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Illinois Field & Bean

A PUBLICATION OF THE ILLINOIS SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION



The Partners Issue

Strategic partnerships are expanding opportunities for Illinois soy. From cutting-edge university research to global market development, these collaborations are boosting demand and driving value.



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This edition of *Illinois Field & Bean* explores how strategic partnerships are expanding opportunities for Illinois soy. From cutting-edge university research to global market development, we highlight how collaborations are boosting demand and driving value.



FROM THE BOARDROOM

Funded by the Illinois Soybean Checkoff



Scott Gaffner

Secretary & At-Large Director | Illinois Soybean Association

Relationships Matter

How ISA Leadership Creates Opportunities for Illinois Soy

The Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) provides opportunities that extend far beyond Illinois. Through farmer leadership, market development and global engagement, ISA helps build relationships that create demand for Illinois and U.S. soybeans around the world. My experience serving through ISA has reinforced one important lesson: relationships matter.

ISA's investment in farmer leaders creates opportunities to engage directly with customers, industry stakeholders, policymakers and decision-makers across the globe. Those interactions help build trust in Illinois and U.S. soy while strengthening partnerships that support demand growth for soybean farmers.

Serving through ISA has opened doors to represent Illinois farmers on national and international stages. Today, I serve on the Executive Committee of ISA, the American Soybean Association (ASA) Board of Directors and the boards of the U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC), the USA Poultry and Egg Export Council (USAPEEC) and the World Initiative for Soy in Human Health (WISHH). Earlier in my service, I became the first U.S. farmer to serve on the Executive Committees of USSEC, USAPEEC and WISHH. Those experiences showed me firsthand how organizations working together can strengthen demand for U.S. soy.

Some of the most valuable experiences came from meeting directly with international customers and industry leaders. In China, our largest export market, I participated in discussions with government officials and industry representatives who help shape recommendations regarding agricultural purchasing decisions. In Pakistan, one of the fastest growing markets for U.S. soy, I met with industry leaders who have helped expand soybean purchases and create new opportunities for U.S. farmers. Although every country is different, one thing remains the same: Trust built through personal relationships often becomes the foundation for future business.

These experiences also demonstrate the value of collaboration among the organizations that represent U.S. soybean farmers. USSEC works to develop and maintain international markets for U.S. soy. USAPEEC helps expand demand for poultry and egg exports, which increases the need for soybean meal used in feed. WISHH promotes soy products and solutions that improve nutrition, food security and economic development in emerging markets. Although each organization has a different mission, all are focused on increasing demand for U.S. soy.

ISA plays an important role in connecting Illinois farmers to these efforts. By investing in farmer leadership and engagement, ISA helps ensure that producers have a voice in discussions about trade, market access and demand development. It also provides opportunities for farmers to build relationships with customers and stakeholders who influence purchasing decisions around the world.

The time commitment required to serve in these leadership roles is significant, but the benefits can be substantial. Every trade mission, customer meeting and board discussion is an opportunity to strengthen demand for the soybeans grown by Illinois farmers. Although the work often takes place thousands of miles from home, the goal remains the same: to create opportunities that improve profitability and market access for Illinois soybean farmers.

As global demand for protein continues to increase, the partnership among ISA, ASA, USSEC, USAPEEC and WISHH demonstrates what can be accomplished when organizations work together toward a common goal. The relationships built today help create opportunities for tomorrow, ensuring that Illinois and U.S. soy remains trusted and valued in markets around the world.



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CEO'S MESSAGE

Funded by the Illinois Soybean Checkoff



John Lumpe

CEO | Illinois Soybean Association

Partnerships that Amplify Efforts and Stretch Dollars

Any farmer who has worked through a tough season knows success is rarely a solo effort. The right people in your corner can make all the difference. Whether it's a neighbor who shows up with a grain cart when your truck breaks down, an agronomist whose recommendations improve yield and profitability or an organization advocating for your interests while you're focused on the work only you can do, strong partnerships create stronger outcomes.

That's exactly how we approach our work at the Illinois Soybean Association. Every day, ISA's highly skilled team of professionals are working on your behalf—but we also recognize that the greatest impact comes from working alongside others who share our commitment to Illinois soybean farmers.

That's the focus of this Partners issue of *Illinois Field & Bean*.

The checkoff dollars and membership dues you invest stretch further when they're combined with the expertise, resources and influence of trusted partners. On our own, we can accomplish a great deal. Working together with universities, conservation leaders, industry organizations, government agencies and innovative companies, we can deliver results that no single organization could achieve alone.

Research is one of the best examples. We're partnering with leading institutions such as the University of Illinois, Southern Illinois University and Purdue University to tackle the challenges farmers face today while preparing for those on the horizon. These collaborations help transform cutting-edge research into practical, field-tested solutions that improve profitability, productivity and long-term sustainability.

