concern for many Illinois farmers and a subject of extensive research for the Illinois Soybean Association.

It's tricky to diagnose, because soybean plants are infected very early in life – as

early as emergence – but don't show symptoms until much later when it releases a toxin that damages the leaves. There has been an increase in cases in Illinois over the past several years, because soybeans have been planted in unfavorable conditions, some of which include: low-lying, poorly drained areas; compacted areas of fields; fields

with high moisture-holding capacity; and cool, moist soils.

Symptoms begin to manifest in mid to late summer when saturated soils allow toxins to be produced by the fungus in the roots of the plants which are then translocated to the leaves. This easily recognizable disease is still contained in the roots despite the symptomology in

the above portions of the plant. Soybean cyst nematodes (SCN) can aid in the infection of SDS. The damage to the roots helps create infection points that are more easily accessed by the SDS fungus.

Illinois farmers are learning that planting earlier soybeans can bump yields, but the last several years in Illinois have been

wet and cold, resulting in the increased risk of SDS and other early infecting fungal diseases.

"Sometimes we see soybeans start to yellow too early and automatically assume we have SDS in our fields, but that's not always the case," says Cody Pettit, field agronomist for Pioneer brand seed with Corteva Agriscience. "There are a few other soybean diseases that look very similar to SDS and we should properly identify what is occurring in our fields. Brown Stem Rot (BSR) is a good example."

According to Pettit, BSR is caused by *Phialophora gregata*, a fungus that survives in soybean residue. Like SDS, the BSR fungus infects roots earlier

in the season but shows symptoms later.

"It's often challenging to distinguish between SDS and BSR, but there are some key things to look for," says Pettit. "Digging up the roots is the best way to properly distinguish between the two diseases in the field. Once you start digging, a blue discoloration on the outside of the taproots may indicate an SDS fungal colony of spores. You should not see these blue-ish spores with BSR. Next, split the stem and examine the color of the cortex and pith of the lower 8 inches of the plant. A grayish-brown cortex with a white, healthy-looking pith will sig-

nify that SDS has infected the plant. A dark and rotted pith would be sign of disease from BSR."

Pettit reports that a disease newer to the fungus family, Red Crown Rot (RCR) can easily lay dormant for years without a host. Like others of its kind, RCR is more prevalent in low-lying, saturated areas of a field.

"This disease can be distinguished by color on the lower portion of the plant, a rusty-red spore-bearing structure will be noticed on plants infected with RCR," says Pettit. "Infected plants are often easily pulled from the soil because of the pest's damage and how they decay the root system."

Continues Pettit, "Once the disease is noticed, there is unfortunately not much one can do to reverse the effects of yield loss or plant damage. The best management practice for these types of disease is to plant into ideal conditions and manage drainage for fields that tend to be more saturated. Seed treatments are an effective way to help control these diseases as well, especially when planting into a field that has showed history of these diseases."

His advice for Illinois farmers concerned about field fungus?

"Dig in! Literally," says Pettit with a laugh. "Root systems have lots of stories to tell. It's important to know what your fields are trying to say."



Says Pettit, "Digging up the roots is the best way to properly distinguish between diseases in the field."



Post Harvest Evaluations and Assessments

Farmers have many post harvest priorities, and here we've outlined some items that should be top of mind.

By Claire Weinzierl

Harvest has always been a crowd favorite. Whether it's the humid heat of summer being replaced by crisp, autumn air, or the end of year holidays peeking out on the horizon, harvest tends to bring with it a sense of happy endings. But as any farmer knows, the work doesn't stop even after the crop is out of the field.

In fact, as farmers wrap up in the field and park the combine in the machine shed, there are several things that should be evaluated and assessed in order to continue managing the farm efficiently and remain profitable. Were there any new management practices implemented that raised concerns? How well did that new seed treatment work to protect seeds from early season diseases? Was there a particular weed running rampant in your region that needs to be addressed? Or maybe a new fungicide was applied that should be assessed for effectiveness?

Here are some overarching items to start the assessment process when conducting post-harvest field evaluations:

Grain Quality

It's important to pay attention to grain quality at harvest

to evaluate new and existing practices implemented each year. Did you notice a change in grain quality due to fungicide use? If the soybeans were planted earlier than usual, was there any shattering present? Note any major grain concerns such as moisture, frost damage, and insect damage. Depending on weather conditions during planting and throughout the growing season, the actual magnitude to disease infection during those months usually reveals itself in the fall. Pod abortion, reduced pod fill, seed stains/molds, and compromised stem quality may lead to poor harvestability.

