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

Commodity market price drivers—

- **The market has turned from bearish to bullish**, say commodity analysts, at least for the time being. When the CME closed on Friday afternoon, one long term market analyst and commodity advisor observed, "Green across the board with big corn harvest week. Let's hold a "Bear Wake." That was based on the net gains for contracts last week across the 5 prime commodities on the grain trading floor.

Funds net buyers of CBOT soy, corn and wheat, traders say

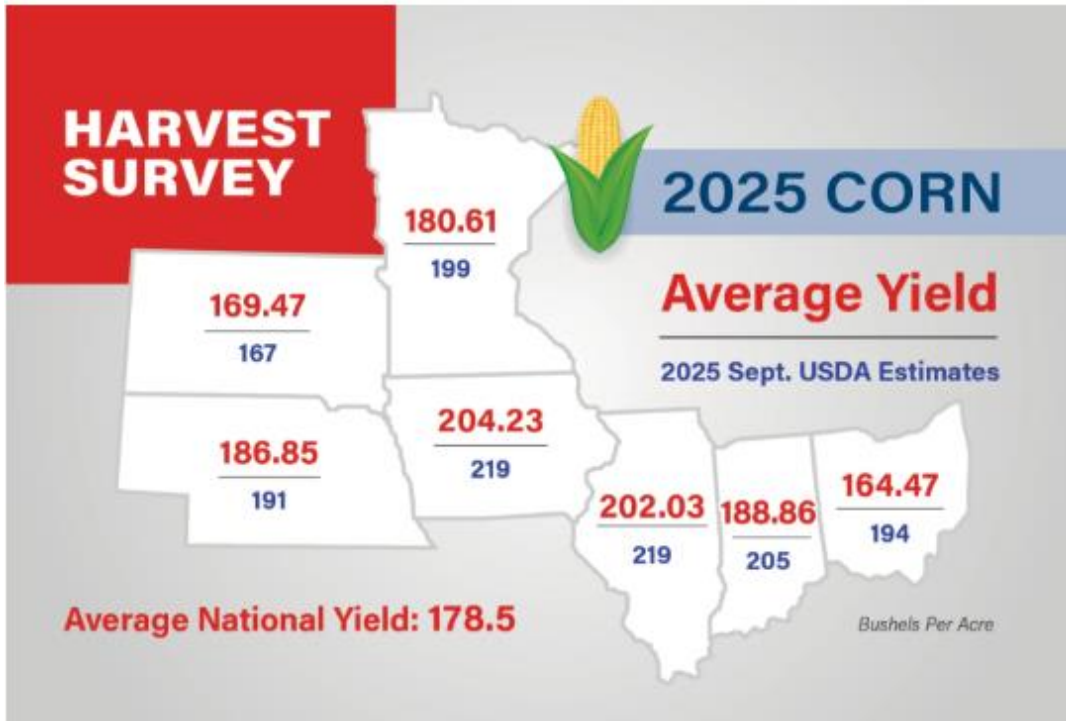
Reuters News | less than a minute ago



CHICAGO, Oct 17 (Reuters) - The table below shows net buying or selling of Chicago Board of Trade grain futures contracts by commodity funds, based on the average of estimates from sources COMFUND/CBT.

	Corn	Soybeans	Wheat	Soymeal	Soyoil
October 17	+2,500	+6,500	+500	+3,500	+1,500
October 16	+12,500	+3,500	+2,000	+1,000	+4,000
October 15	+11,000	+4,000	+500	+1,000	+1,000
October 14	+5,500	+2,000	+1,500	+2,000	0

- **Without the USDA crop enumerators in the field**, farmers, grain traders, processors, and many others are uncertain of the size of the 2025 crop, and its subsequent value. Taking a shot at a speculative guess, based on some farmers' thoughts, [Farm Journal](#) tallied the guesses of 1,100 farmers. "The biggest takeaway is that corn yields are estimated to be down compared with USDA's September estimates in 6 of the 7 Pro Farmer Crop Tour states. Due to disease pressure and

