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A weekly Cornbelt digest of marketing, economic, agronomic, and management information.

Commodity market price drivers—

- **WASDE was Thursday.** [USDA raised its projections](#) for season average prices for corn, beans and wheat, but not near the extent that fertilizer and fuel prices have climbed. In fact, there were few numbers provided by USDA’s economists to justify the increases. Global coarse grain production for 2025/26 is forecast 2.7 mil. tons higher to 1.593 bil. This month’s foreign coarse grain outlook is for larger production, greater trade, and higher ending stocks relative to last month, in the [World Ag Supply and Demand Estimates](#).

U.S. Corn Supply and Demand

Item	2024/2025 estimate	2025/2026 forecast	Change from March 10	Change from 2024/2025
Planted area (million acres)	90.9	98.8	--	7.9
Harvested area (million acres)	83.0	91.3	--	8.2
Yield (bushels per acre)	179.3	186.5	--	7.2
----- Million bushels -----				
Beginning stocks	1,763	1,551	--	-212
Production	14,892	17,021	--	2,129
Imports	22	25	--	3
Total supply	16,677	18,597	--	1,920
Feed and residual	5,454	6,200	--	746
Food, seed, and industrial	6,813	6,970	--	157
Ethanol	5,436	5,600	--	164
Domestic use	12,267	13,170	--	903
Exports	2,858	3,300	--	442
Total use	15,126	16,470	--	1,344
Ending stocks	1,551	2,127	--	576
----- Percent -----				
Stocks to use ratio	10.3	12.9	--	2.7
----- Dollars per bushel -----				
Average market price	4.24	4.15	0.05	-0.09

-- No change.

- **U.S. 2025/26 soybean supply and use projections** include increased imports and crush, and unchanged ending stocks. Soybean imports are increased 5 mil. bu. reflecting trade to date. Crush is raised 5 mil. bu., driven by higher soybean meal domestic use. The season-average soybean price is projected unchanged at \$10.20 per bu. The soybean meal price is raised \$5 to \$300 per short ton. Soybean oil price is raised at 55¢ per lb., up 2¢.

U.S. Soybeans Supply and Demand

Item	2024/2025 estimate	2025/2026 forecast	Change from March 10	Change from 2024/2025
Planted area (million acres)	87.3	81.2	--	-6.0
Harvested area (million acres)	86.2	80.4	--	-5.8
Yield (bushels per acre)	50.7	53.0	--	2.2
----- Million bushels -----				
Beginning stocks	342	325	--	-18
Production	4,374	4,262	--	-112
Imports	29	25	--	-4
Total supply	4,746	4,612	--	-134
Crush	2,445	2,610	35	165
Seed and Residual	93	112	**	18
Domestic use	2,539	2,722	35	183
Exports	1,882	1,540	-35	-342
Total use	4,421	4,262	**	-159
Ending stocks	325	350	**	25
----- Percent -----				
Stocks to use ratio	7.3	8.2	**	0.9
----- Dollars per bushel -----				
Average market price	10.00	10.30	0.10	0.30

-- No change. ** Rounds to zero.