The same is true in conservation. Through our partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, we're helping farmers adopt practices that protect our natural resources while strengthening the economic resilience of their operations. Stewardship and profitability aren't competing priorities, they're complementary goals.

Building demand is another area where partnerships make an enormous difference. A bushel only creates value when there's a strong market waiting for it. That's why we work alongside the U.S. Soybean Export Council and the Soy Excellence Centers to expand opportunities for Illinois soybeans around the world. We also collaborate with organizations such as the USA Poultry & Egg

Export Council and the U.S. Meat Export Federation, strengthening global demand for the products that rely on Illinois soy. Closer to home, our work with the Illinois Innovation Network is helping identify new markets, new technologies and new uses that continue to increase soybean value.

Some collaborations might surprise you. In this issue, you'll read how PepsiCo is fueling trucks with soy biodiesel throughout the Midwest and how the Chicago Fire FC soccer club is incorporating soy-based products into its new stadium. These are exciting examples of how innovation is creating new opportunities for Illinois farmers in places many of us never imagined.

You'll also meet the farmer leaders whose vision and commitment help drive these efforts forward. Their leadership extends beyond Illinois, representing our farmers at the highest levels of state and national organizations while ensuring your voice continues to shape the future of agriculture.

None of these partnerships happen by accident. Each one is built with a clear purpose: to create greater value for Illinois soybean farmers and maximize the return on every checkoff dollar entrusted to us. That's a responsibility we take seriously.

I'm proud of the relationships we've built, but I'm even more proud of the farmers who make them possible. Your investment, your leadership and your willingness to think beyond the farm gate continue to open doors that benefit soybean producers across Illinois.

As you turn the pages of this issue, I hope you'll see more than stories about successful collaborations. I hope you'll see the power of your investment at work and the opportunities that lie ahead when we continue building the right relationships.

If you have an idea for a new partnership, or you'd like to become more involved, I'd love to hear from you. The next great opportunity often begins with a simple conversation.





How Partnerships are Expanding Opportunities for Illinois Soy



Partnership might sound like a casual business transaction, but for Illinois soybean farmers, the value of partnership runs much deeper.

Good things come from partnerships: a research trial that reduces risk, a conservation program that pencils out, a buyer relationship that protects demand or a new soy-based product that moves more bushels.

"At the Illinois Soybean Association (ISA), partnerships are at the heart of everything we do," explains Abigail Peterson, ISA's Director of Agronomy and a Certified Crop Adviser. "From universities to national organizations and global networks, these collaborations are essential to delivering practical, farmer-focused research that drives profitability and reduces risk on every acre."

That's the larger story behind ISA's many longstanding partnerships. Together, they bring more expertise, stronger market access, better information and new demand-building opportunities to Illinois soybean farmers.

Read on to discover the value that returns to your farm via collaborations with universities, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA's NRCS), the U.S. Soybean Export Council, Soy Excellence Centers and the Illinois Innovation Network.

TURNING RESEARCH INTO FIELD-LEVEL DECISIONS

When it comes to cultivating university partnerships, ISA focuses on investing in collaboration and research that will lead to better decisions in the field.

"ISA's Soybean Production

committee is guided by a clear objective: to deliver cross-functional agronomic research and education that creates opportunities for Illinois soybean farmers to increase on-farm profitability and better manage crop production risks," Peterson says.

By partnering with researchers at the University of Illinois, Southern Illinois University, Purdue University and other institutions, ISA can expand the scope of soybean research while keeping farmer needs at the center.

"These partnerships are not just about funding research—they are about co-developing solutions," Peterson says.

One example is a multi-institution project studying emerging soybean pests and diseases, including decays stem borer and soybean gall midge. Led by researchers from Southern Illinois University, the University of Illinois and the Illinois Natural History Survey, the project uses field sampling, laboratory analysis and surveys to better understand how these threats affect soybean yields across Illinois.

Research collaboration extends to conservation-focused efforts, too. In the Lake Bloomington and Evergreen Lake watersheds, ISA is working with experts from Purdue University, University of Illinois, McLean County Soil and Water Conservation District and the City of Bloomington to deliver a practical, data-driven framework that conservation agencies and farmer-led watershed groups can use to target conservation practices such as cover crops to reduce nutrient loss into waterways.

ISA connects Illinois farmers to broader regional research through the North Central Soybean

Research Program, which supports multi-state university research on plant stressors that reduce soybean yield and profitability. Through Science for Success, checkoff-funded research is translated into fact sheets, webinars, videos and other tools farmers can use to make timely management decisions.

"These partnerships ensure that Illinois farmers are not facing today's challenges alone," Peterson says.

MAKING CONSERVATION PRACTICAL

The partnership between ISA and USDA's NRCS is helping more Illinois soybean farmers explore how conservation practices, programs and financial resources might fit their operations.

