

SEPTEMBER 2026

Illinois Field & Bean

A PUBLICATION OF THE ILLINOIS SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION

The Illinois Advantage

*What makes Illinois soy stand out
on the national and global stage?*

*From our unmatched transportation network
to innovative infrastructure projects, Illinois
moves soy efficiently and effectively.*



STILL STRONG. STILL DEPENDABLE. STILL RUNNING.

WITH PARTS FROM JOHN DEERE.



JOHN DEERE



Out here, everything has to perform. That's why John Deere offers more parts at affordable prices. OEM. REMAN. Essentials by John Deere. A&I. Sunbelt. The right part for the job at the right price. Everything you need to keep it Still Running.

JohnDeere.com/StillRunning



JOHN DEERE

Engineered for
peak performance.



JOHN DEERE
REMAN

Smart sustainability
meets smart economics.

ESSENTIALS
BY JOHN DEERE™

Essential parts. Essential value.
John Deere fit.



Economical repairs for older
or mixed fleet equipment.



Aftermarket options for turf
and outdoor equipment.

Contents

September 2026 Volume 6 Issue 11

4

FROM THE BOARDROOM: ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY

The St. Lawrence Seaway is an often overlooked yet vital navigable deep waterway connecting the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean. Here's why it matters and why ISA is investing in strengthening this transportation resource.

5

CEO MESSAGE: EARNING OUR ADVANTAGE

Illinois has numerous ag industry advantages. But maintaining that edge takes intention.

6

ILLINOIS' UNMATCHED TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Learn how good transportation makes for good economics.

10

BUNDLE YOUR BRIDGES

Discover why bridge maintenance is so important to the success of Illinois farmers.

14

HOW ILLINOIS MOVES SOY

Go behind the scenes to explore how farmers get their crop from field to market.

18

SOY CONNEXT COMES TO ILLINOIS

More than 500 soybean buyers from nearly 60 countries experienced Illinois agriculture in August.

20

FROM THE FIELD: GROW YOUR GROUND GAME!

Read updates about ISA's partnership with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

22

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS OF THE NATIONAL SOY CHECKOFF

Through collective investments, U.S. soybean production has grown from 1.8 billion bushels in 1990 to over 4 billion bushels today.

24

IF OUR SOILS COULD TALK

The Illinois Centennial Soil Archive Project is asking for farmers' help in identifying remaining sites for sampling.

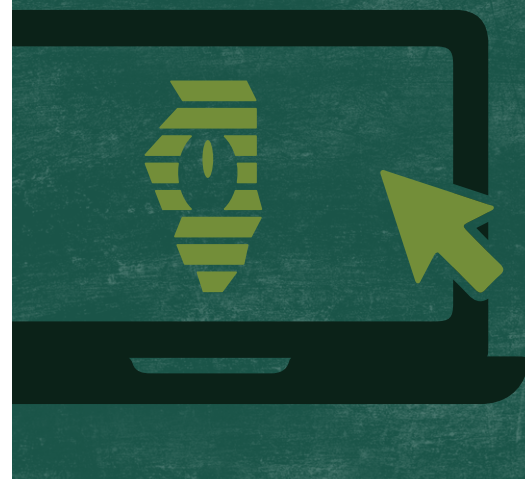
26

VOICE FOR SOY: SUITS OFF, OVERALLS ON

For members of Congress, August is a chance to spend time back home to visit with the constituents they represent.

**VISIT US
ONLINE AT**

ilsoy.org/illinois-field-bean/



This issue of *Illinois Field & Bean* dives into the latest research, explores key trends in transportation and logistics, shares updates on bridge improvement efforts and highlights the global relationships being built right here in Illinois.



FROM THE BOARDROOM

Funded by the Illinois Soybean Checkoff



Jeff O'Connor

At-Large Director | Market Development Committee
Chairman | Illinois Soybean Association



St. Lawrence Seaway

When I was asked to write about the St. Lawrence Seaway for this edition of "From the Boardroom," the staff member doing the asking admitted not knowing what it was. That comment is indicative of our collective lack of awareness of "The Seaway" - most people don't know about it. Yet as Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) works to leave no stone unturned in our pursuit of moving more Illinois soybeans, the Seaway will pop up as one of those stones we must address routinely. My situation is different in that I personally advocated for its growing use to exporters in Rotterdam, Netherlands, back in 2024 and continue to promote it as an alternative any chance I get.

The St. Lawrence Seaway will always play a supporting role to the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers in the transportation of bulk cargoes of Illinois soybeans. It provides another route for competing soybeans from Great Lakes states to leave the upper Midwest, moving from lake harbors through Canada and into the Atlantic.

The Seaway was built between 1954 and 1959 as a venture between the U.S. and Canada. Each country provided its own management corporation to develop and operate a portion of the route. At the time, bulk cargoes of grain, petroleum and iron ore were traversing the Great Lakes and shipping to Europe, a vital trade partner at the time for those commodities. From the furthest port of Duluth, Minn., to the Atlantic Ocean, a distance of 2,342 miles is covered with 16 locks on the system raising and lowering boats 243 feet in elevation. Ships using the Seaway are smaller than those we commonly think of in the more familiar canals, such as the Panama Canal. The size is still significant enough to move valuable tonnage annually.

The importance of the St. Lawrence Seaway as a shipping route is coming back into focus because of how worldwide trade has evolved. The use of shipping containers to move grain is growing, both because of empty container availability and the high quality of grain that is maintained when delivered through an upper Midwest/Canada route and across the North Atlantic. While not frequently moving Illinois' soybeans, it does free up other lanes of transportation for our own grain, especially during harvest time.



CHAIRMAN

Bryan Severs,
Potomac | District 7

VICE CHAIRMAN

Brady Holst,
Plymouth | At-Large

SECRETARY

Scott Gaffner,
Greenville | At-Large

TREASURER

Rob Shaffer,
El Paso | District 6

ASSISTANT

SECRETARY-

TREASURER

Emily Lovelady,
Tamaroa | District 17

GOVERNMENT

RELATIONS

COMMITTEE CHAIR

Tim Scates,
Carmi | District 16

MARKET

DEVELOPMENT

COMMITTEE CHAIR

Jeff O'Connor,
Plymouth | At-Large

SOYBEAN

PRODUCTION

COMMITTEE CHAIR

Heath Houck,
Nokomis | District 13

DIRECTORS

Ryan Frieders, Waterman | District 1

Steve Pitstick, Maple Park | District 2

Dwayne Anderson, Lynn Center | District 3

Weston Olson, Peru | District 4

Brad Zimmerman, Groveland | District 5

Tim Clark, Macomb | District 8

Doug Martin, Mt. Pulaski | District 9

Elliott Uphoff, Shelbyville | District 10

Matt Murray, Paxton | District 11

Jonathan Griffel, Gillespie | District 12

Trent Maxwell, Martinsville | District 14

Jeff Parker, Belleville | District 15

Emily Lovelady, Tamaroa | District 17

Martin Duffy, New Haven | District 18

AT-LARGE DIRECTORS

Betsey Emerick, Vandalia

Lane Tarochione, Maquon

David Wessel, Chandlerville

UNITED SOYBEAN BOARD (USB)