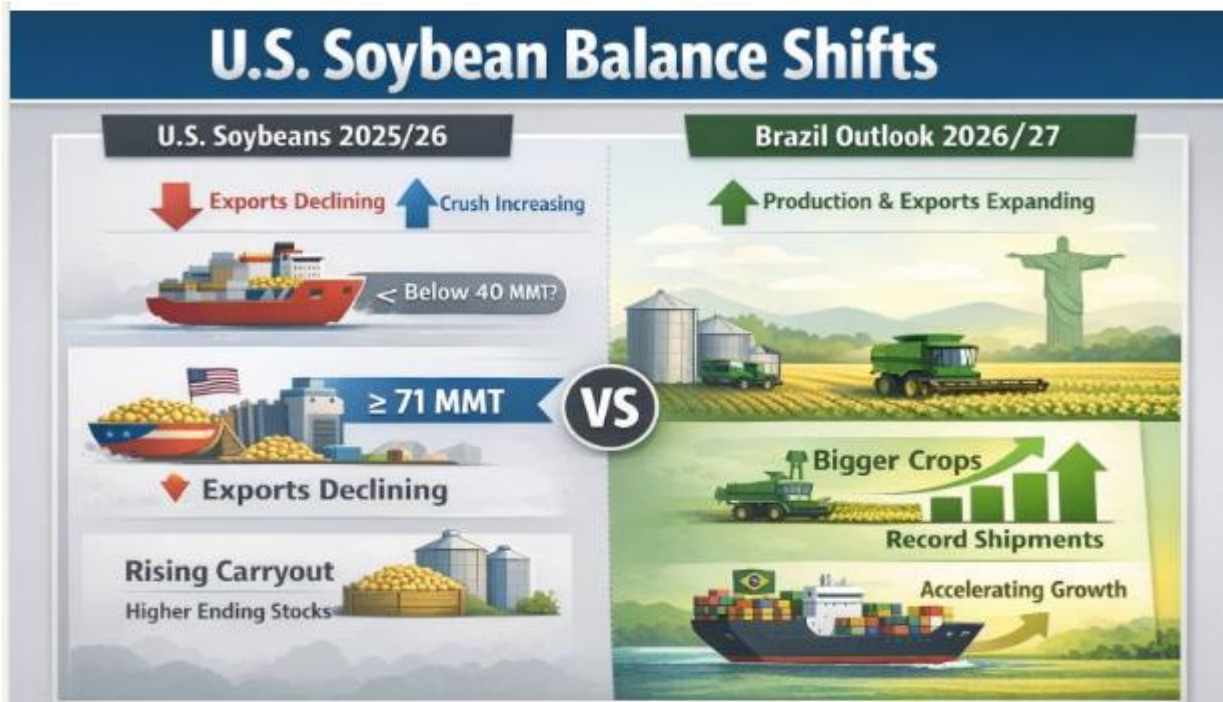
Price Summary

Item	2024/2025		2025/2026		
	Estimate	Change from March 10	Forecast	Change from March 10	Change from 2024/2025
<i>Crops and products</i>					
Wheat (\$/bu)	5.52	--	5.00	0.05	-0.52
Rice (\$/cwt)	15.10	--	12.10	--	-3.00
Corn (\$/bu)	4.24	--	4.15	0.05	-0.09
Soybeans (\$/bu)	10.00	--	10.30	0.10	0.30
Soybean oil (¢/lb)	47.59	--	59.00	4.00	11.41
Soybean meal (\$/s.t.)	300	--	310	10	10

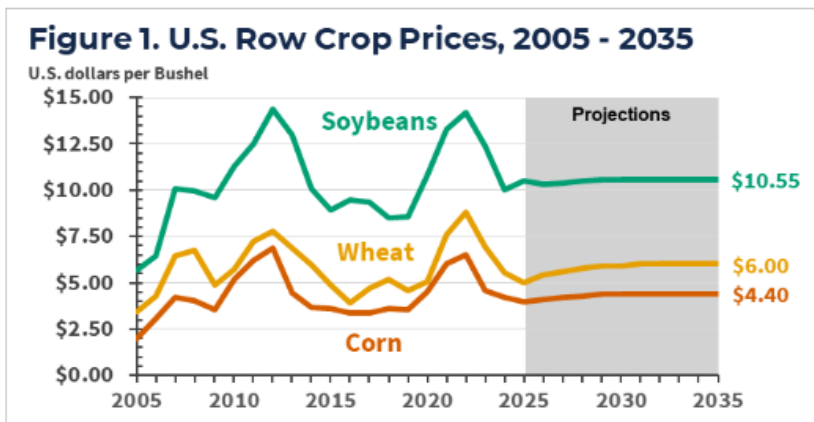
- **The April 2026 WASDE** delivered what many of us have been discussing for quite some time: a downward adjustment to U.S. soybean exports, offset by stronger domestic crush, says former USDA ag economist [Agata Kingsbury with the Foreign Agriculture Service](#).