"At a high level, the purpose of the partnership is to increase awareness and adoption of conservation management practices on Illinois cropland by combining NRCS resources with ISA's strong farmer network and agronomic expertise," explains Whitney Miller, Agronomic Services Coordinator for ISA.

The five-year agreement began in August 2024 and runs through August 2029.

ISA's role is to help bridge the gap between federal conservation resources and farm-level realities, Miller says. The association works with farmers to understand barriers such as cost, time, labor

and equipment, then turns that feedback into outreach that helps farmers and NRCS staff better understand real-world implementation.

Farmer feedback has made one point especially clear: Many farmers believe in the value of conservation practices, but cost remains a major barrier.

"If cost is the biggest barrier, and not every NRCS applicant can be funded, then economics has to be part of the conversation when discussing the transition to conservation management practices," says Darby Danzl, Regional Technical Agronomist for ISA.

That economics-first approach has shaped events such as the Illinois Cover Crop Field Day, Dinner and Data, Talk Dirt to Me: Soil Test Interpretation for Profitable Management, cover crop field tours and Soil Health Week programming. These events and others like them connect farmers with data from Illinois-specific checkoff-funded research, NRCS programs and practical insights about cover crops, nutrient management, weed suppression and reduced tillage.

The NRCS partnership also helps farmers better understand federal programs such as CSP, EQIP and RCPP.

"The partnership isn't about creating exclusive access



to programs or funding opportunities. Instead, it's about making sure farmers understand what's out there and feel comfortable taking that first step," Miller notes.

Mindset matters. "Peer-to-peer interaction often builds confidence in a way that written materials alone do not," she adds.

The broader value of the partnership is helping farmers see conservation as another business decision alongside production and financial considerations.

"This partnership helps break down that divide by reframing conservation as a practical part of doing business, rather than a label," Miller says.

For Danzl, another partnership benefit is the opportunity to clear up common misconceptions about conservation program participation and payments.

"In most cases, farmer payments are tied to implementing the agreed-upon practice according to NRCS standards, rather than achieving perfect results. For example, if a farmer plants a cover crop and dry weather affects emergence, they may worry that they will not receive the payment," Danzl relays. "However, that's not true, and NRCS understands that weather is a huge variable in farming. As long as the cover crop is planted according to program requirements, they will still receive funding."

BUILDING GLOBAL SOY DEMAND

If production and conservation partnerships help Illinois farmers manage what happens on the acre, ISA's global partnerships help grow demand for the crop produced from those acres.

By working with the U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) and Soy

Excellence Centers (SECs), ISA helps connect Illinois soybeans to buyers, industries and future agriculture leaders in growing markets.

"Customers have the option to buy soybeans from anywhere in the world, so to build long-term demand, we have to form quality relationships, which is what the Excellence Centers help to do," explains Eileen Pabst, Market Development Manager for ISA.

Experts at the Soy Excellence Centers, a USSEC-led initiative supported by ISA, train emerging agricultural leaders in high-growth regions such as Southeast Asia, Africa and Latin America. They provide education in areas such as feed formulation and animal performance.

Meanwhile, USSEC strengthens end-user demand in feed, aquaculture, poultry and food uses while positioning U.S. soy as reliable, sustainable and high quality.

"Those relationships shape purchasing decisions, build technical understanding and create brand loyalty beyond a single transaction," Pabst says.

Trade missions and buyer relationships add yet another dimension of partnership for Illinois soybean farmers and end users. A recent trade mission to Vietnam and Thailand, for example, helped ISA better understand the soybean supply chain after the crop leaves the U.S.

"Nothing beats face to face conversations that offer collaboration and connection," she says.

Conversations increasingly focus on sustainability and amino-acid profiles rather than crude protein alone, reflecting changing customer expectations from just a few years ago, Pabst says. Partnerships help ISA understand those needs and respond with technical information from a place of trust.

Partnership with USSEC and the Soy Excellence Centers adds critical capacity to serve every country that buys U.S. soy, a service ISA alone can't provide. That's particularly crucial in an uncertain trade environment.

"Now more than ever, we need to ensure we have diverse market opportunities for our farmers, and we want U.S. soy to be the first call," Pabst says.

CREATING NEW SOY USES AT HOME

There's also demand-building work to be done at home, an effort supported by ISA's partnership with the Illinois Innovation Network (IIN). The collaboration among the state's public universities includes 15 research hubs focused on innovation and economic growth.

"The IIN has some of the best research facilities in the state, and our collaboration represents the most cost-effective way to develop innovative ways to create new demand for Illinois soy," says

Todd Main, Director of Market Development for ISA.

The collaboration is already producing momentum.

"One of the earliest success stories is that we doubled the project proposals submitted to the SpringBoard Challenge from Year 1 to Year 2," Main explains.

The competition provides seed funding to researchers, students, scientists and innovators developing soy-based, sustainable alternatives to everyday products.