Gary Berg, St. Elmo

Steve Pitstick, Maple Park

Rob Shaffer, El Paso

David Wessel, Chandlerville

AMERICAN SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION (ASA)

Daryl Cates, Columbia

Ryan Frieders, Waterman

Scott Gaffner, Greenville

Ron Kindred, Atlanta

Brady Holst, Plymouth

Jim Martin, Pontiac

Charles Miller, Plymouth

Bryan Severs, Potomac

Roberta Simpson-Dolbear, Nebo

OTHER ISA STAFF

Chief Executive Officer, John Lumpe

Executive Employee Relations,

Nicole Butler

Director of Government Relations &
Strategy, Kevin "KJ" Johnson

Director of Market Development,
Todd Main

Director of Marketing Communications,
Betsy Osman

Director of Finance, Kati Owen

Director of Agronomy, Abigail Peterson

Director of Operations, Dustin Scott

STAFF CREDITS

Editor in Chief,
Betsy Osman

Assistant Editor,
Olivia Shafer

Lead Writer,
Ashley Haddon

Digital
Communications
Specialist,
Lee Deal

Communications
Project Specialist,
Lauran Hill

Communications
Coordinator,
Brooklyne
Luessenheide

Illinois Soybean Growers (ISG) is owner of Illinois Field & Bean, a publication for Illinois soybean farmers, designed and written to provide timely and useful industry information. Illinois Field & Bean is published by the Illinois Soybean Association, 1108 Trinity Lane, Bloomington, IL, 61704.

Comments and statewide news articles should be sent to the above address. Advertising space reservations must be made by the first of the month preceding publication. In consideration of the acceptance of advertisement, the agency and the advertiser must, in respect of the contents of the advertisement, indemnify and save the publisher harmless against any expense arising from claims or actions against the publisher because of the publication of the content of the advertisement.

Illinois Field & Bean Magazine may contain information or advertisements for third-party products, services, or companies. Any reference to a specific commercial product, process, service, or manufacturer does not constitute or imply endorsement, recommendation, or favoring by the Illinois Soybean Association.

FOR ADVERTISING INFORMATION OR ADDRESS CORRECTIONS, CONTACT:

Betsy Osman | Editor in Chief

Email: betsy.osman@ilsosy.org

CEO'S MESSAGE

Funded by the Illinois Soybean Checkoff



John Lumpe

CEO | Illinois Soybean Association

Earning Our Advantage



Ask any Illinois soybean farmer what makes this state a great place to grow soybeans, and you'll probably get more than one answer. Our soils. Our location. Our infrastructure. And they'd all be right.

When you put those advantages together, Illinois farmers are in a pretty remarkable position. We can grow a high-quality crop and move it efficiently from the farm to customers across the country and around the world.

That's what we mean when we talk about the Illinois Advantage, and this month's issue of *Illinois Field & Bean* takes a closer look at what makes that advantage possible, and what we need to do to keep building on it.

Illinois sits at the center of North American agriculture, with one of the strongest transportation networks in the country. Our rivers give us access to the Gulf of Mexico and global export markets. Our railways and highways connect farms, elevators, processors and ports. All of that matters because the more efficiently we can move Illinois soybeans, the more competitive we are in the marketplace.

But none of these advantages can be taken for granted. They require investment, innovation and people willing to think about what comes next.

MORE THAN GREAT SOIL

We've all heard that Illinois farmers are fortunate to farm some of the most productive soil in the world. There's certainly truth to that, but I think it sells our farmers short to suggest that geography alone is responsible for our success.

Illinois farmers are constantly working to make good ground even better. Through soil research, conservation practices and better water management, growers are finding ways to protect productivity while making every acre work harder. New tools, including artificial intelligence, satellite technology and precision agriculture, are helping farmers better understand what is happening across their fields and make more informed decisions about where and when inputs are needed.

That means improving productivity while using our resources more efficiently. It's good stewardship, but it's also good business.

And increasingly, it matters to our customers. Buyers around the world want to know not only that we can deliver a reliable supply of

high-quality soybeans but also how those soybeans were produced. Illinois has a strong story to tell on both fronts.

We inherited some tremendous natural advantages in this state. What Illinois farmers continue to build on top those resources is something we should be proud of.

CREATING MORE WAYS TO REACH CUSTOMERS

We saw another piece of the Illinois Advantage on display last month, when Soy Connex brought more than 700 soy leaders from around the world to Chicago.

Having those customers and industry leaders right here in Illinois gave us an opportunity we weren't going to waste. It allowed us to have conversations, build relationships and show firsthand what Illinois brings to the global soybean industry. Those relationships matter because ultimately, our job is to create more opportunities and more demand for the soybeans Illinois farmers grow.

That work extends well beyond Chicago.

The St. Lawrence Seaway provides another important route connecting Illinois soybeans with European customers. ISA continues to strengthen opportunities through that corridor because having more ways to reach more customers makes Illinois soybeans more competitive. When we can move our crop efficiently and reliably to markets around the world, that creates value that comes back to the farm.

That, to me, is what the Illinois Advantage is really about.

Yes, we have great soil. We have an incredible location and infrastructure that generations before us helped build. But an advantage only stays an advantage if you continue investing in it.

That's the work ISA is focused on every day: protecting what Illinois farmers already have while looking for the next opportunity to make it even stronger.

I hope you'll spend some time with this issue of *Illinois Field & Bean* and take a closer look at the people, research and investments behind the Illinois Advantage. Illinois has a lot working in its favor, but maintaining that edge takes intention. Our job is to keep building on what we do well, investing where it matters and making sure Illinois soybean farmers are positioned to compete for years to come.

Funded by the Illinois Soybean Checkoff

Illinois' Unmatched Transportation Network



By Todd Main, Director of Market Development, Illinois Soybean Association

As an Illinois soybean farmer, you already recognize the advantages of our state's incredible transportation system. But what you might not realize is that we operate in a sweet spot unlike any other.

Consider that we can move our products from the interior of the country out to the coasts. We can go down to the Gulf of Mexico through the Illinois waterways system. We can go to the Pacific Northwest through railroad. That's just the short list.

The numbers bear this out. Illinois boasts 145,708 miles of roadways, 6,986 miles of rail lines, 2,185 miles of interstate, 77 shuttle facilities and 62 river elevators, according to Informa Economics data published in a 2023 report commissioned by Illinois Soybean Association (ISA).

All of these options give you and your operation a competitive advantage for producing and selling agricultural goods of the highest quality.

Yet as Illinois produces more soybeans and global demand shifts, we'll need to keep looking ahead and anticipating future needs. We'll need to rethink our transportation system to maintain our competitive advantage.