“This shift has been building for months. Since last year, I’ve been pointing to a U.S. balance sheet that increasingly favored domestic processing over exports, with estimates placing crush at ~2.6 bil. bu. as far back as last October. Today’s WASDE formalizes what the industry has already been signaling for months. Looking ahead, I still see downside risk to soy exports, potentially slipping toward (or even below) 1.5 bil. bu., which would push carryout higher. On the crush side, there may be some incremental upside left, although at ~2.6 bil., we are already brushing up against practical capacity limits. It’s also worth noting the timing. As discussed previously, major revisions were unlikely in the January–February window ahead of the Ag Outlook Forum. Now, with actual trade flows and crush pace for 2025/26 better established, WASDE is beginning to reflect reality more closely. This raises an important question: what does this mean for 2026/27 projections? If last year’s baseline assumptions were off —particularly on exports — then forward projections will need to adjust accordingly. The logical direction remains the same: higher crush and lower exports. And, of course, no surprise on the global side as Brazilian 2025/26 soybean exports were increased to help fill the gap left by the United States. That narrative has been in place since last summer, WASDE is now catching up as harvest is (almost) finalized.

But here’s the key point: if you apply the same logic forward, the implications get even bigger. Brazil is not just filling the gap today; it is set to expand production and exports again in 2026/27 relative to the current year. And if current trends persist, we’re likely still underestimating the scale of that growth. The story isn’t just continuing, it’s accelerating.”



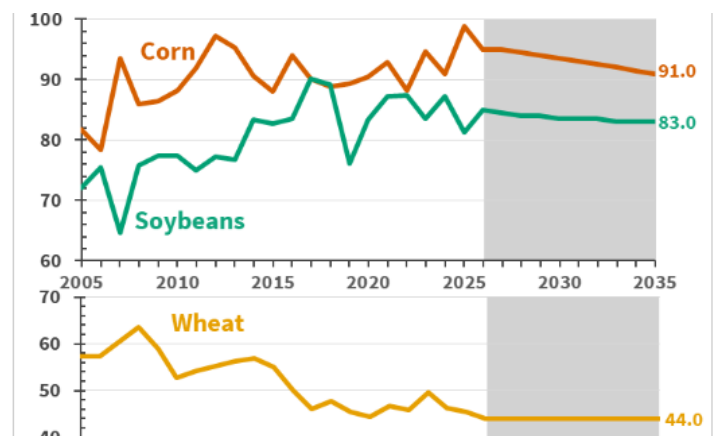
- **The crystal ball at USDA** may be a bit cloudy, but [Univ. of IL Farmdoc ag economists](#) say it is clear enough to see USDA's latest 10-year projection of acreage "projects an outright reduction in total row crop acres under price levels near their long-run averages. Long-run prices are projected at \$4.40 per bu. for corn and \$10.55 per bu. for soybeans. These projections reflect policy



assumptions in place at the time the baseline was constructed, including limited adoption of E15 (15% ethanol blend) and Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) levels. Without significant demand increases, prices will remain relatively low, and acres may exit agriculture. While temporary supply disruptions could raise prices and support acreage in the short-run, they

are unlikely to alter the longer-run trend, and continued improvements in productivity tend to reinforce the projected decline in acreage. Commodity price expectations play a role in the USDA's acreage projections. Prices for most row crops were elevated in the early 2020s due to supply disruptions and strong demand. Corn, for instance, had its farm price reach \$6.54 per bu. in the 2022/23 market year. Prices have since declined, however, and over the coming decade, prices are expected to be at levels much more consistent with average prices over the past 20 years. Figure 1 (above, left) provides historical prices back to 2005 and USDA's baseline projections through 2035 for the 8 major row crops. The longer-term projected averages are \$4.40 for corn, \$10.55 for soybeans, and \$6.00 for wheat