Research is another key element of the partnership. Ideas in review within the IIN illustrate soy's enormous potential beyond traditional uses. Current or submitted projects include self-healing polymers from soybean oil, biodegradable polyester amides from soy meal and soy hull, low-carbon specialty lipids from liquefied soybean hulls and a method for rare-earth-element separation and extraction using soybean oil and 3-D nanoporous micro-ribbons.

The partnership includes intellectual property agreements designed to share financial returns from commercialization. Progress takes time, and Main notes that many new products fail along the way. Still, ISA has filed two patents this year—one for soy-based plastics and another for soy-based xylitol—and successful research could lead to others.

Taken together, these partnerships expand the bench available to Illinois soybean farmers, strengthening business decisions, improving demand and cultivating an even better competitive position on every acre.



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From Soybean Fields to Store Shelves

How Illinois Farmers Help Fuel PepsiCo's Sustainability Journey

When consumers grab a bag of Doritos, a bottle of Mountain Dew or a bag of Ruffles, they likely don't think about the fuel powering those products from manufacturing facilities to store shelves. But, increasingly, Illinois soybean farmers are playing a direct role in that journey.

PepsiCo has adopted an innovative approach to reducing emissions across its transportation network by fueling more than 100 Class 8 semi-trucks in the Midwest with B100 biodiesel. The initiative demonstrates how renewable fuels are creating new opportunities for agriculture

while helping major food companies meet sustainability goals.

For Illinois soybean growers, the program represents more than another biodiesel success story. It illustrates the growing connection between agriculture, transportation and consumer brands — and how soybeans are becoming an increasingly important part of the solution.

BUILDING A LOWER-CARBON SUPPLY CHAIN

Like many companies, PepsiCo has established ambitious sustainability goals to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions footprint across its operations. Transportation is a critical piece of that effort.

"As part of these ambitions, we have explored ways within our fleet team to move our products with a lower carbon footprint," Paula Hanebach, PepsiCo Supply Chain Fleet Program Manager, said. "Biodiesel is one of the various technologies we have implemented as part of this strategy."

Biodiesel offers a practical pathway toward lower emissions because it can be used in existing diesel engines while delivering a lower carbon intensity than conventional petroleum diesel. Unlike some emerging technologies that require entirely new vehicle platforms or infrastructure, biodiesel offers an immediately available solution.

For PepsiCo, biodiesel was a logical fit. The company selected B100 — a fuel composed of 100% biodiesel — because it is a renewable, cleaner-burning diesel replacement that meets ASTM D6751 specifications and can be used in diesel-powered equipment with the appropriate technology and infrastructure. Beyond its environmental benefits, biodiesel also delivers economic advantages by supporting domestic energy production and strengthening markets for U.S. agriculture.

COLLABORATION DRIVES SUCCESS

Implementing B100 across a large commercial fleet requires significant planning and partnership. PepsiCo credits much of the program's success to collaboration among organizations throughout the biodiesel value chain.

Key partners included Clean Fuels Alliance America and the Illinois Soybean Association, both of which helped ensure fuel quality standards and navigate regulatory requirements. Technology provider Optimus Technologies supplied the systems that enable PepsiCo's Class 8 trucks to operate on up to 100% biodiesel, while fuel supplier Bencor provided heated storage tanks necessary for maintaining fuel quality across varying climates.

According to PepsiCo, strong fuel quality standards have been instrumental in the program's success.

"One of the key reasons B100 has become successful in the industry is that ASTM standards have helped ensure consistently high fuel quality," Hanebach said. "The biggest lesson we've learned is to lean on our suppliers when we are faced with challenges; they are instrumental in helping us find effective solutions."

RESULTS WITHOUT SACRIFICING PERFORMANCE

One of the most common questions surrounding renewable fuels is whether they can meet the performance demands of commercial operations. For PepsiCo, the answer has been yes. Since launching

the program in 2022, the company has used more than 3 million gallons of biodiesel in place of conventional diesel fuel. Throughout the transition, PepsiCo reports minimal operational disruption while maintaining high levels of driver satisfaction.

The experience demonstrates that lower-emission transportation solutions do not have to come at the expense of reliability.

"Our results demonstrate that it is possible to operate a lower-emissions fleet without compromising performance or reliability," Hanebach said. "That finding is significant because transportation fleets operate under tight schedules and demanding conditions. Maintaining efficiency while reducing emissions is essential for the broad adoption of renewable fuels across the industry."

CREATING VALUE FOR FARMERS

Although reducing emissions was a primary objective, PepsiCo identified another important benefit that stood out during the program's growth: support for American agriculture. The biodiesel and renewable diesel industry supports more than 107,000 U.S. jobs, generates billions of dollars in annual wages and contributes more than \$42 billion in economic activity nationwide.