The present moment is a bright one, and the opportunities for serving growing markets in Asia, Africa and beyond are exciting. Now is the right time to take inventory of our unmatched transportation network—and to position it for Illinois farmers' long-term success via new ISA initiatives such as Transportation 2050.

GOOD TRANSPORTATION MAKES GOOD ECONOMICS

Our ability to transport soybeans efficiently to buyers makes a difference to your bottom line. Two factors make that possible.

First, we can get our product anywhere in the world when it needs to get there. We're a reliable partner. Buyers make repeat orders from farmers they trust.

Second, we're efficient and effective. A good transportation system accelerates and emphasizes your advantages as a grower and

the care you place into the goods you produce.

We often hear that buyers from around the world prefer U.S. soy because it's higher in quality. It doesn't have the same characteristics of stress because it hasn't been handled multiple times.

Compare this to Brazilian soybeans. Buyers have told us that because Brazil has a tropical climate, farmers often use wood fires to dry out the crop. This tends to scorch the beans, degrading the amino acid profile containing all the energy, vitamins and minerals that animals and people need in their diets.

Illinois' transportation costs are also highly competitive. Freight costs make up just 10% to 15% of the value of U.S. soy compared to 30% of the value of Brazil, according to Diogo Damiani, president of the Rural Union of Sorriso, quoted in a July 20, 2026, article in the Financial Times.

The Illinois transportation network ensures this type of quality and cost structure is preserved through the supply chain from the farm gate to the end user. And it's as true for conventionally grown beans as it is for non-GMO and other types of value-added soybeans that can be placed on a container directly on the farm and shipped to their final destination.

HOW SOY GETS TO BUYERS

En route to its buyer, soy can pass over some combination of rural roads, bridges, railroads or rivers. Every county within Illinois has its own unique makeup of transportation infrastructure. In northern Illinois, a lot of the beans go either to crush facilities or via railroad to the Pacific Northwest. In other parts of the state, soybeans are transported to specific buyers based on whoever is offering the best price. It all just depends on your economics, your region and the infrastructure available to you.

The benefits and the opportunities for improvement are widespread.

ROADS AND BRIDGES UNLOCK FARM GATE GOODS

Rural roads and bridges ensure your soybean crop gets off the farm and on its

way to its end user. Yet 25% of bridges in Illinois are either load-weight restricted or in bad shape and not viable. That adds a lot of costs, as farmers must drive around those locations to get to their final destination.

ISA has been talking about this for quite some time. A few years ago, we raised and advanced the process of bridge bundling in the state. This enables contractors to bid on more than one project at a time in geographically similar areas, reducing procurement costs up to 30%.

WATERWAYS FLOAT FARM GOODS TO BUYERS

Rivers, such as the mighty Mississippi, are an essential vein for transporting Illinois soybeans. Locks and dams must operate properly to ensure safe passage of our farm goods out to export markets.

A number of 600-ft. locks need to be expanded to 1,200 feet so they can handle modern tows. This would dramatically change the economics of the waterway.

We're fortunate that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers does a good job of upgrading these, but there's a backlog. All of these locks and dams were built back in the 1920s and 1930s, so they're long past their 50-year life expectancy. You can do a baling wire, spit and duct tape, but at some point, you've got to make the investment.

We applaud the Army Corps for their work and applaud Congress for appropriating the funds to make it possible. But there's still work to be done.

RAILROADS KEEP SOY ON TRACK

Our Class I railroads are privately owned and in good shape because of the investments companies have made in them. The Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program has been working to reduce delays in Chicago caused by train congestion, ensuring things can flow through there a lot easier.

Ongoing efforts are exploring ways to better

plug in the short-line railroads, which are arteries off of the main line often managed by separate companies.

TRANSPORTATION 2050

The transportation system that got us here won't get us to the next phase of Illinois soybean industry growth, nor will it fully satisfy the needs of future buyers. That's why we need a shared vision for the future of Illinois transportation.

ISA has put together an initiative called Transportation 2050 to help Illinois meet the market. Over the final six months of 2026, we'll be doing a lot of listening to farmers like you—understanding what your county's transportation needs are and how ISA, the ag community and our many transportation partners can position us for long-term success.

As a state, we need to be resilient. We need to have redundant systems so that if a breakdown occurs in one place, it doesn't completely hamstring us. But there will be key differences. Some areas of the state might need more storage. Other areas might need a multimodal facility with railroad access. It's going to be a bespoke approach, but it's knowable, and we just have to think about it.

Although China is the major buyer of our products now, the won't be the case in 2050. China is expected to lose up to half a billion people over the next 50 years, stemming in large part from that country's former one-child policy. Demographics are destiny. That's a lot of demand destruction.

We need to think about the markets of the future. Some of the largest growth over the next 50 to 60 years will be in Africa, where we ship a very limited volume of soybeans today. Very little goes to Sub-Saharan Africa, and we've got to have a system that enables us to do that. Strong demand is also expected to continue in Indonesia and other parts of Southeast Asia, to name just a few buyer hubs.

We're not going to leave our future up to chance. We're going to educate and engage people around the state to make sure we protect that competitive advantage.

BUILDING ON LINCOLN'S LEGACY

Everybody knows how important transportation is to Illinois. You can trace it back to a speech that was given by a now-revered president who, at the time, was stumping for the Illinois State Legislature. In an address published in March 1832, this prominent American argued for public funding for strengthening the transportation system.

His name was Abraham Lincoln.

Now, it's your turn to engage with ISA and our partners as part of Transportation 2050. What transportation investments does your farm need to thrive? I encourage you to engage in these conversations. Talk to your neighbors. Visit with your elected officials.

Now is the time to map the next chapter in the history of Illinois' unmatched transportation network.



FROM YOUR FIELDS TO FIREFIGHTERS HANDS

The more we discover about soybeans, the more valuable they become. One innovative product, SoyFoam™, creates a new, sustainable use for your crop that protects firefighters and the planet.