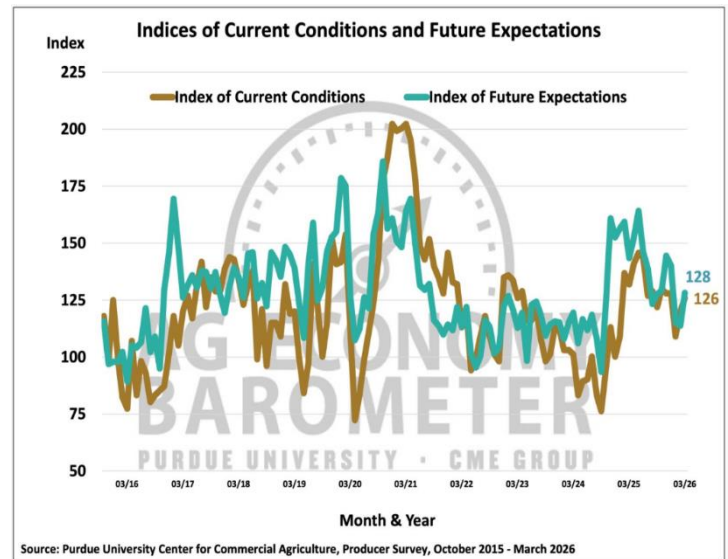
(right). Under the anticipated price conditions, total planted acreage for the 8 major row crops is projected to decline to 241.6 mil. acres in 2035/36. This is a 6 mil. acre reduction from the projected 247.6 mil. acres in 2026/27, and 8 mil. acres fewer than the longer-term average of 250 mil. row crop acres since 2005 (above). Despite acreage changes, total production for all major U.S. crops is projected to increase except sorghum, where production remains flat. For corn and soybeans, yield growth more than offsets declining acreage, resulting in continued expansion in output. For the remaining crops, yield gains combine with stable or slightly increasing acreage to support production growth without requiring reductions in planted area." →



- **What about demand growth for corn and soybeans to raise prices?** The IL Farmdoc ag economists say USDA is projecting little to no growth in demand for corn and soybeans. [They say the USDA economists are not bullish on demand](#), “For crops such as corn and soybeans, yield-driven supply growth exceeds demand growth by a wider margin, placing downward pressure on returns and contributing to reductions in planted acreage. Ethanol use is projected to remain essentially flat at around 5.6 bil. bu., as increases in ethanol exports offset weaker domestic consumption. Food, seed, and non-ethanol industrial uses are projected to decline slightly due to a downward trend in high-fructose corn syrup production, while feed use remains relatively stable. Although exports are expected to increase by about 15% over the period, total demand grows by only 3.9%. The projected modest decline in soybean acreage reflects demand growth that is positive, but not sufficient to keep pace with continued gains in supply driven by yield improvements. Domestic use expands primarily through increased processing, as crush rises alongside expanding capacity in response to growing demand for soybean oil in biofuel production. Because soybeans are jointly processed into oil and meal, sustained increases in crush also require continued growth in soybean meal demand, which is supported by gradual expansion in livestock production and contributes to modest increases in meal prices over the projection period. Beyond domestic use, U.S. soybean exports are projected to increase only moderately, as global demand growth slows relative to the previous decade and competition from Brazil limits gains in U.S. market share. In total, soybean demand is projected to grow by about 6.2% over the projection period. By contrast, holding acreage, imports, and stocks fixed at their initial projection levels, yield gains would result in a supply increase of approximately 7.9%. This smaller but still meaningful gap helps explain the more modest decline in soybean acreage relative to corn. Ethanol use is projected to remain essentially flat, providing no additional source of demand growth for corn. At the same time, biomass-based diesel demand is determined by Renewable Fuel Standard policy assumptions that differ from the finalized rule. Under baseline assumptions, biofuels do not generate sufficient demand growth to offset yield-driven increases in supply. USDA’s long-term projections indicate that, under the baseline policy and market assumptions, yield-driven growth in supply exceeds demand growth for major U.S. crops. As a result, prices are projected to stabilize at levels that place downward pressure on returns, contributing to gradual reductions in planted acreage, particularly for corn and soybeans. These projections highlight a shift in how acreage adjusts over time: rather than reallocating among crops, total planted area is projected to decline. This shift reflects projected supply and demand conditions in which increases in productivity are sufficient to meet expected use, limiting incentives for acreage expansion. This article is the first in a series examining how alternative assumptions, including ethanol blending and RFS policy, may affect long-run supply, demand, and acreage outcomes.”

Farm Economy--

- **Farmer sentiment improved in March** as the [Purdue University Ag Barometer](#) rose from 116 points in February to 127. The Future Expectations Index this month was still 12 points below last year's December index, and 16 points below last year's March index. The percentage of respondents who cited high input costs as their biggest concern increased from 44% to 46% this month. However, the percentage of respondents who think the U.S. is headed in the "right direction" and who expect land prices to be higher 5 years from now also increased.