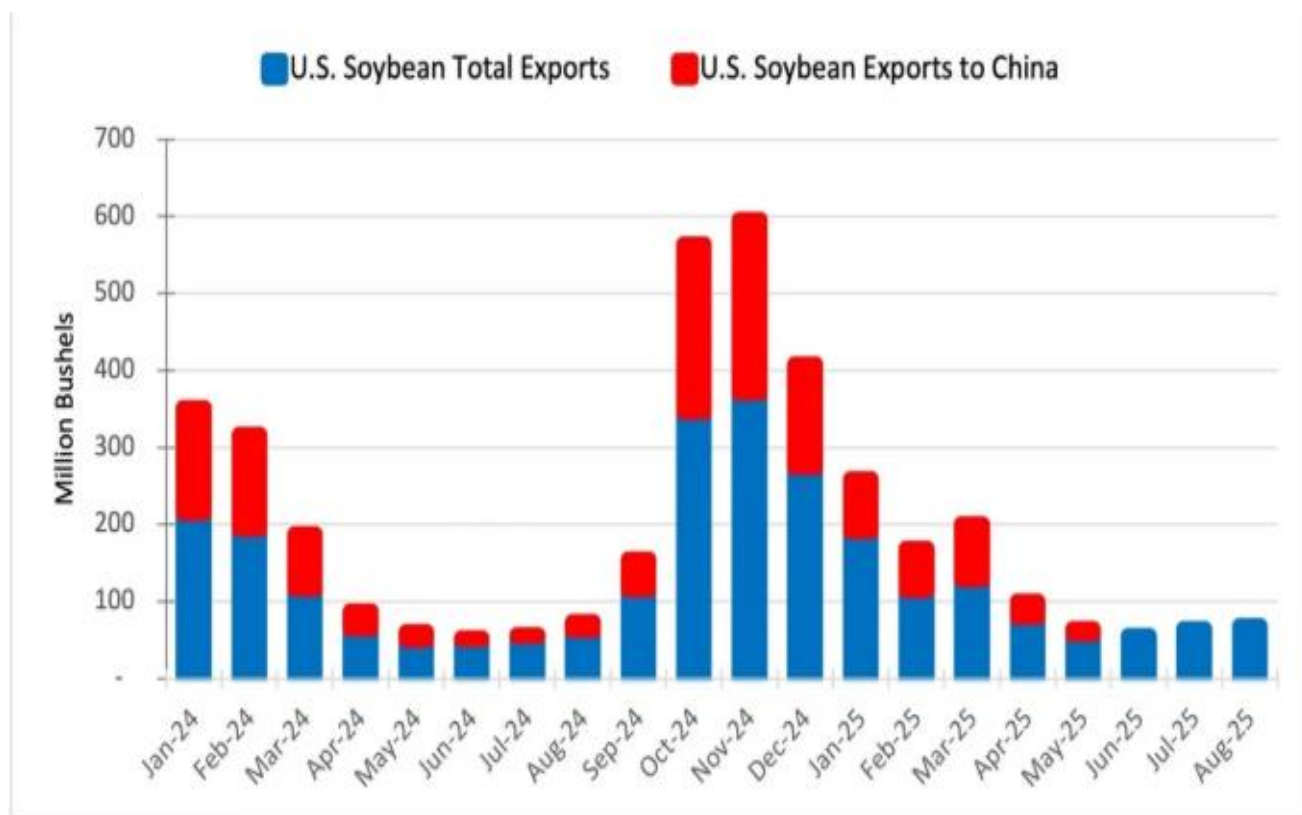


dryness, the 2025 national corn yield could be lower than the 2024 average of 179.3 bu. As of mid-October, yields are steady or lower for 74% of the respondents across the Crop Tour states, a far cry from higher production estimates for each state in USDA's September Crop Production Report. If production does shrink, as the

Farm Journal survey indicates, the national average yield could fall to 178.5 bu. per acre, well below the 186.7 in the USDA September survey. An estimate of the soybean yield was not tallied. Farm Journal staff asked how much of the crop had been harvested. The respondents to the survey guessed 43% for corn and 79% for soybeans. Over 1/3 of the respondents expressed concerns about the shortage of storage, particularly in the Northern Plains.

- **The federal government shutdown** has continued, resulting in another week without the USDA publishing a Crop Progress report. According to a Reuters poll of 10 analysts, the U.S. corn harvesting progress lagged behind last year's pace. On average, the analysts estimated that 44% of the U.S. corn crop had been harvested as of Sunday, with estimates ranging from 35% to 55% for corn. Here's a closer look at the corn crop progress through the perspective of local agronomists. In IA, Eric Wilson, Wyffels agronomy manager, shared that corn harvest is moving quickly, with some farmers in his area nearing the end of corn harvest. Phil Krieg, agronomy service representative for Syngenta Crop Protection in IL, shared that corn harvest is 60% complete. Travis Gustafson, agronomic service representative for Syngenta Crop Protection in NE, estimated that only 10–15% of corn has been harvested.