For soybean farmers, biodiesel creates a valuable domestic market for soybean oil while helping diversify demand beyond traditional food and feed uses. PepsiCo recognizes the important role farmers play in making programs like this possible.

"Illinois soybean farmers play a critical role in helping companies like PepsiCo achieve sustainability goals," Hanebach said. "The soybeans you produce are a key feedstock for biodiesel, which allows us to reduce emissions and operate a lower-emissions transportation fleet."

That connection creates a unique partnership between producers and end users. Every gallon of biodiesel used in a truck helping deliver PepsiCo products begins with feedstocks grown by farmers. The relationship creates value throughout the supply chain, from rural communities and biodiesel plants to transportation companies and food manufacturers.

STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE SUPPLY CHAIN

Programs such as PepsiCo's B100 initiative highlight the increasingly interconnected nature of modern agriculture. Farmers produce the



soybeans that are used to make biodiesel. Biodiesel powers transportation fleets. Transportation fleets move food products to consumers. Each link in the chain depends on the others.

According to PepsiCo, these collaborations create shared value for everyone involved. Food companies benefit from lower-emission transportation options. Farmers gain additional demand for their crops.

Transportation providers access cleaner fuel solutions that maintain operational performance.

At the same time, domestic renewable fuel production helps strengthen U.S. energy independence and build a more resilient supply chain. For Illinois soybean growers, the program serves as a tangible example of how investments in renewable fuels continue to create opportunities both on and off the farm.

LOOKING AHEAD

Following the success of its Midwest B100 program, PepsiCo anticipates expanding the use of biodiesel and other renewable fuels into additional geographies across the U.S. The company views renewable fuels as an important tool for reducing emissions while supporting American agriculture and rural economies.

As demand for lower-carbon solutions continues to grow, Illinois soybean farmers remain uniquely positioned to help meet that need.

"We see this as a true collaboration," Hanebach said. "Your efforts not only support renewable fuel solutions but also help strengthen domestic supply chains and rural economies."

For Illinois soybean producers, that's a powerful reminder that the soybeans grown in their fields do more than fill grain bins. They're helping fuel trucks, support rural communities and move some of America's most recognizable food and beverage brands toward a more sustainable future.





FROM FIELD TO PRODUCT

Farmer checkoff dollars fuel soy-based innovation.
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COMMERCIALIZE

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The Role of Illinois Farmer Leaders

By Ashley Rice-Haddon, Lead Writer, Illinois Field & Bean

Illinois Field & Bean
connected with some
of our state's agricultural
organizations to learn more
about the current Illinois
farmers elected to serve
and lead their boards.



Bryan Severs, Chairman, Illinois Soybean Association
Term: July 2026-July 2027
(In 2nd term)

Bryan Severs resides in Vermilion County with his wife, where they raise corn, soybeans and cattle alongside their two sons. In addition to serving as Chairman of Illinois Soybean Association, Bryan is also on the Board of Directors of the American Soybean Association.

A third-generation farmer, Bryan graduated from Western Illinois University with a degree in animal science and has previously served as president of his local school board.



Mark Bunselmeyer, President, Illinois Corn Growers Association
Term: Nov. 2025-Nov. 2026

Mark Bunselmeyer raises corn and soybeans in Macon County with his father and brother-in-law. He and his wife, Mindy, have two children.

Mark earned a degree in Agricultural and Consumer Economics from the University of Illinois and then went on to build a renewed agriculture education program and FFA Chapter at Maroa-Forsyth High School before leaving to farm full-time in 2004.

Mark has been farming in some capacity since the 1990s, including growing horseradish as a specialty crop from 1991-2008.



Tim Thompson, Chairman, Illinois Corn Marketing Board
Term: Aug. 2025-Aug. 2026

Tim Thompson farms corn and soybeans with his wife, Tami, in Morgan County, where they also raised two children, Timothy Jr and Marleigh. On his farm, he incorporates minimal and no-till conservation practices. In addition to farming, he is a Valent USA Regional Sales Manager for the Northeast U.S.

In his free time, he trains Labrador Retrievers and competes in the American Kennel Club Performance Field Trial.



Tracy Heuerman, President, Illinois Wheat Association
Term: Jan. 2026-Jan. 2027

Tracy Heuerman became president of the Illinois Wheat Association after serving on the board for many years as both a farmer and an industry professional. She farms with her dad and brother in Effingham and Clay counties, where they grow corn, soybeans and wheat.

Tracy started farming some of her own land in 2016 and has been employed with the FS Growmark system since 2010. Her current role is a Field Sales Agronomist in the seed division covering 11 counties in the South-Central part of the state. Tracy earned a master's degree in Plant and Soil Science from Southern Illinois University Carbondale.







**Philip Nelson, President,
Illinois Farm Bureau**
Term: Dec. 2025-Dec. 2027

Philip Nelson and his wife, Carmen, operate a fourth-generation grain and livestock farm near Seneca, growing corn, soybeans and alfalfa and running a cow-calf operation. They have two sons, Kendall and Kyle, and a daughter, Rachel.

