

- ▶ Farm Real Estate
- ▶ Farm Appraisals
- ▶ Auctioneer Services
- ▶ Operating Loans
- ▶ Agribusiness Loans
- ▶ Farm Management
- ▶ Trust Services



833-797-FARM (3276) | hbtbank.com



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

### ***Commodity market price drivers—***

- **The strongest El Niño since 1950 is now close to certain.** But it is not moving grain prices, ... yet. NOAA puts a very strong event above 90% and gives a 69% chance of being the largest 1 in the record. We estimate it will cut world crop production by about 83 million tonnes (3+ bil. bu). That number is real. But roughly 350 mil. bu. of it is a U.S. shortfall that El Niño did not cause, and only about a quarter of what remains reaches the market in the crop year now being traded. Most of the loss arrives in 2027. Look at what has actually moved this year. Wheat is up about 50% — on the Black Sea war, European drought and U.S. dryness. El Niño's contribution to 2026/27 wheat is close to zero. Corn is our highest-conviction call, and it is not an El Niño call either. It depends on whether the U.S. crop is 15.5 bil. bu. or 16.0. [AgResource \(grain market consulting\)](#) is at 15,520 bil. bu. USDA is at 16,013 bil. bu. Pro Farmer came in below us at 15,344 bil. bu. In vegetable oils, a pending

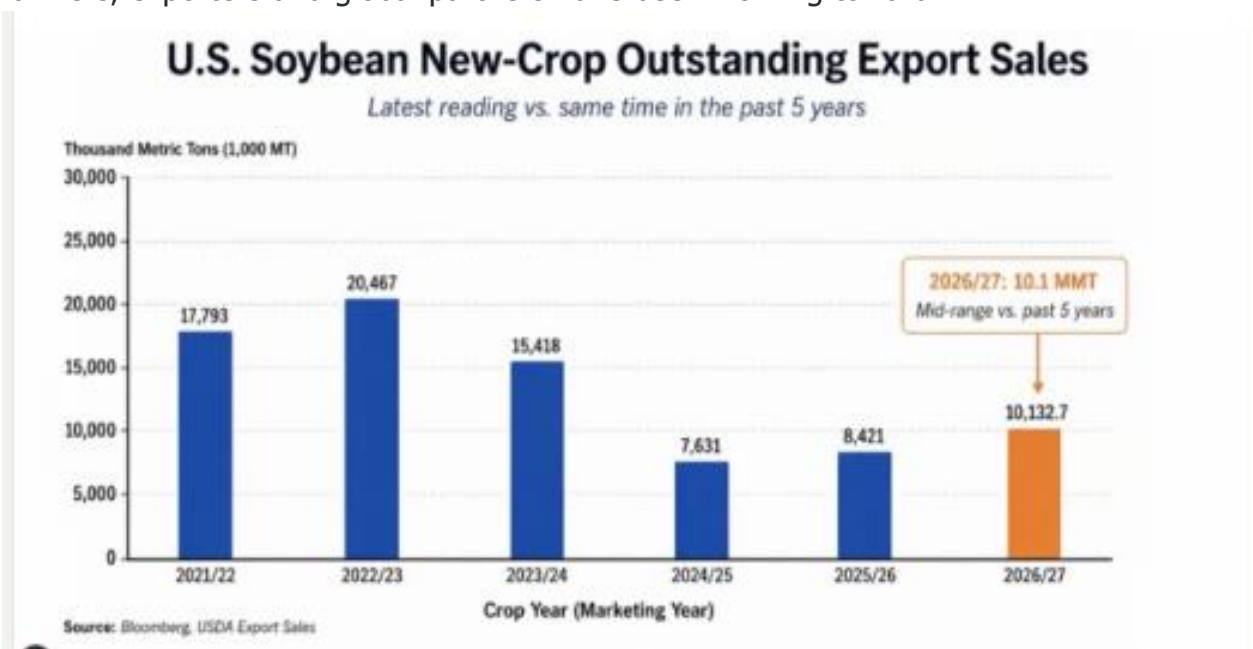
| Commodity             | June 11      | P10         | Central    | P90        |
|-----------------------|--------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| Wheat                 | -31.9        | -5.0        | +0.4       | +5.7       |
| Corn                  | +17.4        | -89.9       | -46.3      | -5.9       |
| Rice                  | -56.2        | -33.1       | -19.6      | -7.6       |
| Soybeans              | +33.7        | -36.6       | -7.4       | +20.8      |
| Palm oil              | -17.6        | -11.1       | -7.1       | -3.6       |
| Cotton                | -2.3         | -1.5        | -0.9       | -0.4       |
| Sorghum               | -3.0         | -2.9        | -1.7       | -0.7       |
| <b>NET, ALL CROPS</b> | <b>-59.8</b> | <b>-120</b> | <b>-83</b> | <b>-53</b> |