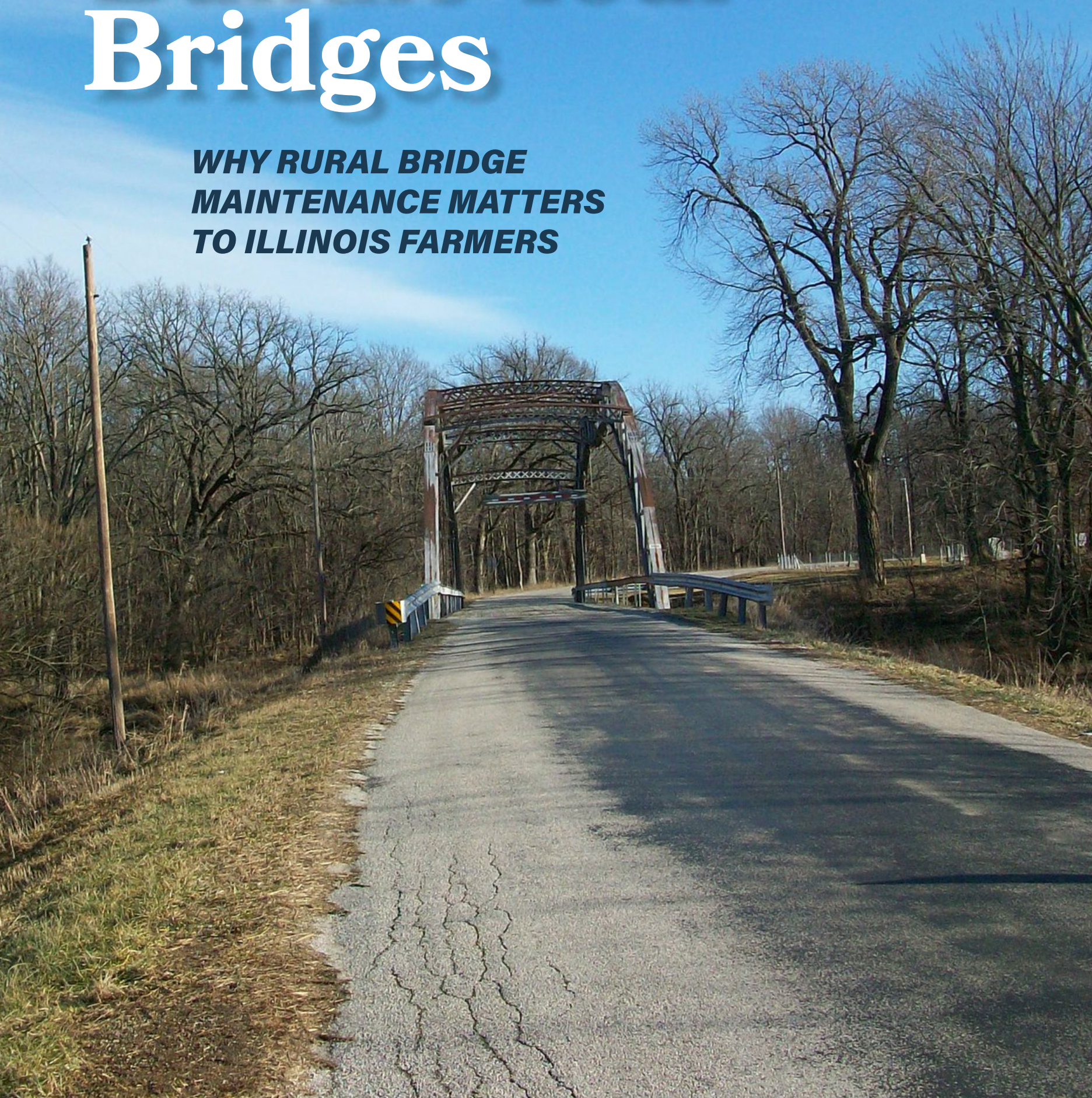
See how your Soy Checkoff is unlocking new markets for soybeans at unitedsoybean.org



Funded by the Illinois Soybean Checkoff

Bundle Your Bridges

***WHY RURAL BRIDGE
MAINTENANCE MATTERS
TO ILLINOIS FARMERS***



For most Illinois soybean farmers, getting the crop to market is just as important as growing it. Every load leaving the field depends on a transportation system that works — from township roads to county highways and, perhaps most importantly, the rural bridges connecting them.

Those bridges might not receive much attention during planting or harvest, but when a structure is weight-restricted or closed altogether, the impact can be significant. Longer truck routes, higher fuel costs, delayed grain deliveries and additional wear on equipment all chip away at a farm's bottom line.

That's why the Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) has made rural bridge infrastructure a key priority. Through research, education and advocacy, ISA is helping local governments explore a strategy called bridge bundling. This approach can stretch limited infrastructure dollars while keeping Illinois agriculture moving efficiently.

EVERY MILE MATTERS

Illinois farmers benefit from one of the most extensive transportation networks in the world. Grain moves from farms to elevators, processors, rail terminals and river ports through thousands of miles of local roads and bridges before reaching domestic and international markets.

When one piece of that network fails, the effects ripple outward. A bridge closure often forces trucks onto lengthy detours, adding mileage, fuel costs and travel time during the busiest seasons of the year. In some cases, roads that weren't designed for heavy agricultural traffic experience additional wear, creating even more infrastructure challenges for neighboring communities. Emergency vehicles, school buses and local businesses are affected as well.

For farmers operating on tight harvest schedules, even a short delay can lead to higher transportation costs and missed marketing opportunities. According to ISA, roads and bridges serve as the first connection between soybean farmers and the marketplace, making reliable infrastructure essential to maintaining Illinois' competitive advantage.

AN AGING BRIDGE SYSTEM

Illinois faces a significant infrastructure challenge. The state has nearly 27,000 bridges, one of the largest bridge inventories in the nation. Yet many of those structures are showing their age. Recent ISA research found that approximately 65% of Illinois bridges are rated in fair or poor condition, with thousands requiring rehabilitation or replacement. Many are owned by counties, municipalities and townships that often have limited budgets to address growing maintenance needs.

Waiting until a bridge reaches a critical condition can be costly. Emergency repairs often cost more than planned maintenance, and prolonged closures impose additional economic burdens on rural communities. As bridges continue to age, local governments face difficult decisions about where to invest limited transportation dollars.

LOOKING BEYOND ONE BRIDGE AT A TIME

Traditionally, bridge projects have been completed individually. Each bridge requires its own engineering, bidding, contracting and construction process. Bridge bundling takes a different approach. Rather than replacing or rehabilitating one bridge at a time, multiple bridge projects are grouped together under a single contract. The bridges might be located within one county or across several neighboring jurisdictions.

The concept is similar to buying seed, fertilizer or fuel in larger quantities. Purchasing in bulk often reduces costs, and the same principle applies to infrastructure projects. By combining projects, local governments can reduce administrative expenses, purchase materials more efficiently and streamline project management. Contractors can mobilize crews once instead of repeatedly moving equipment between separate projects, helping reduce overall construction costs while completing more work in less time.

ISA estimates that bridge bundling can reduce project costs by more than 30% while helping local governments maximize available funding.

BIGGER RETURNS FROM EVERY DOLLAR INVESTED

Improving bridge infrastructure isn't simply an expense; it's an investment. A recent economic analysis commissioned by ISA found that every dollar invested in bridge improvements across Illinois generates nearly \$5 in economic benefits statewide. Within Illinois' top agricultural counties, every dollar invested returns approximately \$3 in benefits.

Those returns come through reduced freight costs, improved transportation efficiency, job creation and broader economic activity. Over a 30-year period, researchers estimate statewide bridge investments could support more than 52,000 jobs, generate \$2.83 billion in labor income and contribute more than \$5.6 billion in additional economic value.

For agriculture, reliable infrastructure means grain reaches markets more efficiently, transportation costs remain lower and Illinois producers stay competitive in domestic and global markets.