Philip also serves as President of COUNTRY Financial, in addition to serving as Chairman of the Illinois Agricultural Association Foundation Board of Trustees. He previously served as Illinois Farm Bureau President from 2003-2013; Illinois Soybean President from 1989-1991; LaSalle County Farm Bureau President from 1993-1999; and American Soybean Association President from 1993-1994, in addition to other leadership roles.



**Katie Brown, President, Illinois
Pork Producers Association**
Term: Feb. 2026-Feb. 2027

Katie Brown is a fifth-generation hog farmer and currently is a wean-to-finish contract grower in Christian County. Katie and her husband, Ethan, have two sons, Andrew and Tyler. She is also an Associate Director of Research and Development at The Maschhoffs.

Katie serves as the treasurer of the Parents in Education Committee at her children's school and takes an active role in her county's Farm Bureau Young Leaders program. Katie earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in animal science from the University of Illinois.



**Shannon Welsh, President,
Illinois Beef Association**
**Term: June 2026-June 2027
(In 2nd term)**

Shannon Welsh is a beef producer and grain farmer based in McDonough County. Alongside his family, Shannon raises Simmental, Angus, Red Angus and other commercial breeds to sell as show cattle, embryo transfers and custom transfers. On the row-crop side, he raises corn, soybeans, cover crops and hay.

Shannon and his wife, Renee, have three grown children who are all still involved in the agriculture industry.



**Don Guinnip, Chairman,
Illinois Nutrient Research &
Education Council**
Term: Dec. 2025-Dec. 2026

Don Guinnip farms in Clark County where he grows corn, soybeans, wheat and milo and

has a cow-calf operation. He is married to Susan, who is a retired Extension agent, and they have two kids, Molly and Andy, and one grandchild.

Don graduated from Southern Illinois University – Carbondale with a degree in agriculture education. After college, he taught high school before deciding to return home and start farming.

Don also serves as an Illinois Corn Growers Association District 12 Director, and locally serves on the Clark County Board, Clark County Farm Bureau Board and Clark County Republicans, among involvement in other organizations.



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Growing the Future Together

Chicago Fire FC and Illinois Soybean Association announce official partnership

By Chicago Fire FC

Partnerships rooted in shared purpose are powerful – that’s why Chicago Fire FC is excited to launch a new, meaningful collaboration with the Illinois Soybean Association (ISA). These two Illinois-based organizations are committed to investing in communities, supporting future generations and driving innovation. This collaboration demonstrates what’s possible when local organizations align their forward-looking visions. As an official partner of Chicago Fire FC and the Club’s exclusive partner in the Soybean Farmer Association category, ISA will join the Fire in celebrating the homegrown spirit that defines both organizations.

ROOTED IN ILLINOIS, BUILT FOR IMPACT

This partnership is structured on shared priorities. Illinois soybean farmers are leaders in advancing agriculture through innovation, sustainability and community investment. Similarly, Chicago Fire FC is dedicated to developing soccer talent from the youth level through programming that engages the city’s youth and helps grow the game – whether through the Chicago Fire Foundation or the Academy program, all the way up to our First Team. Together, we are investing in the future of Illinois, both on and off the pitch. From supporting farmers and advancing agricultural innovation to developing players and expanding access to soccer, we share a commitment to growth, development and the next generation.

ENGAGING FANS AT EVERY TOUCHPOINT

A key pillar of this partnership is the fan experience. During Chicago Fire matches at Soldier Field, ISA’s presence will be integrated throughout our matchday environment with in-stadium signage and branding, creating a consistent and visible presence for supporters.

Fans can also look forward to a marquee moment on Oct. 14, when we host Oktoberfest Theme Night, presented by ISA, featuring a limited-edition beer stein giveaway, special activations and a festive atmosphere that brings fans closer to both organizations.

Beyond matchday, the partnership extends into digital storytelling to showcase the shared “homegrown in Illinois” connection between the two organizations. A social content series will highlight Fire players locally born and raised in Illinois. Additionally, ISA will be featured in the Chicago Fire’s magazine-style series Inside the Fire, offering fans a deeper look at how ISA is supporting local farms and fostering innovation.

SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION

On sustainability, these two organizations will lead by example through this partnership. Through product integration at the Fire Pitch, Chicago Fire FC will begin incorporating soy-based alternatives and renewable solutions in its facilities. This will also

create a platform for educational storytelling around renewable energy and sustainable innovation, helping our fans better understand the role soybeans play in shaping a more sustainable future.

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF SOCCER FANS

The community impact will be evident through the Chicago Fire’s STEM Soccer Program, where ISA will serve as the Presenting Partner. Powered by Sphero STEM Technology, the program transforms the way young participants explore soccer through computer science, using curriculum, coding robots and activities to spark curiosity, problem-solving and imagination. We are excited to have ISA supporting this initiative, which builds teamwork, communication and leadership skills that translate on the farm and the field.