Table 1: Production change by commodity, million tonnes, against the June 11 edition. The NET row is calculated jointly and is not the sum of the commodity ranges. Appendix D lists every change from June.

U.S. biofuel decision is worth more to soybean oil than the entire palm oil loss we model. There is one clean El Niño position in the report: South Africa, harvests in 2027. The region's own climate forum

now forecasts the same dry window we do. The uncomfortable part: anyone who prices this event correctly and ignores everything else will be right about El Niño and wrong about the market.

- U.S. soybean export inspections** increased last week, but the pace remains below a year ago, according to USDA. The agency says soybean inspections totaled nearly 25 mil. bu. in the 7 days ending September 10. That's up from about 17 mil. from the previous week, but below the 823,000 tons inspected during the same week last year. Corn inspections fell to 60 mil bu., compared with 66 mil. a week earlier. Corn inspections since September 1 are nearly even with last year at 85.4 mil. bu. Wheat inspections increased to nearly 17 mil. bu. from 16 mil. the previous week but remained well below the 28 mil. inspected during the same week last year. Since the start of the new soybean marketing year, USDA has inspected about 33.6 mil. bu. for export, down from 40 mil. a year earlier. Corn and wheat inspections were also lower compared to last year.
- It's still early, but all signs are pointing to U.S. Soy building real momentum** in the 26/27 marketing year, says [Jim Sutter, CEO of the US Soybean Export Council](#). As we shift focus from old crop to new crop, the data tells an encouraging story: outstanding new crop soybean export sales — soybeans contracted but not yet shipped — now stand at approximately 10.1 million metric tons. That's clearly ahead of where we were at this same point in each of the last two years: roughly 7.6 million metric tons in 24-25, and about 8.4 million in 25-26. What's driving this? Certainly, a big part of it is pricing. U.S. soybean values are becoming more competitive relative to Brazil. Comparing FOB New Orleans to FOB Paranagua, the U.S. premium has been narrowing from much higher levels. We're not at parity yet, but we're getting closer — and as that gap closes, buyers are increasingly recognizing the U.S. Soy Advantage: reliability, quality and a nutritional edge that goes beyond price alone. More competitively priced U.S. Soy + recognized better value of U.S. Soy = stronger new crop sales bookings. And the kind of steady, sustained recovery our farmers, exporters and global partners have been working toward.



- **Central IL harvest results**, reported by Greg Johnson of TGM at Champaign. He says, "With less than 10% harvested nationwide, the early results appear to show IL as extremely variable, but slightly below average. Iowa is above average."

Yields in green are above APH.

