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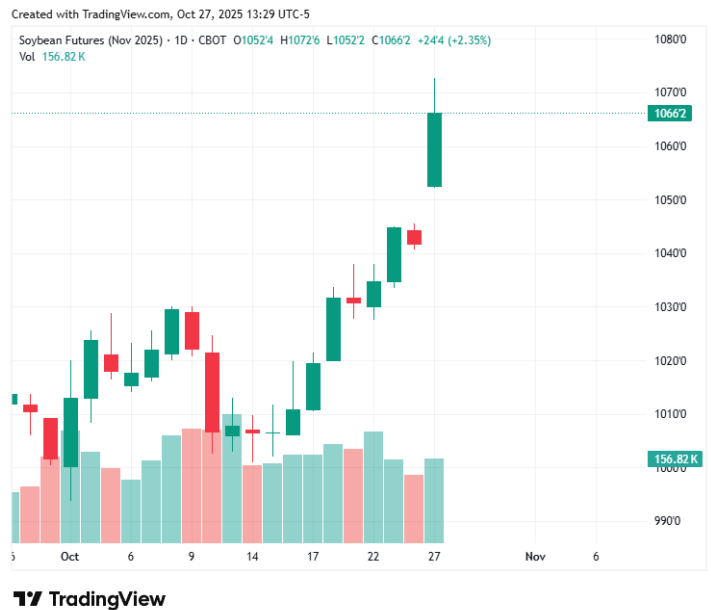
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A weekly Cornbelt digest of marketing, economic, agronomic, and management information.

Commodity market price drivers—

- **Growers, traders, and others** in the US world of soybeans are beginning to get their hopes up that something positive will happen Thursday. Presidents Trump and Xi are scheduled to meet in a summit conference in South Korea, with a myriad of issues on the discussion agenda. US exports of soybeans to China is one of those issues. The soybean options market began to get bullish Friday afternoon. And American Soybean Assn. Pres. Caleb Ragland expressed bullishness Sunday. "ASA is encouraged by Secretary Bessent's comments that trade talks with China are productive and include U.S. soybeans. Signals of purchase commitments are a positive step, and we look forward to learning more details later this week," said Ragland. "We appreciate the White House and trade negotiators keeping U.S. soybeans at the center of discussions and are hopeful Thursday's meeting between President Trump and President Xi will result in a trade deal that delivers results for our farmers." US Treasury Secretary Bessent and Trade Ambassador Greer over the weekend met with Chinese Vice Premier He and Chinese Trade chief Li. "I think we have a very successful framework for the leaders to discuss on Thursday," Bessent told reporters. He said Trump and Xi would discuss soybeans and agricultural purchases from American farmers, more balanced trade and resolving the U.S. fentanyl crisis, which was the basis of 20% U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods. Nov soybeans gapped higher at Sunday night's open climbing into June highs with old crop closing 15 to 25¢ higher. Old corn closed 4-7¢ higher.