- ✓ Approximately 18% of respondents indicated that their farm operations were better off in March than they were a year ago, while 18% expected worse financial performance. However, only 4% of survey respondents plan to increase farm machinery purchases.
- ✓ Approximately 39% of respondents expected inflation for consumers to be above 3%. 34% of respondents indicated that interest rates would be lower, while 16% said interest rates would be higher in the next 12 months.
- ✓ 12% of producers said that within the last 6 months, they had discussed leasing farmland they own for solar energy production. Lease rates varied considerably, with approximately 21% of reported lease rates above \$1,500 per acre. Fifty-six percent of respondents reported that contract offers included an escalator clause, with the most commonly reported range being 2% to 3% per year. Overall, 5% of March survey respondents said that either they or one of their landowners had signed a solar lease.
- ✓ A small percentage of farmers expect farmland values to increase. Alternative investments, net farm income, and interest rates were cited as the 3 factors having the greatest influence on farmland values.
- ✓ The percentage of producers who indicated the U.S. is headed in the "right direction" increased from 59% in February to 65% in March.
- ✓ In March, the percentage of producers who expected good times in the next 5 years was 37%, which is 12% lower than the share reported in March 2025. There continues to be a large disparity in expectations between crop and livestock producers. Approximately 31% of respondents expected good times for crop producers, while 63% expected good times for livestock producers.

Fertilizer issues and updates—

- **Fertilizer markets are currently facing renewed volatility**, with anhydrous ammonia prices drawing close attention from the agricultural sector. While recent geopolitical tensions are a significant factor, market analysts point out that the upward trend in prices began earlier. Gary Schnitkey, a Univ. of IL Farmdoc, Ag Economist, provided context on the recent price movements, "Nitrogen prices or anhydrous ammonia were edging up before the conflict, so we saw those rising, and we still don't, fortunately, have those at the \$1,200 level like the previous conflict. And by the way, the previous conflict, we were seeing nitrogen prices rise because of Hurricane Ida, well before the Ukraine-Russia event happened." Forecasts suggest farmers should prepare for continued high input costs. Depending on how global events unfold, premium pricing may persist throughout the year. His colleague Nick Paulson outlined the projections for anhydrous ammonia prices this fall. The farmdoc team is using \$860 a ton, "And that \$860 number forecast that you see there, I think we talked about that in the article. I don't want to say that's a best-case scenario, but I think there's even a pretty good chance that we'd see premiums above that, given what we saw in the two years following that Russia-Ukraine crisis. We did see some premiums above what you would maybe expect, given where corn and natural gas prices were, which is what this model uses to forecast." Paulson points to a model created by Schnitkey. It predicts anhydrous ammonia pricing. Today, model projects that fall fertilizer costs complicate what is already a difficult farm economy. Schnitkey notes that sustained high nitrogen prices will heavily impact crop profitability this fall and going into the 2027 growing season, "That's going to make a difficult decision environment because many farmers often price their ingredients then, and we'll see where prices are at that point in time. But, you know, a continuation of current prices would make the economics of growing corn in particular a bit more difficult." (WILL radio) →
- **A temporary ceasefire between the US and Iran** is unlikely to resolve ongoing global fertilizer shortages, leaving U.S. farmers facing continued supply disruptions and high input costs during the spring planting season. The 2-week truce includes a partial reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping route for fertilizer and energy products. A global analyst for the Independent Commodity Intelligence Services said the Strait's limited reopening has taken some of the "immediate panic" out of the world fertilizer markets. However, shipping remains far from normal levels, and no one knows exactly how much fertilizer will move out of the Strait in the meantime. "Even with the Strait technically open," Farm Progress reported, "cargoes may face delays and elevated war risk insurance, so normal trade resumption could take weeks or months." While the agreement eased immediate market panic, analysts say normal shipping flows could take months to recover due to lingering risks, delays and added costs. "I don't think this solves the problem overnight," market analysts noted, pointing to continued uncertainty around transit conditions and fees for vessels moving through the region. The Middle East is a major supplier of nitrogen and other fertilizers, and disruptions have already tightened global supplies. Prices remain elevated, with farmers adjusting budgets and, in some cases, planting decisions. Experts warn the situation could persist well into the growing season, keeping pressure on farm margins and adding volatility to crop markets.