- **Prompted by the Trump trade war launched in 2018** and continued again in his second term, [China figured out how to live without our grain](#). The questions were these: For how long and at what price? The theory has been that China stockpiled soybeans following the 2024 election in anticipation of the trade war resuming. The unknown is the size of the stockpile, which is critical to understanding how long China could hold out in trade agreement negotiations. For U.S. farmers, the plan was to endure short-term pain for long-term gain. With China now making a massive soybean purchase from Argentina, adding to significant buys from Brazil and none from the U.S., IA farmer Matthew Kruse believes that country's leaders answered that question: China isn't relying on its stockpile. It has plenty of sourcing opportunities. The Argentine deal, Kruse says in an [Ag Marketing IQ video](#), "looks like just another example of China going out of their way to avoid U.S. soybean purchases—or other ag purchases from the United States." With last week's buy of 257 mil. bu. from Argentina—a solid quarter of that country's soybean and soybean meal production—on top of 440 mil. bu. from Brazil this calendar year (as of August), chances of China making additional U.S. purchases are falling. China made the buy from Argentina in just 3 days following that country's move to cut its export tax on soybeans and other agricultural products. When we look at production cost and commodity grain prices around the world, it's obvious U.S. farmers aren't the only ones fighting to make a profit on their production. Kruse points out that China is "waiting in the wings" for those low-price deals



- **For the seventh time in 2025**, the overall [Creighton Univ. Rural Mainstreet Index](#) (RMI) sank below growth neutral 50.0, according to the monthly survey of bank CEOs in rural areas of a 10-state region dependent on agriculture and/or energy. The region's overall reading for September fell to 38.5 from 48.1 in August. The index ranges between 0 and 100, with a reading of 50.0 representing growth neutral. Survey Director Ernie Goss said, "Weak agriculture commodity prices for grain producers continue to dampen economic activity in the 10-state region. Almost 3 of 4 bank CEOs and chief loan officers indicated that falling agriculture commodity prices represented the greatest threat to banking operations over the next 12 months." Approximately 3 of 4 bank CEOs reported that tariff increases have had a negative impact on farm operations. In IL, "The state's September Rural Mainstreet Index (RMI) dropped to 24.8 from 38.8 in August. The farmland price index for September increased to 45.3 from 38.6 in August. The state's new hiring index for September fell to 36.8 from 49.6 in August. According to USDA 2024 data, IL produced \$22.5 bil. of farm commodities, accounting for 4.4% of the U.S. total. The top 2 commodities and their U.S. shares were corn at 15.2% and soybeans at 16.3%."

Table 2: The Rural Mainstreet Economy, September 2025				
	Percentage of Bankers Reporting			
	A Recession	An Economic Slowdown		An Expansion
The U.S. economy is currently in:	3.8%	92.2%		4.0%
	Percentage of Bankers Reporting			
	Labor Shortages	Regulatory Costs	Farm Loan Defaults	Falling Farm Commodity Prices
What represents the greatest threat to regional banking operations over the next 12 months?	7.6%	7.8%	11.5%	73.1%
	Percentage of Bankers Reporting			
	Significant Negative	Modest Negative	Little or No Impact	Modest Positive Impact
What has been the impact of the 2025 tariffs on agriculture operations?	26.9%	46.4%	23.1%	3.6%

- **Economic analysts like CoBank** say recent economic data has generally been more positive in nature, tempering expectations for significant interest rate cuts before the end of the year. A new report from CoBank's Knowledge Exchange said the most likely scenario is an additional 4 or 5 cuts of 25 basis points through 2026, leaving the overnight rate around 3% by the end of next year. Tariff policy uncertainty, the sharp drop in immigration, and a massive surge in AI investments have made interpreting traditional economic reports more difficult. The CoBank report suggests sharp swings in monthly import volumes, a flatter working-age population growth, and a soaring stock market make it more difficult to gauge how "Main Street" America is doing economically. "The intense politicization of attitudes has rendered longstanding public sentiment surveys erratic and unhelpful in gauging actual economic conditions," said Rob Fox, vice president of the Knowledge Exchange.