A SHARED VISION FOR THE FUTURE

From matchday experiences to community programs, this partnership is designed to create meaningful connections across Illinois. It bridges urban and rural communities, celebrates local pride for our Club and highlights the innovation happening across the state. As we kick off this collaboration, we’re celebrating not only what it means to be “homegrown in Illinois” but also a future rooted in innovation and shared success – for our fans, our farms, our communities and generations to come.





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FROM THE FIELD



Abigail Peterson

Director of Agronomy | Illinois Soybean Association

Pheasants Forever & Quail Forever



Pheasants Forever and Quail Forever (PFQF) is dedicated to conserving pheasants, quail and other wildlife through habitat improvements, public access, education and conservation advocacy. Their vision is to create a North American landscape of quality habitat supporting wild, sustainable populations of upland game birds and other wildlife that are accessible to hunters and conservationists for generations to come.

One of the largest barriers to implementing conservation practices onto working farms is landowners not being aware of the tools and resources available to them. To address this challenge, Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) has partnered with PFQF to connect landowners directly with PFQF field staff. These experts can help identify low-producing areas within fields, determine eligibility for cost-share programs and provide ongoing technical assistance, from initial planning through implementation. Along with 24 staff members, Illinois PFQF has 53 chapters totaling over 9,000 members as well as field staff who are valuable resources to the public.

A common misconception among landowners is that they must choose either agricultural production or wildlife habitat to maximize profitability. PFQF staff and volunteers operate under the belief that the two can coexist and even enhance each another. By

managing each acre for its most optimal use, farms can achieve greater overall productivity while improving soil health, water quality and wildlife habitat.

This partnership also includes outreach opportunities for landowners to connect with local resources such as Pheasants Forever Farm Bill Biologists and PFQF Precision Ag Conservationists through workshops, webinars and blogs. Additionally, the partnership aims to establish pollinator demonstration plots that can be utilized for outreach efforts in the future.

Already, PFQF has implemented a pollinator plot at the ISA Agronomy Farm in Heyworth, as well as at ISA plots at the Decatur, Ill., Farm Progress Show site, which both showcase how farmers can support pollinators on their operations.

To check out the Farm Progress Show pollinator plot, scan the QR code and join us in Decatur on Thursday, Sept. 10, for the Illinois Crop Management Field Day. The day will also highlight ISA's On-Farm Trial Network, conservation practices, soybean and corn management decisions and ISA checkoff-funded research. Through partnerships such as this, PFQF and ISA are helping shape a future where productive farmland and thriving wildlife habitat go hand in hand.

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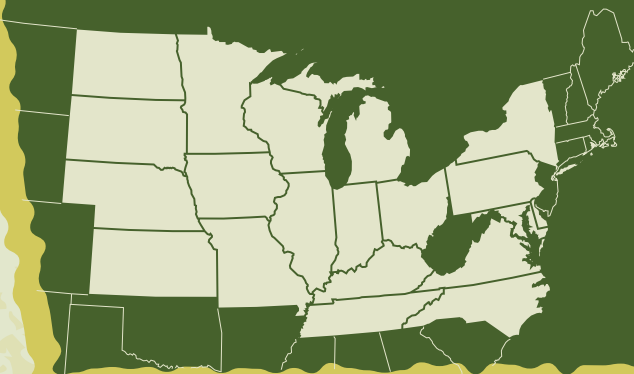
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Meet ALTA: The Organization Behind Quality Soil Testing

*By Dr. John Jones, ALTA Education Advisor
and University of Illinois Assistant Professor of
Agronomy and Soil Fertility Extension Specialist*

Every year, an estimated 1.2 million soil samples are collected from Illinois fields. Those samples guide millions of dollars in fertilizer investments and influence nearly every nutrient management decision made on Illinois farms. Whether you're deciding how much phosphorus or potassium to apply, evaluating soil pH or tracking soil fertility over time, every recommendation begins with one simple question: What does the soil actually need?

THE ANSWER DEPENDS ON THE QUALITY OF THE SOIL TEST

Illinois has long led soil testing and nutrient recommendation development. Decades of research and collaboration among universities, laboratories, industry and farmers have shaped today's fertilizer guidance. As precision agriculture advances, confidence in laboratory data is more important than ever.

Across Illinois and the Midwest, many growers don't work directly with a soil testing lab. Instead, they partner with a trusted retailer, crop consultant or Certified Crop Adviser to collect soil samples and help interpret the laboratory analysis and provide recommendation. Whether they collect samples themselves or work with a trusted adviser, growers rely on a process that continues long after the sample leaves the field.

That's where the **Agricultural Laboratory Testing Association (ALTA)** plays an important role.