- **Sunday (10/26)** Ambassador Jamieson Greer issued the following statement on securing Agreements on Reciprocal Trade with Malaysia and Cambodia and reaching Frameworks for Agreements on Reciprocal Trade with Thailand and Vietnam.
 - ✓ **Malaysia** has committed to provide significant preferential market access for U.S. products exported to Malaysia across goods sectors, dairy, horticultural products, poultry, pork, rice, and fuel ethanol, which will create commercially meaningful market access opportunities for a significant range of U.S. exports. Malaysia has committed to address a range of non-tariff barriers, including through: (1) recognition of the U.S. food safety system for U.S. meat, poultry, and dairy products; (2) streamlined halal certification of U.S. food and agricultural products; (3) opening market access for U.S. sorghum to Malaysia; and (4) adoption of regionalization approaches to facilitate U.S. exports of pork and poultry.
 - ✓ **Cambodia** has eliminated tariffs on 100% of U.S. products exported to Cambodia, creating commercially meaningful market access opportunities for the full range of U.S. exports. Cambodia has committed to address and prevent barriers to U.S. agricultural exports in the Cambodian market, including by recognizing U.S. regulatory oversight and accepting certificates issued by U.S. regulatory authorities, as well as recognizing U.S. sanitary and phytosanitary measures and other measures for food and agricultural products.
 - ✓ **Thailand** will eliminate tariffs on 99% of goods, covering a full range of U.S. industrial and food and agricultural products. Thailand will address and prevent barriers to U.S. food and agricultural products in the Thai market, including by: (1) expediting access for U.S. Food Safety and Inspection Service-certified meat and poultry products; (2) addressing trade irritants and ensure requirements imposed on U.S. horticultural products, including for distiller dried grains with solubles, are science- and risk-based; and (3) accepting currently agreed certificates issued by U.S. regulatory authorities. The Agreement will enable U.S. farmers, ranchers, fishers, and manufacturers, and small businesses to increase U.S. exports, and expand business opportunities, and it will help reduce the goods trade deficit with Thailand.
 - ✓ **Viet Nam** will provide preferential market access for U.S. exports by removing tariffs on almost all goods, including food and agricultural products, which will create commercially meaningful market access opportunities for the full range of U.S. exports. The United States and Viet Nam will address and prevent barriers to U.S. agricultural products in the Vietnamese market, including with regard to U.S. regulatory oversight, and Viet Nam continuing to accept certificates issued by U.S. regulatory authorities, facilitate trade in agricultural products, and maintain access for U.S. agricultural goods, including for specialty cheeses and meats. Viet Nam has already improved access for U.S. peaches and nectarines through its agreement to a systems approach.

Cattlemen, the White House, and Argentina—

- **President Donald Trump** said [in a social media post Wednesday](#) that American cattle ranchers "have to get their prices down," and that the tariffs he's enacted are "the only reason they are doing so well, for the first time in decades. If it weren't for me, they would be doing just as they've done for the past 20 years — Terrible!" the post continued, adding "It would be nice if they would understand that, but they also have to get their prices down, because the consumer is a very big factor in my thinking, also!" "We would buy some beef from Argentina," Trump told reporters on Air Force One. "If we do that, that will bring our beef prices down, because our groceries are down, our energy prices are down. ... The one thing that's kept up is beef, and if we buy some beef now, I'm not talking about that much from Argentina. That would help Argentina, which we consider a very good country, a very good ally in a place."
- **The White House plan** to lower beef prices by importing millions of pounds of Argentine beef is not a practical economic formula says the beef industry, and Bloomberg is reporting "The US plans to increase the tariff-rate quota for Argentina to 80,000 metric tons of beef — effectively quadrupling the amount exempt from 26.4% tariffs, a White House official said later Wednesday," [Bloomberg reported](#). "The Agriculture Department also said it would seek to expedite regulatory reforms and increase processing capacity to lessen the impact on US farmers." Some ranchers called Trump's moves a "gut punch" that will only hurt good cattle prices.
- **Josh St. Peters, Executive Director of the IL Beef Association** says the plan has already had a bearish impact on cattle prices and will eventually have negligible impact on consumer beef prices. He said a consumer will only save the value of a quarter pound hamburger patty per year when Argentine beef eventually reaches the grocery store meat case. [His comments are in this short video.](#)
- **Wes Hornback of Monticello, IL, raises cattle**, then processes the beef and sells it locally to consumers at his Sage City Market in Monticello. And he says the effort to import Argentine beef to drive down consumer beef prices is not friendly to beef producers on both ends of his business. [His comments are in this short video.](#)
- **Mark McHargue, the president of the NE Farm Bureau**, also criticized the potential agreement with Argentina. "Unfortunately, we have an administration that thinks they have to lower the price of beef," McHargue posted on X. "NE Farm Bureau is adamantly opposed to anything that would artificially lower the price of beef." Sen. Deb Fisher, R-NE, posted on X Tuesday, "Bottom line: if the goal is addressing beef prices at the grocery store, this isn't the way," Fisher continued, in part. "I strongly encourage the Trump administration to focus on trade deals that benefit our ag producers—not imports that will do more harm than good."