Bailout Issues—

- **US farmers have not received any of the funding** promised by the White House. And farmers were “perturbed” when they learned \$20 bil. was quickly sent to Argentina, and they will get angrier when they learn Argentina is going to get another \$20 bil. from US sources. The [news service Axios](#) is reporting, “The U.S. is working on a multibillion-dollar rescue plan for [Argentina](#) funded by the private sector, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent (left) told a group of



reporters. Bessent said the \$20 bil. facility — aimed at shoring up Argentina's debt market — would work alongside the Trump administration's measures announced last week. It would bring support for Argentina from, or arranged by, the [U.S. to roughly \\$40 bil.](#) “We've actually been working on it for weeks,” Bessent told a roundtable of reporters at the Treasury Department. “It is a private sector solution to

Argentina's upcoming debt payments,” Bessent added. “Many banks are interested in it, and many sovereign funds have expressed interest in it,” Bessent said. News of the plan comes after Bessent announced last week that Treasury had agreed on a \$20 bil. currency swap framework with Argentina's central bank. Bessent said on Wednesday that the U.S. had bought more Argentine pesos this morning. The peso took a hit last month after President Javier Milei's party lost key local elections, raising doubts among investors about his economic program.”

- **President Donald Trump has for weeks** been talking about providing a bailout for America's farmers harmed by his tariff policies, especially soybean farmers whose top buyer, China, [hasn't bought any U.S. soybeans](#) since at least May. Multiple figures have been tossed around for the bailout, possibly between \$10 bil. and \$14 bil., but no firm plans reportedly have been set. Wondering who and which farming sectors would benefit from the bailout, [Fox Business host Stuart Varney asked Secretary of Agriculture Rollins](#) on Thursday, “Will every farmer get some money in this bailout? All of them? Or is it targeted to one group of farmers?” Her answer reflected politics more than policy. Obviously,” Secretary Rollins replied, “the president remains very focused on, as he has said, all along — he calls them ‘his farmers,’ but those who have been with him for a really long time, from the very beginning.” Asked about the \$20 bil. to \$40 bil. bailout President Trump has reportedly decided to give to Argentina, a direct competitor of America's soybean farmers, Secretary Rollins [said](#): “The president's focus remains 100% on America first.” Last week, Trump indicated he had a plan to reduce the price of beef for US consumers. Over the weekend he said, “We would buy some beef from Argentina,” he told reporters aboard Air Force One during a flight from Florida to Washington. “If we do that, that will bring our beef prices down.” Trump has been working to help [Argentina bolster its collapsing currency](#) with a \$20 bil. credit swap line and additional financing from sovereign funds and the private sector ahead of midterm elections for his close ally, President Javier Milei. An additional \$20 bil. is being directed to Argentina for a bigger bailout, and the US will get Argentine beef in return.

Conservation, Environment, Carbon—

- **It's time to unleash American ethanol in the maritime fuel market.** Ethanol is low-cost, broadly available, and reduces emissions by 60%+ says Geoff Cooper, head of the Renewable Fuels Assn. "[Diplomats from around the world met](#) last week to vote on whether to adopt a new set of international regulations focused on reducing GHG emissions from oceangoing ships. And whether the interests of U.S. fuel producers, farmers, and shippers are at the table—or on the menu—remains to be seen. the ships that would be subject to the IMO regulations typically consume roughly 70–80 bil. gals of fuel per year worldwide. Even if U.S. ethanol captured just 5% of the global maritime fuel market, it would equate to a game-changing demand boost of 4–5 bil. gals., while simultaneously increasing corn demand by 1.5 bil. bu. or more. Just imagine the economic impact that this sort of new demand would have on the rural communities where ethanol is produced and corn is grown!" says RFA's Geoff Cooper. →
- **"Absolutely not!" says Donald Trump.** [The Trump administration unequivocally rejected the proposal](#) to integrate biofuels into shipping and has threatened to retaliate if nations support it, setting the stage for a fight over the climate deal. An international vote to formally approve cutting maritime [emissions](#) was delayed by a year on Friday, [in a victory for the Trump White House](#), which opposes the carbon-cutting plan. The London-based International Maritime Organization (IMO), which is the shipping body of the United Nations, voted in April for a global pricing system to help curb greenhouse gases. Delegates instead voted on a hastily arranged resolution to postpone proceedings, which passed by 57 votes to 49, to appease Donald Trump. "I am outraged that the International Maritime Organization is voting to pass a global Carbon Tax," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform Thursday. "The United States will NOT stand for this Global Green New Scam Tax on Shipping." Shipping accounts for nearly 3% of global greenhouse gas emissions, according to the IMO, while the CO2 pricing plan should encourage the sector to use less polluting fuels. →
- **Ethanol bolstered growth in U.S. corn demand** from the mid-1990s through 2010, but outdated regulations are preventing further progress, contends [National Corn Growers economist Krista Swanson](#). "A stable blend rate isn't enough to maintain U.S. domestic ethanol use as motor gas declines in the future. The last thing corn growers need is a declining domestic demand segment that further depresses already below-breakeven market prices. Alternatively, clearing hurdles for higher ethanol blends supports American corn growers with market-driven price support for homegrown biofuel. A 1% increase in the national average blend rate uses 486 mil. bu. more corn in domestic ethanol, a 5% blend rate increases uses 2.4 bil. bu. more corn in ethanol. This is critical point for farmers. With policy change to allow year-round E15 and higher ethanol blends, we can unlock expanded use for American corn, strengthen rural economies, and provide consumers with a reliable, lower-emissions, cost-effective energy source. Clearing the hurdles for higher blends of ethanol provides potential for market-driven demand for homegrown corn. This is a solution farmers need now. Full implementation of E15 lays the groundwork for future solutions. Ethanol isn't just a solution for farmers. It's an American-made high-performance biofuel that lowers transportation costs, reduces emissions, and [supports the economy](#)."