Founded as the Illinois Soil Testing Association in 1981, ALTA is dedicated to advancing the quality and consistency of agricultural laboratory testing throughout North America. Its

Illinois roots reflect our state's long history of leadership in soil testing and nutrient management. Through laboratory proficiency testing, technical collaboration, education and the promotion of standardized analytical practices, ALTA helps member laboratories continually evaluate and improve their performance. Laboratories earning the ALTA Soil Analysis Certification (ALTA-SAC) demonstrate an ongoing commitment to producing accurate, dependable and consistent analytical results.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER TO ILLINOIS FARMERS?

When more than 1 million soil samples are used each year to guide nutrient management decisions, analytical quality matters. Small differences in laboratory results can influence fertilizer recommendations, lime rates, variable-rate application maps and long-term fertility planning. Reliable laboratory analyses provide greater confidence that recommendations are based on sound information and that soil test values can be compared consistently over time.

Better data supports better decisions, and better decisions deliver better results for farmers — strengthening both profitability and long-term stewardship of our soils.

As a soil fertility specialist and ALTA advisor, I work closely with soil testing laboratories throughout Illinois and across the country. I have seen firsthand the emphasis ALTA places on analytical quality and continuous improvement. Equally important, ALTA is much more than a laboratory proficiency program. The organization actively brings together university researchers,



test results they can trust and supports nearly every fertilizer recommendation made across Illinois.

Illinois agriculture has always advanced through strong partnerships among farmers, retailers, laboratories, universities, Extension and industry. ALTA is proud to be part of that tradition by promoting laboratory excellence, supporting agricultural innovation and helping ensure Illinois producers have confidence in the data that drives their management decisions.

The next time you review a soil test report, look for the ALTA logo or consider asking if the lab is an ALTA member. Remember that the numbers on the page are the foundation

of every nutrient management recommendation that follows. Confidence in those recommendations begins with confidence in the laboratory that produced them.

To learn more about the Agricultural Laboratory Testing Association and to verify whether your lab has earned ALTA-SAC status, visit alta.ag.



public and private laboratories, crop advisers, retailers and industry partners to improve the science that supports nutrient

management. Much of this work happens behind the scenes, but it helps ensure farmers and their advisers receive soil





Kevin "KJ" Johnson

Director of Government Relations & Strategy |
Illinois Soybean Association

Protecting Farmers in a Tight-Margin Environment

This is a challenging time to be a farmer. Commodity prices have fallen from the highs we saw a few years ago, but many of the costs required to raise a crop haven't come down with them. Fertilizer, seed, equipment and land costs have all continued to put pressure on farm budgets. Across the country, farmers are sharpening pencils, evaluating every expense and looking for ways to manage risk in an environment where margins are getting tighter by the day.

For decades, crop insurance has been one of the most important risk management tools available to farmers. It provides certainty in an inherently uncertain business and helps protect operations from weather disasters, market disruptions and other circumstances outside a farmer's control. It is a program Illinois farmers value and support.

However, support for the program shouldn't prevent us from asking whether it is working as fairly for Illinois farmers as it should. One statistic continues to stand out: Over the past decade, Illinois has averaged a crop insurance loss ratio of roughly 0.40. In simple terms, Illinois farmers have received less than 40 cents in payments for every \$1 paid into the program. Nationally, the average loss ratio is double that, averaging 0.80 (Coppess, Schnitkey, Sherrick, et. al).

No farmer wants to collect an insurance payment. A low loss ratio can be a sign of productive farmland, sound management and favorable growing conditions. Nevertheless, when the difference between Illinois and the national average remains that large over an extended period of time, it raises legitimate questions about whether the program's assumptions accurately reflect the risks faced by Illinois producers today.

Agriculture has changed dramatically over the years. Yields have increased, technology has advanced and production costs have risen significantly. Yet many farmers believe the data used to calculate premiums and coverage levels have not kept pace with those changes. As a result, Illinois farmers might be paying into a system that does not fully recognize the realities of modern production agriculture in our state. Unfortunately, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency is limited by statute in making changes to crop insurance, meaning legislative action is needed to fix this issue.

Fortunately, Congress has an opportunity to address these concerns, as work is currently underway on the next farm bill. The U.S. Senate's draft of the Agricultural Act of 2026 opens the door for important conversations about strengthening and modernizing the crop insurance program.

Illinois Soybean Growers will be actively engaged throughout the farm bill process, advocating for a crop insurance program that remains strong, reflects today's production costs and risks, and treats Illinois farmers fairly. Illinois farmers have been strong partners in making crop insurance one of the most successful components of federal farm policy, and as lawmakers consider its future, we want to ensure it continues to work as intended for the farmers who rely on it every year. We are asking for a program that keeps pace with modern agriculture and delivers the fairness, reliability and meaningful protection Illinois farmers deserve.





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