Keeping detailed records can help prepare for a more successful season next year.

Field Resource Concerns

Be sure to check for any field concerns, such as weeds or erosion, that may require new practices to be implemented.

"The two main ways to prevent erosion are by reducing soil disturbance through no-till or reduced tillage and by maximizing soil cover with crop residues and/or cover crops," says Stacy Zuber, USDA-NRCS State Soil Health Specialist. "The purpose

(See Post Harvest, page 22)



When evaluating grain quality at harvest, note any major grain concerns such as moisture, frost damage, or insect damage.

Post Harvest

(continued from page 21)

of both is to build and protect stable soil aggregates. Providing soil cover is important because the living plants and plant residues are able to deflect the force of a raindrop falling onto bare soil. It may be hard to imagine, but when raindrops fall on bare soil, each impact can dislodge soil particles from the surface that are able to runoff and cause erosion."

Adds Zuber, "As far as weed control, cover crops have proven to be effective, especially in providing an additional tool when dealing with herbicide resistant weeds. For this to work, a higher seeding rate and/or later termination of the cover crop is needed to provide enough biomass to cover the soil surface and provide shade that prevents weed seeds from germinating. Because you need a uniform stand of cover crop to effectively provide a mulch layer over the entire soil surface, using a drill to plant the cover crop might be more effective than other planting methods to provide that consistent growth."

Yield Maps

Look at yield maps not only for field inconsistencies, but to compare varieties, hybrids, planting dates, and trends of fields with different maturities, genetic packages, and input programs (e.g. chemical, fertility, etc.). The amount of information collected can be overwhelming. Work with your field agronomist or Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) to help you best utilize and evaluate all your data on the farm.

Financial Statements

One of the most important evaluations farmers should make once the crop is out of the ground is their financial statements. Precision Conservation Management (PCM), a program brought to farmers by

IL Corn and the Illinois Soybean Association, combines precision technology and data management with farm business and financials to help farmers manage, adopt, and adapt conservation practices long-term and improve on-farm decision-making.

The program aims to help farmers implement conservation practices and integrate financial data to help them understand how certain management changes can impact both their environmental impact and their bottom line. PCM Operations Manager Clay Bess suggests that farmers evaluate how their corn responded to the applied nitrogen rates at the end of the season, and to look at pesticide costs, particularly herbicides and fungicides, and consider if the number of trips and products were worth the dollars spent.

"These are things, fertilizer and pesticides, that farmers and I discuss regularly during PCM report deliveries to contemplate reducing rates of either or both," says Bess.

Grain Marketing

Needless to say, grain marketing is likely the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about post-harvest priorities. To help make the best decisions, consider local supply and demand conditions for grain, assess market prices, be realistic about your storage costs, and determine your appetite for risk.

Curt Strubhar, Risk Advisor for Advance Trading, Inc., suggests that there is still a great deal of uncertainty in the grain markets.

"While there is never a time when there isn't market uncertainty, today's level is historically high," says Strubhar. "For corn and soybeans both, the Northern Plains and Minnesota

had severe droughts early in the growing season. Minnesota received some relief in July while the Dakotas largely remained dry. Can good crop yields in Illinois, Indiana and Ohio offset those losses to still produce a trend line crop, or are the price bulls right in suggesting U.S. corn yields will be seven to 10 bushels below trend?"

Strubhar adds that in terms of demand, China remains key, and that domestically, ethanol production has rebounded from the 2020 COVID slowdowns but still has some judicial uncertainty with several key rulings this summer.

"Net of that uncertainty, we advise using commodity options heavily in one's marketing portfolio. They protect against this uncertainty by letting producers protect against risk of lower prices but allow producers to participate in higher markets should they be realized."



Look at yield maps not only for field inconsistencies, but to compare varieties, hybrids, planting dates, and trends of fields with different maturities, genetic packages, and input programs.

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CHAD BELL
Farmer from Viola



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A Winning Hand in the Data Game

Farmobile discusses how to have a winning hand in the data game.

Farmers, determined to optimize new markets, will need a digital strategy and full deck of data cards.