Farm Economy—

- **The October [Ag Economists' Monthly Monitor](#)** paints a tough picture for U.S. farmers heading into 2026: weak trade demand, stubbornly high input costs and continued consolidation across agriculture. While experts say today's challenges don't match the full-blown crisis of the 1980s, most agree the current downturn is dragging on with few signs of a quick turnaround. "High input

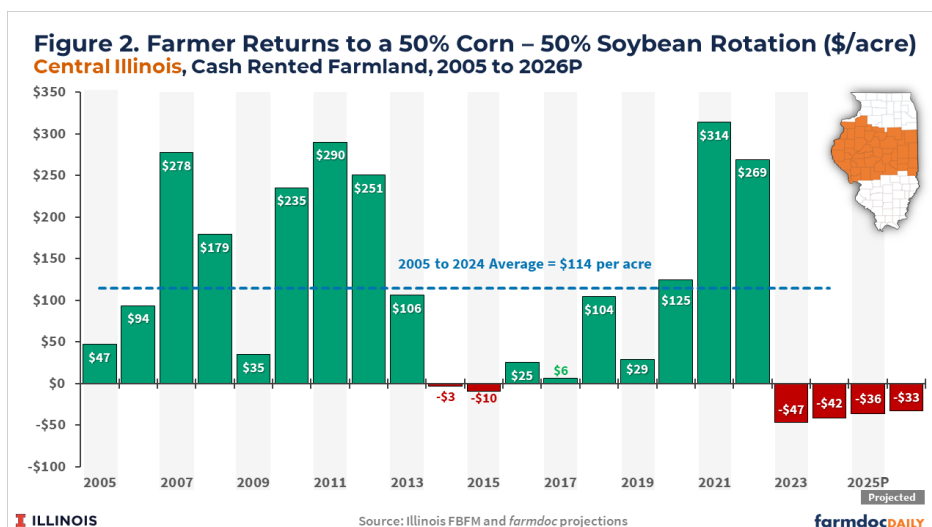


costs and the inability of domestic soybean crush growth to offset lost Chinese demand" continue to weigh heavily on profitability, one economist explains. Another adds: "The lack of trade opportunities, and high input costs, are doing the most damage right now." A third economist sums it up more bluntly: "Margins

are collapsing, and optimism is evaporating fast." One of the major themes in the latest survey of Cornbelt Ag economists is the fact negative margins could be a theme for row crop agriculture for the foreseeable future. 59% of economists say the farm economy is worse off than a month ago, and 89% believe it's weaker than last year. 76% expect the situation to persist or even worsen through 2026, while only a quarter expect any improvement in the next 12 months. As one economist puts it: "It's not a collapse, but it's a grind. Farmers have been absorbing higher costs for two years without any real recovery in prices," says one respondent. "That wears on you," another adds. "It's like death by a thousand cuts — not one thing is breaking the farm economy, but everything's contributing." With nearly 8 out of every 10 economists surveyed projecting conditions to persist or worsen over the next 12 months, Ben Brown, Univ. of MO Extension economist, says it reiterates the concern that farmers could face more tough decisions next year. "I think the expectation for conditions to stay challenging shows up in multiple points of the responses, just this continued downturn and extended pressure on farm finances absent some type of market rally. Maybe that's a yield shortfall due to drought somewhere in the world. But absent of that, I think we're this slow grind lower trying to figure out how to find an equilibrium point where producers are looking at moving cropland out of production, maybe putting it to more pasture or CRP," Brown says. "Long story short, we're looking for any of those available measures that reduce production enough to help rally prices."