HELPING LOCAL COMMUNITIES FIND SOLUTIONS

Recognizing both the need and the opportunity, ISA has spent several years working alongside transportation experts, engineers and local officials to better understand how bridge bundling can work in Illinois. That effort has included commissioning engineering research, conducting statewide stakeholder surveys, hosting educational webinars and developing practical resources for local governments.

One result is ISA's Bridge Bundling Toolkit, an online resource that walks counties, municipalities and townships through the process of evaluating, planning and implementing bridge bundles. The toolkit includes planning guidance, case studies, funding information and communication resources designed to help local officials navigate what can often be a complex process. ISA has also developed an interactive bridge dashboard that allows users to better understand bridge conditions across Illinois and identify opportunities for future projects.

INVESTING IN AGRICULTURE'S FUTURE

For farmers, bridge maintenance might seem like a local government issue. But reliable infrastructure directly supports farm profitability. Every bushel harvested depends on a transportation network capable of moving grain safely and efficiently from field to market. As equipment grows larger and harvest windows become tighter, dependable bridges become even more critical.

Investing proactively, rather than waiting for bridges to fail, helps reduce long-term repair costs while minimizing disruptions to agriculture and

rural communities alike. Bridge bundling offers one practical way to make those investments go further. By combining projects, stretching taxpayer dollars and improving transportation reliability, Illinois communities can preserve critical infrastructure while supporting the state's largest industry.

For Illinois soybean farmers, that means fewer detours, more efficient grain movement and stronger connections between the farm gate and markets around the world.



***"Improving bridge infrastructure isn't simply an expense;
it's an investment."***

Your return on investment for your 0.5% checkoff contribution? Transportation Efficiency.

ILLINOIS SOYBEANS, MOVING FARTHER, FASTER;
YOUR CHECKOFF STRENGTHENING EVERY MILE.

\$4.97

in benefits for
every \$1 invested
in Illinois bridge
maintenance

Source: WSP study

Illinois soybean farmers have a competitive edge thanks to our state's robust transportation network. To ensure continued success in the global market, the Illinois Soybean Association invests checkoff dollars in solutions that strengthen Illinois' aging infrastructure.

Learn more at ilsoy.org

Funded by the Soy Checkoff



How Illinois Moves Soy

By Mallory Shehorn, Communications Intern, Illinois Soybean Association



Illinois is home to some of the most productive soil in the world, making it an advantageous place to grow crops such as soybeans. This rich soil supports high crop yield and the production of quality soybeans that are in demand across the nation. Despite soybean's many advantages, many people are unaware of the vital role soy plays in their daily lives.

The Midwest is widely known for its agricultural production and its role in providing feed, fuel and food. Illinois alone produces approximately 474 million bushels of soybeans, making transportation critical to move products efficiently. Multiple transportation options including railroads, trucks and barges give Illinois an advantage by providing a strong and reliable network.

"It is about the network, having a strong network and strong resiliency due to the unpredictability of unpredictable times. If you have issues such as an accident, you have other options to get your exports delivered," said Todd Main, Director of Market Development at Illinois Soybean Association (ISA).

The transportation network not only helps farmers reach domestic markets, but allows agricultural products to be exported to consumers and customers around the world. Illinois has access to major rail corridors, highways and rivers, creating a system that can move massive quantities of grain efficiently. The availability of multiple transportation options helps reduce delays, strengthens our supply chain reliability, and supports Illinois' agricultural economy by ensuring products can reach manufacturers and export terminals when the demand is at its highest. As global

markets continue to rely on Midwest crops, improving transportation remains essential to our region's long-term growth and success.

Illinois is ranked as the nation's leading soybean producer, having a surplus that supports both exports and the state's transportation industry. According to Main, "Exports are driven by demand; strong demand raises prices, which is better for farmers." This highlights

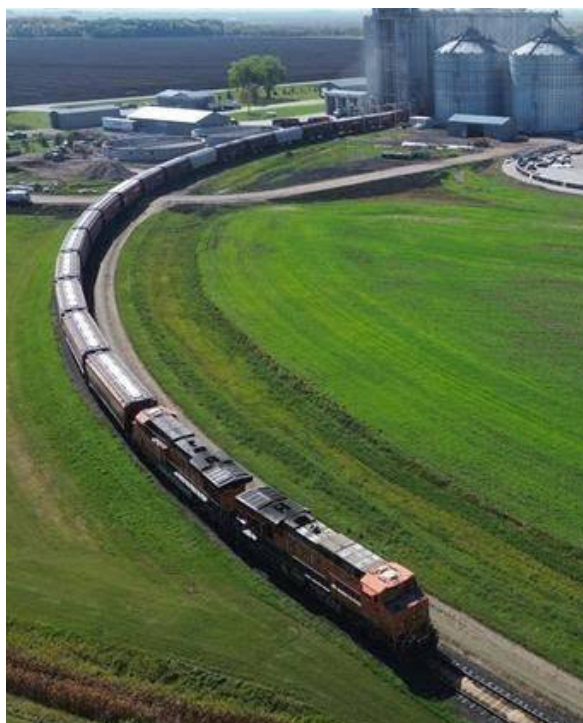
the importance of maintaining effective transportation systems that connect Illinois producers to buyers around the nation. Roads, railways and waterways enable soybeans to be moved more efficiently from farms to processing facilities, ports and international markets. When transportation networks operate smoothly, shipping costs remain lower and products can reach customers faster, helping Illinois farmers remain competitive. Along with that, the movement of agricultural goods supports jobs in trucking, warehousing and rail transportation. Efficient transportation creates large economic benefits for communities throughout the state. As for Illinois, the soybean industry continues to grow. Reliable transportation will remain essential for sustaining agricultural productivity and economic growth.

Illinois has been able to grow its soybean production as the demand for the crop continues to expand across a variety of markets.

As our markets expand, it gives our farmers more opportunities to grow and sell crops, encouraging production to meet demands. "If we have more markets, we have more demands," said Main. In Illinois, our soybeans are grown and used in biodiesel production, vegetable oil, livestock feed and other food products as well. Soybeans are shipped throughout the U.S. and exported internationally, where

"It is about the network, having a strong network and strong resiliency due to the unpredictability of unpredictable times."





they will be used for animal feed and human consumption. "Soy is the lowest cost form of protein; in countries with poverty, especially, soy is an economical way for their meals. It is affordable for use in livestock feed or for human consumption. It can be used in biodiesel or for cooking oil and is domestically produced." said Main.

Illinois moves soy effectively, yet there is room for improvement. For example, the Implements of Husbandry bill signed Aug. 7 by Gov. JB Pritzker will update the Illinois Vehicle Code to better account for today's bigger farm equipment. The amendment takes effect Jan. 1, 2027, and will allow farmers to move heavier agricultural implements with farm wagons up to specified weight limits. It keeps farmers and their fleets in compliance rather than requiring them to restrict movement to equipment meeting 1970s-era weight restrictions. Past state definitions were written decades ago and

did not account for large farm wagons commonly used by farmers today, creating potential confusion for farmers and law enforcement.