By Steve Cubbage, Vice President of Data Services, Farmobile

Since the mid-90s, the emergence of yield monitors, precision ag equipment, data technologies, and decision making software have generated an enormous amount of complex, but often disparate agronomic data sets.

The real question is — can farmers use the data to their operational and economic benefit; because the need to

prove carbon-mitigating or resource-sustaining crop and livestock practices have come of age.

It is increasingly evident that the “right” set of field-level “data cards” position farmers to create a “winning hand” to participate in and profit from some of today’s most-promising emerging markets (carbon, water, regenerative ag, 4R and more).

So, do you hold a full deck of “digital” data cards?

The ability to leverage these now-valuable assets lies in a farmer’s ability to answer YES to these questions:

1. Do you have the right data? (And is it yours to use?)
2. Is the data complete, field-level and across all farming activities?
3. Is it portable? (Can you export it as raw, standardized and organized raw data points?)
4. Is your data a digital acre or a pen and pocket notebook?

5. Can you share data with trusted partners?

6. Can you match harvest and planting with fertility data?

7. Does each field have two years of data?

The good news, it’s not too late to collect the kind of data you need to convert NO to YES.

Farmers, determined to optimize new markets, will need a digital strategy and full deck of data cards. In the next agricultural round, there will be no bluffing.

**Get digital or go home.**

Why all the fuss? Why should you care?

For some time now, the ag-food chain has been addressing a growing global population, increased demand, dwindling natural resources, and changing crop cycles. The “great awakening” is that agriculture must do more with less.

Global goals to mitigate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and achieve Net Zero initiatives have caused many companies, concerned with potential future penalties, to consider carbon offsets as a way to demonstrate mitigation. Agriculture offers a clear solution. Buying “green” credits from farming practices to sequester carbon in the soil, for example, is just one way to buy consumer goodwill.

Consequently, the farmer’s ability to prove mitigation practices with verifiable data puts them at the table and in the winner’s circle.

Verifiable data makes a winning hand.

Farmobile, now a part of the AGI family of brands, specializes in data technology that enables farmers to collect and control an organized and detailed, point-by-point, raw agronomic and machine data set — gathered in real-time from a mixed fleet of farm and ag retail equipment. As a participant in a number of carbon, water and regenerative pilots, Farmmobile has identified some of the most-wanted data attributes.

A farmers’ winning hand of field-level data cards, most often, includes two to three years of:

- As-applied or fertility (especially nitrogen)
- Fertilizer type
- Tillage practice
- Planting
- Harvest
- Cover crop (what type, when applied and terminated)

The most frequently-missing and hardest-to-prove data sets include: cover crop (type and seeding/termination dates), tillage



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practices and as-applied data. Producing digital records to prove these adds important value.

But, farmers can’t do this alone.

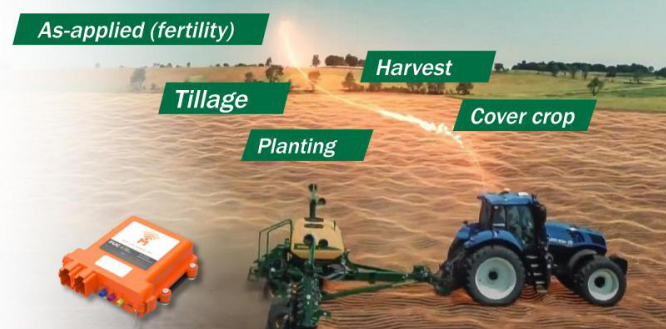
Ironically, many companies assume farmers maintain a full set of data cards for every field and activity; but they don’t. Farmers must collaborate with ag retailers to add the fertility card. Technologies like Farmmobile provide a distinct advantage because data can be automatically collected and shared between farmers and ag retailers to create a comprehensive “system of record” for a full-season data decks.