Agronomy—

- **If you have not had any rain for a couple months**, agronomist Howard Brown, retired from Illini FS, now Sunrise FS, Urbana, says don't expect your soil to provide an accurate soil test. "The lack of rainfall will likely necessitate adjustments to some management practices due to the altered soil environment. Here are management changes to consider:
Defer soil testing to spring or the fall of 2026.
 - ✓ Dry soil makes it difficult to consistently sample the expected depth with the soil probe, often resulting in less than seven inches. A shallow sampling depth can lead to higher soil test results that are not representative of the typical seven-inch depth.
 - ✓ Dry soil can alter soil test results. Soil pH can be depressed by as much as 0.5 units due to soluble salts accumulating in the sampled zone. Dry soil conditions may cause clay layers to collapse, resulting in a lower K Test.
 - ✓ It will take several rains over time to recharge the soil to what is considered "normal". With cold weather soon to arrive, deferring sample collection to Spring or Fall, 2026, is advised. Consider collecting soil samples in the Spring if fertilizers are applied in the Fall, and in the Fall if fertilizers are applied in the Spring. This allows plenty of time to create a nutrient management plan. →
- **And dry soils will not satisfactorily accommodate** anhydrous ammonia, says agronomist Howard Brown. "Anhydrous ammonia is applied as a liquid under pressure. The applied liquid quickly expands into a gas until it combines with water, forming ammonium-N, which is considered stable. Free ammonia migrates through the soil until it either finds water or the soil surface, where it can escape as a gas. Dry soil dramatically increases resistance to tillage equipment, including anhydrous ammonia knives. Be prepared for an increase in tool bar repairs and possibly knife replacement before the end of the application season. Check the knife and tube for excessive wear before starting an application. It is more efficient and safer to check equipment each morning for wear or breakage rather than having a breakdown in the middle of a large field. Inspect welds in high-stress areas for cracks or breaks."
- **If fertilizer must be reduced**, can a cover crop recycle some to replace what farmers are not wanting to buy and apply? [For the fertilizer quandary](#), one solution is to consider planting some cover crops this fall, recommends David Hula, [reigning world corn yield record holder](#). "Nitrogen, potash, boron, sulfur... those are mobile nutrients, so if you plant a cover crop it's going to pick up those nutrients, and then when you kill that cover crop, you can recycle that residue that was left over, or the residual nutrients that were left over," explains Hula. Cover crops can scavenge for nutrients from previous crops, store them and then release them for use the following season – a process that can help reduce the need for synthetic fertilizers. Hula adds that corn and soybean growers don't need to be using no-till on the farm to benefit. "You can strip-till into those cover crops, or early in the spring you can work the cover crops in to get the benefits," he says. [Randy Dowdy](#) says one of the benefits he's seen is that microbial activity likes to colonize around a living root mass.