What does SB3208 do? It updates the definition of 'implement of husbandry' in the Illinois Vehicle Code, allowing farm vehicles with one axle to qualify up to a 24,000-pound limit for single-axle farm vehicles to qualify under the definition. It would also allow farm wagons with two or more axles to qualify up to 44,000 pounds. It provides clarity for farmers, law enforcement and regulators regarding which vehicles qualify for agriculture exemptions.

Why does this matter for Illinois soybean farmers?

"Modern soybean harvest requires larger wagons to move grain efficiently between fields, bins and local elevators. Many commonly used wagons today exceed older weight

assumptions despite being standard agricultural equipment. Clear definitions help avoid unnecessary citations or regulatory confusion during critical planting and harvest periods. Updating the law ensures Illinois agriculture can operate efficiently while maintaining safety standards," said Matt Johnston, Policy Specialist at ISA.

Our farmers depend heavily on quality and efficient transportation to move crops from their fields to storage to market. As farm equipment has changed, larger grain wagons have become a standard tool for ensuring an efficient harvest and helping reduce the number of trips needed to transport soybeans. With harvest being a time-sensitive period of the year for soybean farmers, any delays, confusion or uncertainty with transportation regulations can create challenges. Updating the law will help farmers keep soybeans moving efficiently

while providing clear guidance for both farmers and law enforcement.

Illinois' rich soil and strong agricultural practices have helped the state of Illinois become the nation's leading soybean producer. Soybeans are an important crop with numerous end uses, such as biodiesel, vegetable oil, livestock feed, and human consumption, while serving as an affordable source of protein throughout the nation. With Illinois producing millions of bushels of soybeans yearly, transportation efficiency is important to move crops from farms to domestic and international markets. Illinois benefits from a diverse transportation network, allowing our farmers to move soybeans efficiently and smoothly.



American Opportunity Powered by Clean Fuels

The biodiesel and renewable
diesel industry supports more
than \$42.4B in economic impact
and 100,000+ jobs in the U.S.



Materials supported by United Soybean Board, soybean farmers and their checkoffs.



Clean Fuels
ALLIANCE AMERICA
cleanfuels.org

Funded by the Illinois
Soybean Checkoff



Soy Connext Comes to Illinois

By Olivia Shafer, Assistant Editor, Illinois Field & Bean

On Aug. 4, more than 500 soybean buyers from nearly 60 countries experienced Illinois agriculture firsthand as Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) team members helped kick off the U.S. Soybean Export Council's (USSEC) 2026 Soy Connext Conference in Chicago.

Ahead of the conference, ISA's Market Development team coordinated three simultaneous farm tours, hosted by Illinois soybean farmers Ryan Frieders, Dale Pitstick and Jeff O'Connor. The visits provided

international buyers with an up-close look at modern soybean farming in Illinois and the practices that position the U.S. as a reliable supplier in the global marketplace.

Throughout the tours, participants learned about farm equipment and precision agriculture technology, soybean production practices, market demand and Illinois' transportation infrastructure. ISA staff and industry experts also shared insights on topics including sustainability, agronomy, diversification, food-grade soybeans and soybean oil.

The tours served as an opportunity for attendees to connect directly with Illinois farmers and gain a deeper understanding of the innovations, stewardship practices and supply chain efficiencies that support U.S. soybean production. The visits were met with positive feedback, with many buyers praising both the educational programming and the chance to see Illinois agriculture in action.

"Farm visits are such a good opportunity to tell our story," said Roberta Simpson-Dolbeare, an Illinois farmer and USSEC

Vice Chairwoman. "Illinois and U.S. farmers have a lot to be proud of. From how we grow our soybeans to how we operate our farms, we're planning ahead so the next generation can continue farming. We take care of our soil and try to do things the right way, preserving not only our land but also operating efficiently so we can continue to have the high percentage of family farms in Illinois that we do today."

The Soy Connex Conference officially began Aug. 5 with the annual USSEC Board Meeting, Trade Team Invitational and SEC GAP meeting. This year's conference set an attendance record, with over 800 U.S. soy buyers, sellers, growers and visionaries present to spark innovation, open new markets and shape the future of soy together.

"It's great to be here in Chicago. I know people around the world, and certainly myself too, think of Chicago as a hub for commodity trading. When we think about where to host the Soy Connex events, we look for a place that has good transportation, a place where people would like to go, and a place that has facilities where we can host this sort of event," said Jim Sutter, CEO of USSEC. "Also, the other benefit is the great

partnership we've had with the Illinois Soybean Association, and the great farm tours that we were able to organize. Thank you to Illinois for being such a good partner and a good host."

Over the following two days, keynote presentations and breakout sessions explored a variety of topics impacting global agriculture and trade, including geopolitics, global supply and demand, the 2026 growing season, specialty soybeans, feed-cost dynamics, consumer trends, the Sustainable U.S. Soy label, corporate transparency, and opportunities within the energy, biofuels and crush sectors.

Throughout the conference, ISA team members also met with representatives from Vinh Hoan, a leading aquaculture company in Vietnam; COFCO, China's largest food and agriculture company; and CP, one of Southeast Asia's largest fish, poultry and pork producers. Discussions focused on strengthening relationships and expanding opportunities for U.S. soy in international markets. Team members also engaged with visitors at ISA's booth, highlighting the International Commercialization Initiative (ICI) and

its role in supporting global market development efforts, as well as ISA's Soy Innovation Center and It's Sustainably Soy-certified products.

"Meeting with buyers in person is a great opportunity to not only share our personal farming story, but also to explain why U.S. soybeans are top of the line," said Simpson-Dolbeare. "We can point out the quality differences in our sustainably raised soybeans and explain the four Ds, which help show why U.S. soybeans are better than those grown in other countries. U.S. soybeans are naturally dried in the field, resulting in less damage to the beans. Because they are dried more naturally, they store better and are more digestible. There is also no deforestation involved. Those are the key points that really help when meeting buyers face to face."

From hosting farm tours and engaging global customers to participating in high-level trade discussions, ISA played an important role throughout Soy Connex, helping showcase the value, reliability and sustainability of Illinois soybeans to a worldwide audience.





Darby Danzl

Regional Technical Agronomist |
Illinois Soybean Association



Whitney Miller

Agronomic Services Coordinator |
Illinois Soybean Association

Grow Your Ground Game!



In August 2024, Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) entered a partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) in an effort to increase awareness, education and outreach related to NRCS conservation programs and resources in Illinois. Through this partnership, ISA is helping connect farmers with information about conservation practices, including cover crops and no-till, while highlighting the technical resources and expertise available through USDA-NRCS.