Analogy aside, farming is

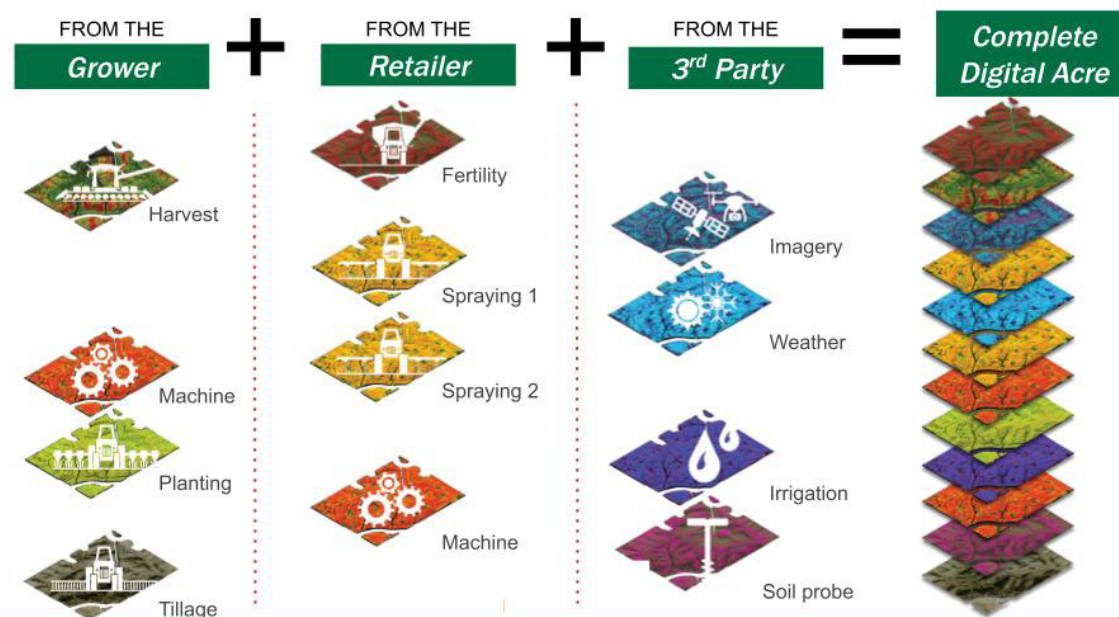
no game. And, in the digital world, there are no mulligans. Farmers either have the data, or they don’t.

Opportunity abounds; and more data means better

ROI-potential. Start collecting data, today. Create a digital acre, because all farmers deserve a winning hand and a royal flush.

A WINNING HAND = FARMERS WITH DATA

Farmobile, now a part of the AGI family of brands, specializes in data technology that enables farmers to collect and control an organized and detailed, point-by-point, raw agronomic and machine data set.



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Data can be automatically collected and shared between farmers and ag retailers to create a comprehensive “system of record” for a full-season data decks.



A Champaign County farmer notices weed control in non-GMO beans, cover crop vs. no cover crop. Note: the rye was also rolled.

First Steps to Better Soil Health

Working with farmers to better understand the economics of soil health

By Abigail Peterson
ISA Conservation Agronomy Manager

Working with farmers to incorporate no-till or cover crops on their operations has been one of the most educational and rewarding roles I have participated in as an agronomist. From fall 2020 to today, it has been exciting to watch fields adapt to new management practices having faced a variety of challenging conditions. Between frost in the spring, intense rain events, and even voles, I am working with farmers to closely monitor how fields respond with these new

practices. Through the Five-Year Transition Program with Precision Conservation Management (PCM), farmers are comparing systems to achieve the best economic return on their largest asset, the soil.

One Champaign County farmer has worked with cover crops for over eight years. The plot we are evaluating is a new field that has undergone conventional tillage before corn and soybeans for as long as the farmer can remember. Working with experienced farmers when applying cover crops and no-till can open an opportunity to take a more advanced approach earlier on. Knowing

how to handle species choice, termination situations, and equipment adjustments can help overcome a lot of challenges that first-time cover-croppers face. Fall 2020 was a more ideal planting season for cover crops compared to 2018 and 2019. Seventy pounds of Elbon rye was planted in the field on October 20, a higher rate being applied for added weed control. When utilizing cover crops for effective weed control, it proves to be beneficial when high rates are used to choke out weeds like waterhemp and marestail.

A farmer in Shelby County who is new to both no-till and cover crops within his crop

rotation, wanted to learn how these practices could start addressing some issues that conventional tillage wasn't addressing. A good approach to implement cover crops is to first identify goals for the field to select the best application. Overall goals for the farmer included improving soil health, increasing ROI, and keeping yield competitive on the plot. Two goals from the farmer that stood out as top priorities were focusing on soil erosion and incorporating these practices with minimal risk. The field was rotating to soybeans in 2021, which was promising as soybeans are more adaptable to the system.