The Business of Farming—

- **Farmers who own a significant portion of their farmland** base typically are in much stronger financial positions today than those who rent a higher percentage of their farmland. [IL Farmdoc ag economists](#) illustrate why this is the case by showing cash flow requirements from purchasing farmland 20 years ago and comparing those cash flows to cash rented farmland. Overall, farmers that bought farmland 20 years ago had to meet larger cash requirements to finance the purchase compared with cash renting but have experienced large capital gains and would now see significantly higher returns compared to cash rent farmland. We also show cash flow requirements if a farm were purchased today and speculate on what the results of that purchase will look like in the future if historical trends continue. Their calculations are based on land values of \$5,000 per acre in 2005 and \$16,000 per acre in 2025; fixed interest rate of around 7%; and average property tax and cash rent values from 2005 to 2024 for central IL. Owning farmland has many years of negative cash flows, and the cash requirements associated with debt service and property taxes on the owned land consistently exceed the cash rental payments, meaning that additional funds from other sources are needed to cover debt servicing costs. On the other hand, cash renting farmland has had mostly positive returns. Average returns from cash renting are projected to be negative in 2025 (-35). The current multi-year period of negative returns to cash rented land are concerning. Historically, a common strategy to increase owned land has been to apply the returns earned on rented land towards a future farmland purchase. However, this has become an increasingly difficult strategy as farmer returns on rented farmland have not increased with the cash flow requirements associated with ownership. Figure 2 shows average farmer returns to cash rented farmland in a 50-50 corn-soybean rotation in central IL. Farmer returns have varied around an average of \$114 per acre from 2005 through 2024, with no indication of trending upwards. Over the past 20 years, average cash rents have more than doubled in IL while the cash requirements associated with farmland ownership have more than tripled. This has altered the historical strategy of using returns



from rented farmland to generate the resources needed to finance future farmland purchases. More rented acres are now needed to generate the returns needed to help finance farmland purchases. This has created greater risk exposure for farms that are more heavily reliant on rented farmland. This is becoming particularly evident during the current multi-year period of negative returns to

cash rented farmland in IL.

Tariffs, Trade, and Agriculture—

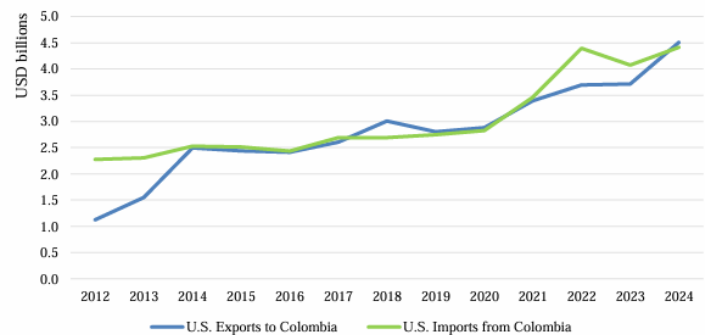
- **Farmers should brace for another trade-related gut punch.** Colombia is a significant



importer of numerous agricultural products from the US, but in the past week, President Trump has insulted the Colombian President Gustavo Petro (left) numerous times. Fueling a spat that threatens to shatter ties between the long-allied nations, Gustavo Petro said, "Mr. Trump has slandered me and insulted Colombia." Colombian boats and personnel have been targeted in Trump's bombing orders of ocean craft in the Caribbean. As retribution, Trump has announced an end to hundreds of millions of dollars of US aid to Colombia and threatened tariffs on Colombian goods. In 2024, U.S. agricultural exports to Colombia reached a

record high of \$4.5 bil., a 21% increase from 2023. This growth, supported by the U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement, represented the highest rate among the top 25 U.S. agricultural export markets globally. The top U.S. exports in 2024 to Colombia included corn (236 mil. bu.), soybean meal, ethanol, pork, distillers' grains, soybeans, dairy products, wheat, and soybean oil. The US also remains the top importer of Colombian agricultural products. Colombian agricultural exports to the United States increased by 8% to \$4.4 bil., driven by rising demand for coffee, cut flowers, and fresh fruits. Colombia ranks as the 6th largest market for U.S. agricultural exports globally and had the largest growth rate among the top 25 U.S. agricultural export markets in 2024. The U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement has played a key role in supporting U.S. agricultural exports, which have grown by 309% since the agreement went into place in 2012. →

Figure 1: U.S. Agricultural Trade with Colombia, 2012 to 2024 (USD billions)



Data Source: Global Agricultural Trade System [GATS](#), FAS-USDA

- **In a related note, US philanthropist Howard Buffet** has been working in Colombia for an estimated 5 years, to convert farmers from planting coca, which produces cocaine, to coffee and cacao, which produces chocolate. Buffet (far right) has pledged \$200 mil. through his foundation to finance the initiative, according to the [Chronicle of Philanthropy](#).