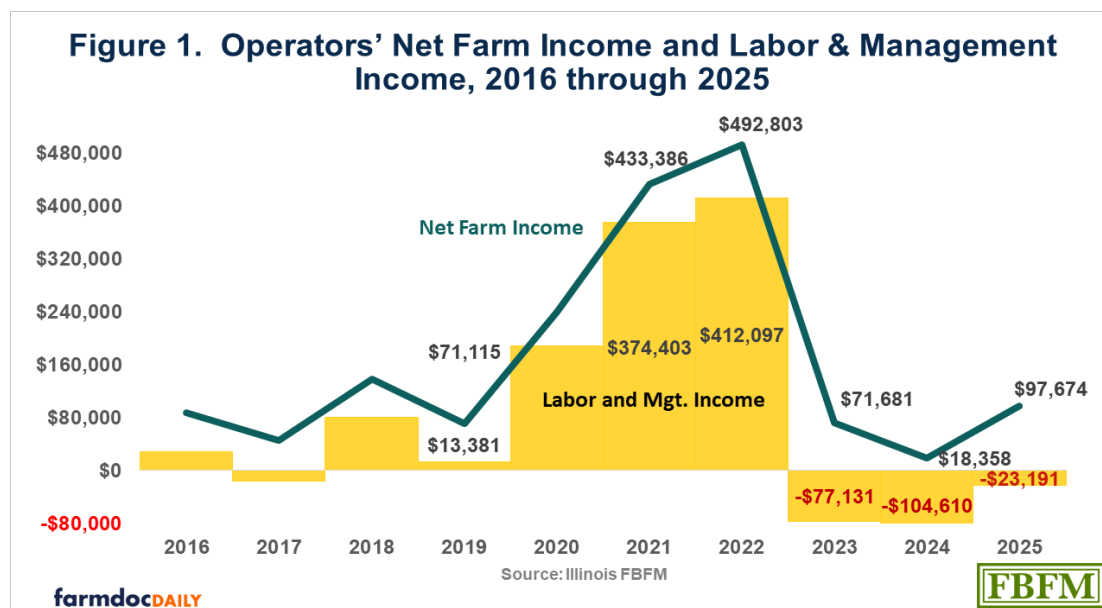
Yields in black are at APH.

Yields in red are below APH.

- ✓ **Auburn (central IL) - 80 acres of beans made 96 bpa, a record by 9 bpa.**
- ✓ **Auburn (central IL) - 80 acres of beans made 86 bpa, a record by 8 bpa.**
- ✓ **Bond County (south-central IL) - Field of beans made 75.3 bpa, which is a record. Hearing that most of the neighbors' beans are running 65 bpa to 75 bpa. Small bean size, due to the late dryness and the heat. With a timely rain, producer felt that the beans could have made 90 bpa.**
- ✓ **Bond County (south-central IL) - Producer is 75% done with corn harvest. Thus far, the corn average is 235 bpa, vs. 250 bpa last year and 275 bpa 2 years ago.**
- ✓ **Champaign County - 152 acres of corn went 231.6 bpa.**
- ✓ **Hancock County (western IL) - First 160 acres of 110-day corn made 253 bpa. Good corn, but about 20 bpa less than last year's record.**
- ✓ **Iroquois County - 71 acres corn planted on April 6th made 220 bpa, which was better than expected by 10% below last year.**
- ✓ **Macoupin County (southwest IL) - 98 acres of Group 3.3 beans made 86 bpa, which is the best ever by 14 bpa.**
- ✓ **Macoupin County (southwest IL) - A field of corn made 230 bpa. This is less than the record high of 250 bpa, but producer was still happy, as it was an up-and-down season with rainfall coming in buckets, followed by dry stretches.**
- ✓ **Montgomery County (south-central IL) - First 200 acres of corn made 231 bpa. Corn was drier and a little better than expected. Test weight was 61 pounds.**
- ✓ **Morgan County (western IL) - First field of corn-after-beans made 224 bpa. The rest of the corn will probably not need to be dried.**
- ✓ **Shelby County - 80 acres of April 25th planted 110-day corn averaged 244 bpa vs an APH of 250 bpa.**
- ✓ **Shelby County - First field of 109-day corn made 214 bpa. Didn't plant this hybrid last year but the 109 day I did plant last year was 249 bpa.**
- ✓ **Vermilion County - 60 acres of corn made 247 bpa, which is 7 bpa less than the APH and 30 bpa lower than the 2024 yield.**
- ✓ **Southeast Indiana - First 30 acres of corn (planted in early April) went 217 bpa, vs. 240 last year.**
- ✓ **Western Indiana - Silage made 21.9 tons per acre or 214.6 bpa. Same field two years ago made 24.6 tons per acre or 241 bpa. Last year the field across the road from this one had silage that made 26.1 tons or 255 bpa.**