- **The top Senate Republican is privately warning the White House** that American farmers — a key GOP constituency — will continue to suffer if the Trump administration doesn't reopen FSA offices amid the government shutdown. Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-SD, (left) is quietly

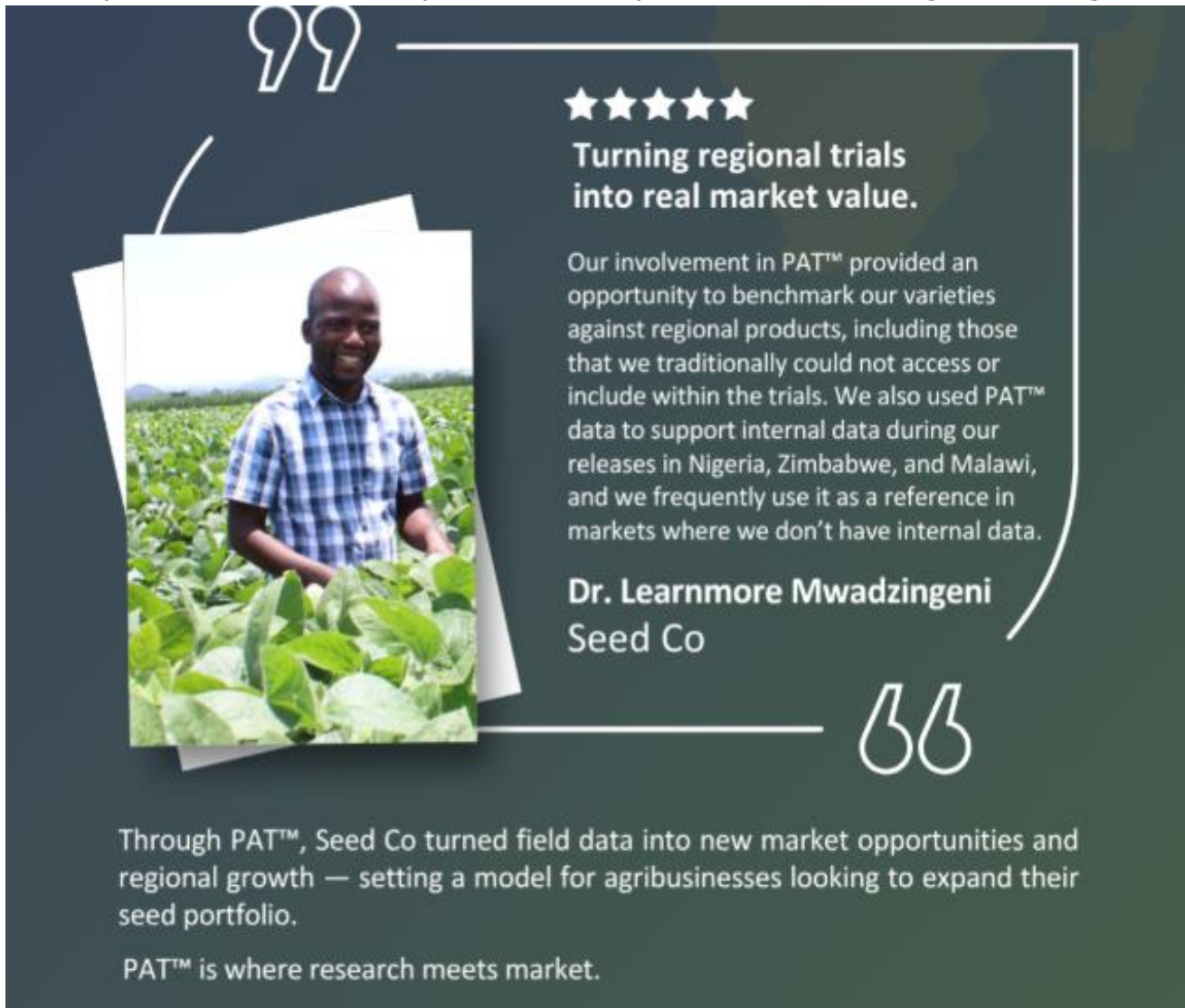


pressing the administration officials to let farmers continue to access Marketing Assistance Loans, which allow them to meet cash flow needs during harvest season and as they make planting decisions for next year, according to 4 people with direct knowledge of the conversations, including 2 Trump officials. Politico reports that it would also require USDA to reopen thousands of shuttered county Farm Service Agency offices across the country to facilitate those loans. So far, administration officials say they have no plans to shift other money around for the agriculture loans like they've done with troop pay and other priorities. "We're working that issue, and I hope to get an answer soon," Thune said in a brief interview Thursday.