ISA'S ROLE

ISA's Soybean Production staff play a key role in fulfilling the partnership's objectives while expanding awareness and participation in Illinois NRCS programs. Through workshops, field days and technical resources, ISA brings farmers and NRCS staff together to explore practical applications of soil health and conservation management.

The ISA-hosted events are designed to foster collaboration, encourage knowledge exchange and provide hands-on learning

opportunities for both groups. To stay updated on upcoming events, visit www.ilsoy.org/events/.

In addition to coordinating educational events, ISA supports NRCS staff and conservation planners by providing technical agronomic expertise that strengthens conservation planning efforts.

To further advance conservation adoption, ISA collaborates with university researchers and farmers through its On-Farm Trial Network (OFTN) to generate practical, unbiased data on conservation practices. Findings from these trials, along with insights from subject matter experts, are shared through ISA publications, digital platforms and events. To learn more about OFTN, visit www.fieldadvisor.org/on-farm-trial-network/.

NRCS PROGRAMS

Illinois NRCS offers several financial assistance programs for farmers looking to implement new conservation practices or build on existing conservation efforts.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) helps farmers, ranchers and forest landowners address specific natural resource concerns on working lands. Through financial and technical assistance, EQIP supports conservation practices that improve soil health, water quality, air quality, wildlife habitat and other natural resources. EQIP is particularly well suited for first-time conservation adopters or producers looking to solve a specific resource challenge.

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) rewards agricultural producers who maintain and improve their existing conservation systems. Through CSP, participants adopt additional conservation activities that address priority resource concerns across their entire operation. CSP is ideal for farmers who already have conservation practices in place and want to expand or enhance them through a comprehensive, systems-based approach.

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) addresses natural resource challenges within a region or watershed by incentivizing conservation practice adoption on agricultural lands. By leveraging public and private resources and fostering collaboration among partners, RCPP delivers innovative, locally led solutions that benefit both agricultural producers and conservation goals.

To learn more about how you can grow your ground game with Illinois NRCS, visit [**www.ilsoy.org/conservation/**](http://www.ilsoy.org/conservation/).



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Celebrating 35 years of the national Soy Checkoff

Dear U.S. soybean community,

For U.S. soybean farmers, the decision to come together 35 years ago and form the national Soy CheckoffSM was a defining moment that would reshape American agriculture for generations. Through collective investments into food, feed, fuel, industrial, exports and sustainable production, U.S. soybean production has grown from 1.8 billion bushels in 1990 to over 4 billion today. Because of what farmers have built together over 35 years, we've been able to create entirely new markets from the ground up like biodiesel, expand exports around the world to 90 countries and develop tools that protect yield on the farm.

The partnership between farmers and the Soy Checkoff traces back to a pivotal moment in American agriculture. For many soybean farmers, the drought of 1988 exposed the need for a national checkoff.



Soon after, farmer leaders on the American Soybean Association voted overwhelmingly to pursue one, making investments available for international and domestic marketing as well as dedicated research into new uses. USB Secretary and Minnesota soybean farmer Tom Frisch believes the opportunity for every soybean farmer in the country to pool their resources and make a collective impact remains just as important 35 years later. “We need to continue to work together as U.S. soybean farmers and not isolate ourselves. We, as U.S. soybean farmers, need to champion our industry every day, every month, every year,” says Frisch.

Qualified State Soybean Boards (QSSBs) have been there every step of the way, serving as the connective tissue between national strategy and on-the-ground reality. “When I view QSSBs, they are at the grassroots level navigating concerns and opportunities with



USB Past Chairs gather for a photo in the Soy Checkoff booth at Commodity Classic 2026 in Austin, Texas.



USB Past Chair Sandy Ludeman participates in a Soy Checkoff town hall in 1992.

their farmers across the state. They are in touch with their local agriculture community about what's happening in their backyard," says USB Past Chair and Mississippi soybean farmer Philip Good.

As the Soy Checkoff thinks about the next 35 years, every investment made aims to grow demand, improve resiliency of the soybean crop and bring additional revenue back to the farm. "The Soy Checkoff isn't just about dollars invested from the half-million U.S. soybean farmers — it's about giving them the power to shape their own future and deliver lasting impact," says Indiana farmer and USB Treasurer Don Wyss.

One example of how powerful this partnership has proven to be is the advancement of high oleic soybean research and farmer adoption. We've seen over a million acres of high oleic across states like Indiana, Ohio, Missouri and the Delmarva region with QSSBs helping promote premiums of \$0.75 to \$1.25 per bushel. And there's potential to reach 5-7 million acres a decade from now. High oleic soybeans have returned nearly \$400 million in premium payments to farmers — a direct return on the \$130 million checkoff investment through 2025.

Another great example of partnership is the lower Mississippi River dredging project which added an additional \$461 million in revenue to U.S. soybean farmers. Through checkoff investment in research, analysis and design, which kickstarted deepening the lower Mississippi River from 45 to 50 feet



USB is formed from the publication of the Soybean Promotion and Research Order under the 1990 Farm Bill.

allowed for an increase of 500,000 bushels per ocean vessel and saves 13 cents per bushel of freight. This investment spanned collaboration with USB, the Soy Transportation Coalition, U.S. Soybean Export Council, the American Soybean Association and multiple QSSBs. "Investing in the research and engineering side of that project was a new venture for us, but it encouraged strategic thinking of how we can use checkoff funds in unique ways to improve all soybean farmers' bottom line," says Good.

As the United Soybean Board celebrates its 35th Anniversary we are proud of the work we've accomplished for every single U.S. soybean farmer. With our continued partnerships with the QSSBs we look forward to what this next chapter brings for the U.S. soybean industry. Together we can continue to deliver sustainable soy solutions to every life, every day.

Here's to the next 35 years of the U.S. soybean industry!



Brent Gattton

Brent Gattton
USB Chair
Kentucky



If Our Soils Could Talk

Illinois Centennial Soil Archive Project

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

Illinois is known for having some of the best soils in the world. But what makes our soils so fertile and productive for crop production? And how can researchers, farmers and conservationists ensure it remains productive for generations to come?

THE ICE AGE

More than 300,000 years ago, four glaciers made their way into Illinois during the Ice Age. The ice flowed down from Canada due to the sheer weight of the ice layers—up to 8,000 feet thick.

During this colder period, snow did not melt in the summer, and as the glaciers advanced into Illinois, they ground up rocks and boulders along the way. The last two glaciers stayed in Illinois until around 13,000 years ago.

When eventually the climate warmed and the glaciers receded, they left an average of a 100-ft.-thick layer of sediment composed of clay, sand, gravel, pebbles and rocks, known as glacial till. Loess, or silt-sized particles deposited by the wind, then covered this till in a mantle across most of Illinois, reaching a depth of more than 20 feet in some places. Loess is rich in minerals and retains moisture, making it good for growing crops.

Overall, the glaciers were concentrated in the central and northeastern regions of Illinois, which flattened the landscape and left behind generally rich soil. In contrast, the glaciers did not reach the far northwest and southern areas of Illinois, which remain hilly and forested.