With this in mind, we selected cereal rye as the cover crop. It is important to not start using cereal rye before corn unless you have experience and understand the nutrient applications to complement that rotation. Cereal rye is winter-hardy, easy to establish, and we know a lot of best management practices for termination success. With the cover crop selected, the next step was choosing the application.

For this first year of using cover crops, the farmer chose a 7.5-inch drill, targeting a rate of a bushel per acre. In fall of 2020, he was able to plant October 5. By utilizing the drill, our goal was focused on soil erosion and keeping the soil intact. The field traditionally undergoes at least two tillage passes before each cash crop. With continuous tillage, he was able to smooth out and repair the seed bed. Unfortunately, the challenge is topsoil loss, destruction of soil structure, poor infiltration, and inconsistent yield results with weather volatility. By drilling the cover crop, we aim for seed-to-soil contact across the field for better root development, which anchors the plant and keeps soil in place.

So why use cover crops and no-till? The field still lacked soil structure and had slow infiltration, and in addition reaps the benefits of weed control, better residue turnover, and nutrient cycling. This plot is especially interesting because we are comparing a no-till/cover crop system against a traditional conventional system. The experiment demonstrates the increased agronomic and economic potential available due to cover crops. The no-till practice promotes better intake of water from some of the intense rain the farm received. The cover crop residue slows water drop-let impact and improves the overall environment around the soybean root as compared to the waterlogged, conventional areas.

With continued use of these practices, we will begin to see better field resiliency and consistent yields. Five years is a key aspect to this project, as it takes time for these practices to prove their worth. Though experience, soil type, and field history are all heavy-hitting contributors when it comes to long-term success, farmer commitment and patience combine to create a perfect composite for better soil health.

Be sure to follow along with ISA and IL Corn as we learn from farmers across the state on how soil health has changed their approach to not



ABIGAIL PETERSON | Conservation Agronomy Manager | Illinois Soybean Association

only yielding cash crops sustainably but yielding improved results across the whole sys-

tem. For more information or to sign up for PCM, visit precisionconservation.org.



A Shelby County farmer's cover crop/no-till vs. tillage.



Conventional tillage plot highlighting waterlogged soils, poor infiltration.



Same plot but with no-till & cover crop highlighting better infiltration and soil retention.



Row spacing is an integral part of planting that can significantly impact the crop yield at harvest.

The Great Debate

Row spacing is more complicated than meets the eye.

By Sarah Meghrian
and Claire Weinzierl

A highly debated topic between farmers and agronomists is determining the best row spacing for soybeans. It may seem like there should be a straightforward answer, however, row spacing is far more complicated than what meets the eye. Soybean farmers have been

planting at different row spacings for years and every farmer has their own preference on the width of which rows should be planted. In the end, there really is no right or wrong answer when it comes to row spacing, as each interval brings benefits and challenges. Some have been known to produce a higher yield or be healthier for the plants. Every farmer wants to maximize productivity and

yield when they manage their farm. Row spacing is an integral part of planting that can prove significant impact on the crop yield at harvest.

One common misconception with row spacing is that less space will produce a higher yield. This is not the case. While high populations of soybeans bring advantages such as less weed competition and greater light interception,

this does not mean yield will greatly increase. Because the number of plants per acre is so high with a narrower row spacing, every plant must compete to grow in the limited space and captures less light, inhibiting growth. The plants are also forced to compete for nutrients and water.

On the other hand, when there is greater distance between rows, soybean plants

can grow larger leaves and capture more sunlight. This leads to the plant producing more branches, which in turn, leads to more pods produced overall. This creates a high and healthy yield. But this does not mean that larger row spacing is the better option. There is a perfect medium, or middle ground where row spacing can be optimized and produce the highest yield.

Common intervals for row spacing for soybeans these days are 7.5-, 10-, 15-, 20-, and 30-inches. In the last 10 years, 15-inch rows have increased in acreage around the Midwest. They have become widely used because this spacing allows the benefit of drilled narrow rows through use of a planter rather than a drill. Drilled soybeans have been on the decline in popularity due to additional planting costs associated with them.