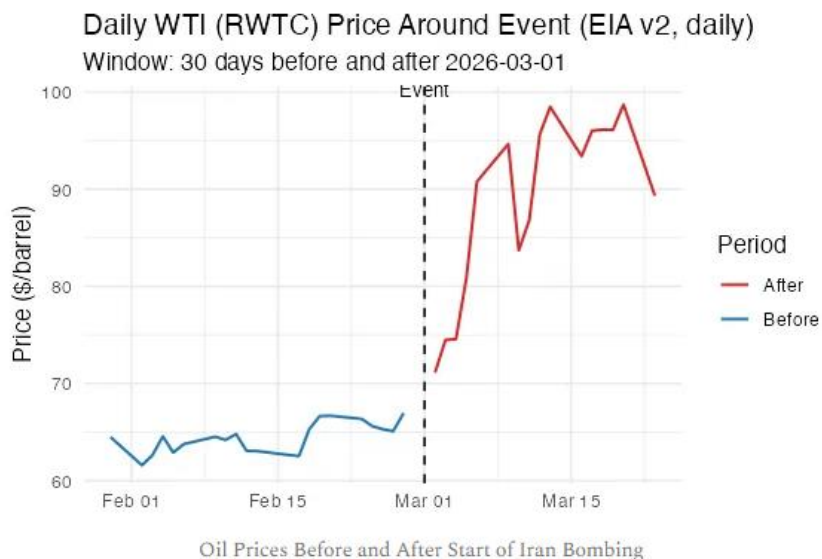
Diesel and other Fuel Issues—

- **Analysts expect volatile, but gradual easing** of fuel prices over the next several weeks if the Iran ceasefire holds, tanker traffic resumes, and production is restored. American Farm Bureau chief economist John Newton said, “All eyes are going to be on the progress over the next 2 weeks to see if the progress made was in the right direction. Obviously, the oil market moves very quickly. We saw how the oil market moved in response to this news.” In a post on X, Patrick DeHaan, head of Petroleum Analysis at GasBuddy, said diesel and gas prices could start falling by a few cents a day, with diesel lagging slightly. Newton agrees that a big drop will take time, “When the Strait of Hormuz closed, we saw the most rapid increase in diesel prices in history, which farmers are paying. So, these markets are incredibly volatile. But again, the supply and demand factors on the ground are going to be what ultimately drive the prices that consumers pay, and farmers pay.” GasBuddy’s DeHaan says that the national average gasoline price could fall below \$4 in a week or 2, and diesel below \$5.68 in weeks. But, even if the ceasefire holds, Newton and other Ag leaders agree that struggling producers will still need more federal help. (Berns Bureau, Washington)

- **The situation in Iran could cost U.S. farmers** an additional \$8 bil. in diesel expenses alone this year says [KS St. Univ. ag economist Greg Ibendahl](#). “According to federal energy data from the EIA, farmers in the U.S. collectively consume approximately 3.7 bil. gal. of diesel each year for planting, spraying, harvesting, and transporting crops. With diesel prices around \$2.12 higher per gal. than at the beginning of the year, this increase can lead to nearly \$8 bil. in added costs for the farming economy—without even considering the impact on fertilizer prices.

Oil is the fuel for the whole economy—it affects diesel, gasoline, shipping, farming, and airline tickets. When oil prices suddenly jump higher and start moving around more:

- ✓ Businesses face more risk. It’s harder for truckers, airlines, and farmers to plan costs when prices can jump a lot from one day to the next.
- ✓ Consumers feel it in gasoline and diesel. Spikier crude prices usually lead to spikier fuel prices at the pump.
- ✓ Policy makers and markets get nervous. Extra volatility tells you the market is worried about supply, shipping routes, or future conflict.