ILLINOIS SOILS

Soil is a natural resource composed of three mineral particles: sand, silt and clay. Soil formation can take hundreds of thousands of years, and its properties depend on the geology and climate.

Two soil taxonomies, or soil classifications, make up the majority of soils in Illinois: mollisols and alfisols.

Mollisols develop from the decomposition of prairie plants and can be 10 or more inches deep.

Alfisols develop thick black topsoils from the decomposition of prairie vegetation. They are primarily found in the southern third of Illinois due to less recent glaciation.

Overall, nearly 90% of the total acreage in Illinois is considered prime farmland.

EXPLORING CHANGING SOILS

A few years back, an old storage barn on the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus was scheduled for demolition. Inside that barn were over 8,000 soil samples, mostly in jars.

Those samples were not new, in fact, the oldest sample was taken in 1861—the same year the American Civil War began.

Altogether, the samples represent more than 600 soil types, all 102 Illinois counties and 27 million acres of cropland.

That discovery led to the creation of the Illinois Centennial Soil

Archive Project, and at the helm is Dr. Andrew Margenot, Professor of Soil Science at the University of Illinois.

To start the project, from 2019-2022, the soil collection had to be reorganized into a physical and digital library. Funded by the Illinois Nutrient Research & Education Council (NREC), the research team was able to conduct the arduous work of reviewing historic notebooks and jar-enclosed identification cards for geolocation of samples to identify the locations the samples were originally taken from.

Since 2023, Margenot's team has been working to resample all 462 locations to see how the soils have changed over time. These locations are primarily on private lands in corn-soybean fields.

As of this writing, 157 of 463 locations have been sampled, and landowners representing 111 more locations have given their permission to sample. That means there are 206 locations or 42% left to be sampled. This is where farmers and other landowners can help.

"Thanks to the generosity of landowners and operators, we've been able to resample sites that were originally sampled as far back as the late 1800s," said Margenot. "The scale of this effort is the first of its kind in the world and builds on millions of man-hours of work and forward thinking by our predecessor. We hope to continue that legacy but need the support of Illinois agriculturalists to make it happen."

Farmers and landowners can scan the QR code, to the right, and click through to see if a

property they own is one the team is asking permission to sample.

The actual sampling procedures the team employs at the sites cause minimal disturbance. It involves a 1.5-in.-diameter probe to sample soils at three feet deep, at three points within a 10- to 15-ft. area. All of the resulting soil data is then provided to the farmer/landowner. The location will only be reported on a county level.

MOVING FORWARD

The Soil Archive Project team has been on the move. Altogether, they have traveled more than 15,000 miles, collected nearly three tons of soil and created over 250,000 data points from the resampled sites. Identifying and gaining permission to access the sites is only the beginning of the soil-testing journey. The process includes resampling, processing, sectioning, preparation and analysis. Through this research, the team is able to identify soil qualities like water content, bulk density, air drying and grinding.

The insights gained from resampling these sites will be used to benefit Illinois soybean farmers in numerous ways: updates to the Illinois Agronomy Handbook, and our state's soil resource base and overall improvements in soil fertility management and conservation recommendations.

"What we will find from comparison of the then-and-now of these soils across our state will provide fundamental insights to soils in general, and to soil fertility and management specifically," said Margenot. "Plus, landowners are provided personalized reports with an estimated \$6,000 value in soil analyses for their resampled land, and a comparison to how it has changed since the original sampling."



SOLUTIONS THAT WORK

Developing differentiated crop protection solutions to address the unmet agronomic and economic needs of US growers.

uplcorp.com/us

Always read and follow label directions.
UPL, the UPL logo and Preview are trademarks of a UPL Corporation Limited Group Company. ©2026 UPL Corporation Limited Group Company. 26-UPL-1909 8/26



Kevin "KJ" Johnson

Director of Government Relations & Strategy |
Illinois Soybean Association

Suits Off, Overalls On

For members of Congress, August is a chance to step away from Washington, D.C. and spend time back home visiting with the constituents that they represent. During the annual August recess, lawmakers can attend local events, tour industries that are significant to their district and hear more about what is happening in their communities straight from the source. For Illinois soybean farmers, that means opening the farm gate and inviting lawmakers to see agriculture up close.

A conversation about farming looks different when it happens outside of an office with suits off and overalls on. Walking through a field, looking at equipment or discussing the decisions made throughout a growing season can tell a different story than a meeting around a conference table. This August, Illinois soybean farmers welcomed legislators to their operations to discuss the issues affecting their farms and rural communities. Farmers shared what they are seeing in their fields, the challenges they are working through and the decisions they make each year to keep their operations moving forward. A visit to a farm allows lawmakers to ask questions, see the operation and learn more about what goes into producing a crop.

Many of the issues discussed in Washington eventually connect back to the farm, such as transportation, trade, biofuels, conservation or the overall farm economy. A discussion about transportation looks different when it happens near the roads, railways and waterways farmers rely on to move crops. A conversation about conservation looks different when it comes from farmers who are putting practices such as cover crops and no-till into place on their own land.

These farm visits also show the changes taking place across agriculture. Farmers are using new technology, improving efficiency and making investments in their operations. They are constantly adapting to new challenges while continuing to produce the crops that support communities across Illinois and beyond.

Time spent back in the district is one of the most important parts of a lawmaker's job. Away from Washington, elected officials have more opportunities to meet with the constituents they represent and hear directly about the issues affecting their communities. Farm visits are a shining example of this work. Agriculture is an industry built around daily decision making, and seeing that in practice can add another layer to the conversation. The discussions that begin during August continue into the year as lawmakers return to Washington and work through issues affecting agriculture.

Those conversations help maintain a connection between the people growing Illinois soybeans and the people making decisions that affect their operations. They also give lawmakers a better understanding of the people behind Illinois agriculture. Farmers are not only producing crops; they are managing businesses, supporting local communities and making decisions that impact the future of their operations. By bringing lawmakers to the farm, Illinois soybean farmers can show what is needed every day across the state to run a farm and explain the challenges and opportunities facing modern agriculture.

If you are interested in hosting a legislator out to your farm and are an Illinois Soybean Grower Member, please do not hesitate to reach out to our Government Relations Team at govrelations@ilsoy.org.



Congresswoman Mary Miller visiting ISA Vice Chairman Brady Holst at his farm in Augusta



SUPPORT FOR EVERY PART OF FARMING

*BUILT BY SOYBEAN FARMERS.
BACKED BY THE SOY CHECKOFF.
READY WHEN YOU NEED IT.*

Visit the Soy Farmer Support Hub to find
resources for your fields, your operation, and you.



SCAN HERE
TO CHECK IT OUT

SENT TO YOU COMPLIMENTS OF
ILLINOIS SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION

1108 Trinity Lane
Bloomington, IL 61704

NONPROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ILLINOIS SOYBEAN
GROWERS



ilsoy.org