- **The U.S. Grains and Global Bioproducts Council** held its annual Global Ethanol Summit in



Washington, D.C. (Mark Wilson, Toulon, IL farmer, chair of the USGBC, presided over the global event. left) At the summit, Growth Energy CEO Emily Skor expressed optimism for the future of bioethanol, while highlighting the positive impact that pro-bioethanol policies have on agriculture. "Bioethanol's future has never been clearer, and our outlook has never been more positive," Skor said. "We deliver a more affordable, high-octane fuel choice that can be used in more than a bil. gas-powered cars and trucks on roads around the globe today." All over the world, she added, from Canada to Brazil to Japan, countries are increasing their commitments to use more bioethanol at higher blends. Skor also noted bioethanol's advantages as a tool for other countries to enhance their trade relationship with the U.S. Skor said that when America invests in bioethanol, the country is investing in the rural economy, supporting farmers, and boosting GDP.

✓ **Wilson unveiled a new interactive tool**, developed in partnership with Faro90, that allows users to compare the blending economics and greenhouse gas reduction benefits of ethanol around the world. "Designed to support policymakers, industry leaders and researchers alike, this tool showcases the global impact of bioethanol with real world data — and the US Grains & BioProducts Council's commitment to advancing sustainable energy solutions through data-driven innovation," he said.

- ✓ **After the Global Ethanol Summit**, now what? As Global Ethanol Summit ended, 9 trade teams continued the momentum and headed to corn-growing states to see farming operations, explore ethanol production plants, view terminal and port facilities and more to build their networks with U.S. suppliers. These groups included:
 - ✓ China delegation: heading to OH
 - ✓ European Union, United Kingdom and Canada delegation: heading to IN
 - ✓ Japan delegation: heading to IL
 - ✓ Malaysia and Indonesia delegation: heading to MO
 - ✓ Mexico delegation: heading to WI
 - ✓ Middle East and Africa delegation: heading to KS
 - ✓ Latin America delegation: heading to MI
 - ✓ Latin America delegation: heading to SD
 - ✓ Taiwan delegation: heading to MN

- **The National Corn Growers Association** is pointing to CA as an example of what could be achieved around the country after the state enacted a law extending access to E15 fuels. It's estimated that if consumers had been able to access E15 in CA during 2025, it would have created a demand for close to 250 mil. additional bushels of corn, which would represent 12% of the expected excess corn supply this year. "The sheer buying power of the millions of drivers on the road in CA promises to increase demand for corn in ethanol, which is good news for the nation's corn growers," said NCGA President Joe Bower. "Now we want to see Congress act to extend access to year-round E15 to every state in the country." He added that "Farmers see what's possible with the new CA law, and it's time for Congress to follow suit."
- **Sen. Charles Grassley, R-IA**, and other Midwest lawmakers have some advice for the president on year-round E15 legislation, "My advice to the president is, come out in support of E15...it should be an easy lift for you, because you already believe in E15 nationwide through your waivers...and it's going to be more morale building from the president and the federal government to the farmers of America, than anything else you could do." The Renewable Fuels Association estimates that nationwide year-round E15 sales would increase corn demand by 2.3 bil. bu.
- **Clean Fuels Alliance America** wrote to U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and asked him to close a loophole in the administration's Reciprocal Tariff Regime. Under President Trump's Executive Order, diesel and renewable diesel are both exempted from reciprocal tariffs because both are classified under the same Harmonized Tariff Schedule heading. "This loophole invites duty-free access to the United States for imported renewable diesel, putting U.S. biodiesel, renewable diesel, and sustainable aviation fuel producers, who are essential to America's energy and farm security, at a competitive disadvantage," the letter said. "Given the ongoing imports of foreign renewable diesel and current challenges for domestic producers and farmers, we ask that you take prompt action to close the loophole." Kurt Kovarik, vice president of federal affairs for Clean Fuels, said, "Domestic biomass-based diesel represents 10% of the value of all U.S.-grown soybeans." That means U.S. trade policy must consistently support U.S. producers.
- **The Energy Information Administration** said the U.S. is heading toward a record amount of ethanol exports in 2025. It's the second-straight year of growth, driven by growing overseas demand, especially in the EU. This growing market for exports is supporting increased U.S. fuel production, even as domestic demand and consumption stagnate. In the first 7 months of this year, American fuel ethanol exports averaged 138,000 barrels a day, the highest January through July data, which goes back to 2010, and 9% more than 2024's annual record for fuel ethanol exports. Increased exports to the Netherlands accounted for most of the growth from 2024 to 2025, likely reflecting Europe's growing demand. Also, India, the U.K., and Canada, which all have blend mandates, continue to import substantial volumes of fuel ethanol. The EIA said growth in fuel exports has pushed domestic production past the pre-COVID peak in 2018, despite lower domestic consumption.