Farm Programs and Mailbox Money—

- **April 17 is the application deadline** for the [Farmer Bridge Assistance program](#). (Most farmers have applied, but if you have not, the deadline is Friday! USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is providing \$11 bil. through a 1-time bridge payment to American farmers with an additional \$1 bil. available for additional commodities. This assistance provides producers with a bridge until the benefits of the One Big Bill Act (OBBA) are available. These bridge payments are authorized under the Commodity Credit Corporation Charter Act. Pre-filled FBA applications will be available to producers who timely filed their 2025 crop acreage report for eligible commodities. Producers who have a secure Login.gov account can access and submit their pre-filled application online as well as track their application and payment status.
- ✓ Login.gov is the public's one account for government. Producers can use one account and password for secure, private access to participating government agencies, including FSA. Producers who already have a Login.gov account can work with FSA using their existing account. Visit [Login.gov](#) to create your account. For assistance in creating a Login.gov account, visit [login.gov/help](#).
- ✓ In addition to applying online, producers can also request their pre-filled FBA application from their FSA county office. Completed FBA applications can be returned to FSA county offices by one of the following methods: 1) In-person 2) Electronically using Box and One-span 3) Email 4) Fax
- ✓ Producers must have the following forms on file with FSA for the 2025 crop year:
 - [Form AD-2047](#), Customer Data Worksheet
 - [Form CCC-901](#), Member Information for Legal Entities (if applicable)
 - [Form CCC-902I](#) (if applicable), Farm Operating Plan for an Individual
 - [Form CCC-902E](#) (if applicable), Farm Operating Plan for an entity
 - [Form CCC-941](#), Average Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) Certification and Consent to Disclosure of Tax Information
 - [AD-1026](#), Highly Erodible Land Conservation, & Wetland Conservation Certification
 - [SF-3881](#), ACH Vendor/ Miscellaneous Payment Enrollment Form (Direct Deposit)
- ✓ Most producers, especially those who have previously participated in FSA programs, will likely have these forms on file. However, those who are uncertain and want to confirm the status of their forms, can contact their local FSA county office. Producers have until April 17, 2026, to submit their completed application. Only one application is required for all FBA eligible commodities nationwide.
- ✓ [Payment calculator](#)
- ✓ [Farmer Bridge Assistance Dashboard](#)
- ✓ To be eligible, producers must meet be actively engaged in farming, have risk and interest in the eligible planted commodity, and reported eligible acres for the 2025 crop year by Dec. 19, 2025

Conservation, Environment, and Carbon—

- **A decade of data** from the Precision Conservation Management program showed that farmers are highly consistent in their practices from year to year, and this consistency impacts agricultural conservation efforts. IL Corn Growers Assn. Water Quality Specialist Laura Gentry says that while farming practices vary widely from one operation to the next, individual farmers rarely deviate once they find a system that works. Gentry says this operational consistency dictates how advocates must approach conservation, "What it means is that when you ask a farmer to do something differently, you'd better have a good reason to ask them to do it. You'd better be able to prove to them that it could be a good management change for them. And asking them, we do this all the time, we say, 'Just do it on one field, just try this on one field.' Especially for nitrogen management, that is a very unlikely thing. It seems that they are not very likely to do that." Again, Gentry notes, farmers are unlikely to test a new nitrogen management strategy on a single field. However, she says they remain open to evaluating other specific conservation practices on a limited basis, "They will look at cover crops from field to field. We might not say try this on one field for nitrogen management, we could say it for cover crops, and they would be more likely to try that." Gentry and Univ. of IL Farmdoc ag economist Gary Schmitkey outline these findings and discuss current nitrogen pricing during a [free Farmdoc webinar](#).

Mark Your Calendar! --

- **Virtual cover crop meeting April 15.** An informal space to exchange cover crop ideas and troubleshoot challenges with fellow farmers. [Details and registration](#).
- **Extension's Crop Management Conference** will be on-line this year, and available until May 31, with research updates to improve productivity and output of crop science experts. Full event details and registration are available at go.illinois.edu/CMC. CEU's available.
- **Modern Approaches to conservation drainage design** will be discussed May 6-7 at Danville, with a focus on drainage water management, saturated buffers, and bioreactors. Watch for details on this event which offers practical guidance on key edge-of-field practices and how to assess site suitability across real-world conditions. [Details](#).

Understanding the rapidly changing agricultural industry can be a daunting task. At Heartland Bank, our team of ag specialists will work with you to meet the goals of your farming operation. With over 160 combined years of agricultural service experience, we are focused on providing outstanding service and results throughout Central and Northern Illinois. Whether it's farmland real estate, operating and equipment loans, or farm management expertise, we have the professionals who you can trust to improve your farmland's productivity and asset value. Contact one of our knowledgeable experts today at 309-661-3276 or toll free at 1-833-797-FARM (3276). *This newsletter is provided as an informational source by Heartland Bank and Trust Company and is not intended to be and should not be treated as advice.*