- **The government shutdown is hitting the nation's farmers** and ranchers in multiple ways. [Politico points out that the shutdown is stalling the delivery of farm loans](#), the release of critical market reports, and the administration's plan for emergency assistance for farmers. Row-crop producers who grow corn, wheat, and soybeans have been weathering uncertainty for months, including tariff troubles and high input costs for things like machinery and fertilizer. Politico said every day the government isn't open adds to the anxiety in farm country, especially as growers are harvesting crops and having to pay bills and their banks. The risks of farm bankruptcies continue to climb this year. A New York Times report said the shutdown is interfering with planning for next year as farmers have to make decisions about what's ahead in 2026. Those plans depend on information only the federal government can provide, including market data and available loans.
- **The farm crisis hasn't been forgotten** during the federal government shutdown...and some lawmakers are sounding the alarm louder than ever, "American agriculture is in serious trouble, and Congress must act now with short-term assistance." The government shutdown has slowed that effort, and Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-IA, says it has added to farmers' plight, "Farmers had to do business at the FSA offices, and they can't get it done." Because FSA offices are closed coast-to-coast. On another issue, Sen. Grassley sees biofuels as a partial solution to the China soybean issue. Grassley, R-IA, is not optimistic that the upcoming meeting between President Trump and China's Xi Jinping will bear fruit on soybeans. And Grassley is urging the president to back his bipartisan year-round E15 legislation, "Until we get the legislation passed, we're never going to get the investment by retailers to make sure the E15 pumps can be equipped to put out E15 on a regular basis."

And now a short break for this message—

- **Within hours of the Trump administration taking office**, the Soybean Innovation Lab (SIL) at the Univ. of IL was shuttered and its staff and assets in central Africa were eliminated as the US Agency for International Development (USAID) was defunded. An international benefactor appeared and SIL Director Pete Goldsmith feverishly salvaged all that was possible. [And he was quite successful!](#) As the link indicates, the Soybean Innovation Lab is back in business, with the release of 3 soybean varieties from the Pan-African Variety Trials that have been bred for central African production, and the first private-sector soybean varieties ever registered in Uganda.



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Dr. Learnmore Mwadzingeni
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The overall purpose is to introduce soybeans, meal, oil, and protein to the exploding population in the African market, which will result in major import demand for US soybeans, something which DOGE employees could not perceive when US AID and the Univ. of IL Soybean Innovation Lab were terminated in January, before it was revived with private investment funding.

Mark Your Calendar! --

- **The 2025 Farm Assets Conference** is scheduled for Friday, December 12 at the Agri-Center, on Carroll Drive, off Route 9 on the west side of Bloomington. The program starts at 8:00 a.m. Registration for 2025 is \$80 per person through noon December 8 and \$100 thereafter. [Register here](#) for Farm Assets Conference details.
- **The Illinois Farm Economics Summit** addresses current economic conditions and policy issues impacting global, US, and IL agriculture. They include Farmdoc presentations, discussion, and Q&A on grain and livestock markets, farm financials and profitability, farm and risk management, farmland values and leasing, farm policy, and more. Preregistration for the 2025 IFES meetings is \$80 per person through December 7th. Registration is \$100 per person beginning December 8th. Walk-in registrations will be accepted the day of the meetings if space allows but cannot be guaranteed. Register for [Dekalb](#), [Peoria](#), [Mt. Vernon](#).
- **The 2026 IL Soybean Summit** will be Jan. 27-28 at the I-Hotel in Champaign. [There are a multitude of reservation choices here](#). The event will be all day Tuesday, a dinner event for ISA members Tuesday night, and the morning of Wednesday.
- **AgMarket.Net** conference, Farming for Profit not Price, will be Feb 1-2 in Nashville, TN. It is designed to educate and provide tools and resources we have for farmers and producers across the country. [Details, speakers, topics, and registration are here](#).
- **A podcast about conservation funding in IL** is available for viewing. [Eliot Clay](#), executive director of the Association of IL Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and [Andrew Larson](#), director of government relations and strategy at the Illinois Soybean Association, joins the Field Advisor podcast to talk about the critical role of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) in IL. View [the podcast here](#).

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).

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