Noteworthy—

- **Brazilian soil scientist Mariangela Hungria** was celebrated as the [2025 World Food Prize Laureate](#) at a high-level ceremony in Des Moines, Thursday. Hungria received the \$500,000 World Food Prize for her groundbreaking work in biological nitrogen fixation, harnessing symbiotic soil microorganisms as an alternative to synthetic fertilizers. "I have dedicated my life to biologicals," said Dr. Hungria in her acceptance remarks. "I am confident that we are continuing Dr. Norman Borlaug's dream into a new vision—a MicroGreen Revolution—driven by biological inputs." The low-cost technologies and products she developed have increased crop productivity affordably and sustainably across tens of millions of hectares, enabling farmers to save billions and mitigating agriculture's environmental and climate footprint. "When I started out, nobody spoke about biological nitrogen fixation. But I loved microbiology, I loved basic science, and I had many ideas I wanted to investigate and study. Replacing the use of chemicals with biologicals in agriculture has been the fight of my life," Hungria said. "I'm really proud of making a contribution towards producing food while decreasing the environmental impact. The goal was to increase yield with the least possible use of chemicals, and we achieved this through more biologicals." The World Food Prize has kicked off its weeklong initiative in Des Moines, gathering international leaders, experts and scientists to discuss critical issues facing global food security. The 2025 Norman Borlaug International Dialogue features dozens of speakers, including the president of Ghana and government officials from Liberia and Sierra Leone. This year's theme is "SOILutions for Security." It's meant to highlight how different industries can work together to address challenges from the ground up. →
- **Also honored at the World Food Prize event** was [the late Dr. Stephen Long, of the Univ. of IL](#). [He was named as one of 25 world food pioneers](#). "Stephen Long is a world-renowned plant scientist whose groundbreaking research in photosynthesis and crop resilience has positioned him at the forefront of global agri-food innovation. A leading advocate for sustainable food security, he directs the \$70 mil. Gates Foundation-funded RIPE (Realizing Increased Photosynthetic Efficiency) project, which engineers crops like soybeans to photosynthesize more efficiently boosting yields and water-use efficiency for smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. His landmark Science publications in 2016 and 2022 demonstrated, for the first time, that photosynthetic improvements can translate into substantial field gains for food crops. Long also founded the SoyFACE facility, the world's longest-running open-air experiment assessing climate change impacts on crops. With over 50 years of research, he is a Corresponding Member of the Australian Society of Plant Scientists, a member of the Royal Society's Earth Sciences Committee, and advisor to the U.S. National Academies. His visionary science offers real solutions for a climate-resilient, food-secure future." Steve died Sept. 9th of cancer before he could accept his award and attend the event recognizing him.



Wrapping up with an honor to...

- **Jeff Martin and sons Doug and Derek**, of Mt. Pulaski, IL, were honored at the 2025 PepsiCo Global Farmer Awards event. Martin Family Farms produce corn and soybeans, but with a different focus than most farmers. [They tell their story in this short video](#) about regenerative agriculture and how it got the attention of ADM and one of its main customers, PepsiCo.

Mark Your Calendar! --

- **The IL Soybean Assn.** will hold a webinar Nov. 5 at 10 am for farmers to understand the tax ramifications under the One Big Bill. It will be presented by Pinion. [Details and registration.](#)
- **A workshop for watershed leaders** will be held Nov. 5-7 at Allerton Park and Retreat Center near Monticello. The workshop is an interactive forum on new viewpoints, real questions, and a hands-on approach to learning. Watershed leaders from IL, IA, WI, MO, and MN will be participating. Registration is \$275. INFO: 608-792-5550.
- **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](#).

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