"The current spacing of my soybeans is 15-inches," says Brad Daugherty, District 14 Director of the Illinois Soybean Association and farmer from West Union, Illinois. "With this row spacing, I feel the plants receive enough sunlight for photosynthesis to take place to reach maximum yield potential, and the quicker canopy closure allows for greater shading of weed seedlings and reduces soil moisture loss through evaporation."

Row widths have been thoroughly researched over the years. Agronomists have conducted many studies with the intention of improving farm management and profitability. Over the last 50 years, research has shown that soybean yield is often greater when the beans are planted in rows spaced narrower than 30 inches. Average yield has been proven to increase when looking at 15-inch rows as opposed to 30-inch rows. Rows spaced 14- to 15-inches apart have shown frequent yield advantages as opposed



Over the last 50 years, research has shown that soybean yield is often greater when the beans are planted in rows spaced narrower than 30 inches.

to wider rows. This spacing provides better weed control as the narrow width allows for the canopy to close quicker, preventing light penetration to the soil surface, resulting in less weed growth.

"One of the drawbacks to narrow rows is that plants are pushed together, and the entire plant can't capture as much sunlight," adds Daugherty. "I feel 15-inch rows hit the sweet spot and allow plants to capture enough light to maximize yield."

"I've tried 10-inch rows in the past and struggled with planting depth since we use a drill that does not have that precise of depth control. With our 15-inch spacing, we are using our planter which is able to give us more accurate depth and spacing. We have found that there is no real yield increase between 10- and 15-inch rows on our operation."

Every farmer has their own preference when they select varieties, herbicide programs, and other inputs when planting each spring, and row spacing is no different. There is no

right or wrong answer when it comes to row spacing, but it's crucial that every farmer

consider accurate, current information when making those decisions.

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Board member spotlight

Get to know ISA board member, Jeff Parker.

Meet Jeff Parker, a fifth-generation farmer and ISA Director representing District 15, which includes Clinton, Madison, Monroe, and St. Claire counties.

Tell us about your farm. It's a fifth-generation grain farm, 700 acres of corn and soybeans a little south of Belleville. I get some help from my wife and sons but it's primarily all me.

Tell us about your favorite memory on the farm. I was fortunate to get to work with both of my grandfathers and my dad on the farm before taking over completely. My fondest memories are working with them, and all they taught me.

When did you know you wanted to farm?

Since I was a kid, farming is something I've always been involved with. I started driving a tractor when I was 10 or so, like most

farm kids. I worked a couple of jobs off the farm after high school and college and came back to it at 25.

Why were you interested in representing the checkoff and membership boards?

I've always enjoyed being involved with aspects of agriculture, and have been on various boards over the years, including IL Corn. It's been interesting getting more involved and learning what's involved on both the checkoff and membership sides. It's educational and I enjoy learning.

What checkoff project are you most excited about this year (FY22)?

Getting involved in the PCM program—it's going to be an exciting one to watch develop and see where we go with it. The diversity in programs that the board offers is exciting,

from educational, to production-focused, to legislative. It's an impressive array of programming.

It's harvest time - what snacks/drinks are in the combine?

Always plenty of water, and my wife spoils me! She always packs me some good sandwiches, chips, probably a Reese's in there, an apple or some fruit.

What has been the biggest change you've encountered during your years of farming?

Technology is probably the biggest. I'm going on 33 years of full-time farming, the technology in all aspects of farming has changed so much over the years.

Should tractors be red or green? Or another color?

Don't care? I've got a variety, but lean toward green.

What are you listening to in the truck?

A combination: a little classic rock, a little talk radio, some classic country.

Have you ever considered getting out of agriculture for a different career? Nope, not seriously.

Who has been the biggest influence in your life?

My dad.

What do you like to do in your free time? We like to do some traveling in the camper, and visit our daughter in Florida.

What are you looking forward to in the next year?

Continuation on the current year—been a good year overall in ag and the soybean industry. Hoping and looking forward to that continuing.

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In just a few clicks and less time than it takes to scroll your social feeds, you can make a difference in important legislative issues such as biodiesel, trade, infrastructure and more. Illinois Soybean Growers (ISG) does the work of monitoring these issues impacting Illinois farmers at the state and national levels, engaging you through the Voice for Soy platform when it's time to act. We've laid the groundwork, but you must be the one to fight for the future you want. Your farm's viability, profitability and accessibility are all up to you.

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be a Voice for Soy Advocate today.

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