## The Business of Farming—

- **Your 2025 income was likely better than 2024**, but not quite up to the 5-year average. That is the analysis of [Farm Business Farm Management](#) after evaluating about 1/3 of its cooperators. Based on records from 1,927 certified usable farms enrolled in the IL FBFM program, average returns to farm operators' labor and management increased in every region of IL in 2025 compared with 2024. However, returns remained below the 5-year average. Although yields and costs were similar to the previous year, earnings improved because commodity prices exceeded beginning-of-year inventory values and farmers received Farmer Bridge Assistance payments. Higher livestock prices also increased returns for livestock farms. The average return to an operators' labor and management was negative \$23,191 in 2025, an improvement from 2024 (below). This measure represents the farmer's effective wage or salary after subtracting a fair return on the operators' equity in



machinery and land from net farm income. The 2025 return was \$81,419 higher than the 2024 average of negative \$104,610

but \$139,505 below the 5-year average. Operators' labor and management earnings were highest on dairy farms, followed by hog, beef, and grain farms. Average returns were \$123,078 on dairy farms, \$121,720 on hog farms, \$38,018 on beef farms, and negative \$25,273 on grain farms. Grain farms accounted for 92% of all farms, while hog farms accounted for 1%. Returns reported for livestock farms may also include returns from grain production. Total economic costs per acre to produce corn and soybeans decreased from 2024 in all areas of IL. Lower non-land interest and land costs were the main reasons for the decline. The cost per bushel of corn decreased in every area except southern IL because costs were lower and yields were generally similar to 2024; southern IL had lower yields. The cost per bushel of soybeans also decreased in every area except southern IL. On these farms, total economic costs averaged \$1,187 per acre for corn and \$878 per acre for soybeans. The data used in this study come from the Illinois Farm Business Farm Management Association (FBFM). Without Illinois FBFM, information of this breadth and accuracy would not be available for educational purposes.

## Farm Programs and Payments—

- **If you remember ARC and PLC**, brush up on your details and prepare to register your base acres, if the USDA allocated some for your farm. Enrollment is open now and runs through December 11. ARC and PLC enrollment for 2027 will open on Nov. 2 and run through March 15 of next year. Congress authorized 30 mil. additional base acres, which would be eligible for farm program payments, and the invitation was accepted by more than the maximum, so about 3.7% will be trimmed. How do you know if your base acres offer was accepted by USDA? Farmers will have to find out...privately...by logging into the USDA at: [fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc](https://fsa.usda.gov/arc-plc) using a [Login.gov](https://login.gov) account. Landowners who do not currently have a Login.gov account can contact their FSA county office to obtain their base allocation notification as well. PLC has reference prices that provide payments when market prices are below those. But currently market prices are well above those PLC reference prices. Farmers and landowners eligible for payments need to stay on top of the requirements because the lack of responses, and choices will result in USDA not making payments. At the Farm Progress Show, Farm Service Agency officials said, "We have the appropriate fund balances in the CCC to (make) both CRP rental payments and ARC and PLC payments." ARC and PLC payments for the 2025 crop year would begin going out after Oct. 1. Undersecretary Richard Fordyce said he has not seen definitive estimates for the total payments, but both USDA analysts and outside analysts expect payments to increase significantly from a year ago. Univ. of IL Farmdoc ag economists project corn, wheat and soybeans will combine for \$9.66 bil. in ARC/PLC payments. In comparison, ARC/PLC payments last year for all commodity crops totaled about \$2.6 bil.
  - ✓ Corn, \$5.38 bil. overall. Nationally, corn payments will average \$58 per acre, though such averages can range widely by county under the ARC program.
  - ✓ Soybeans, \$1.54 bil. with an average payment nationally at \$29 per acre.
  - ✓ Wheat, \$2.74 bil. with an average payment at \$47 per acre.

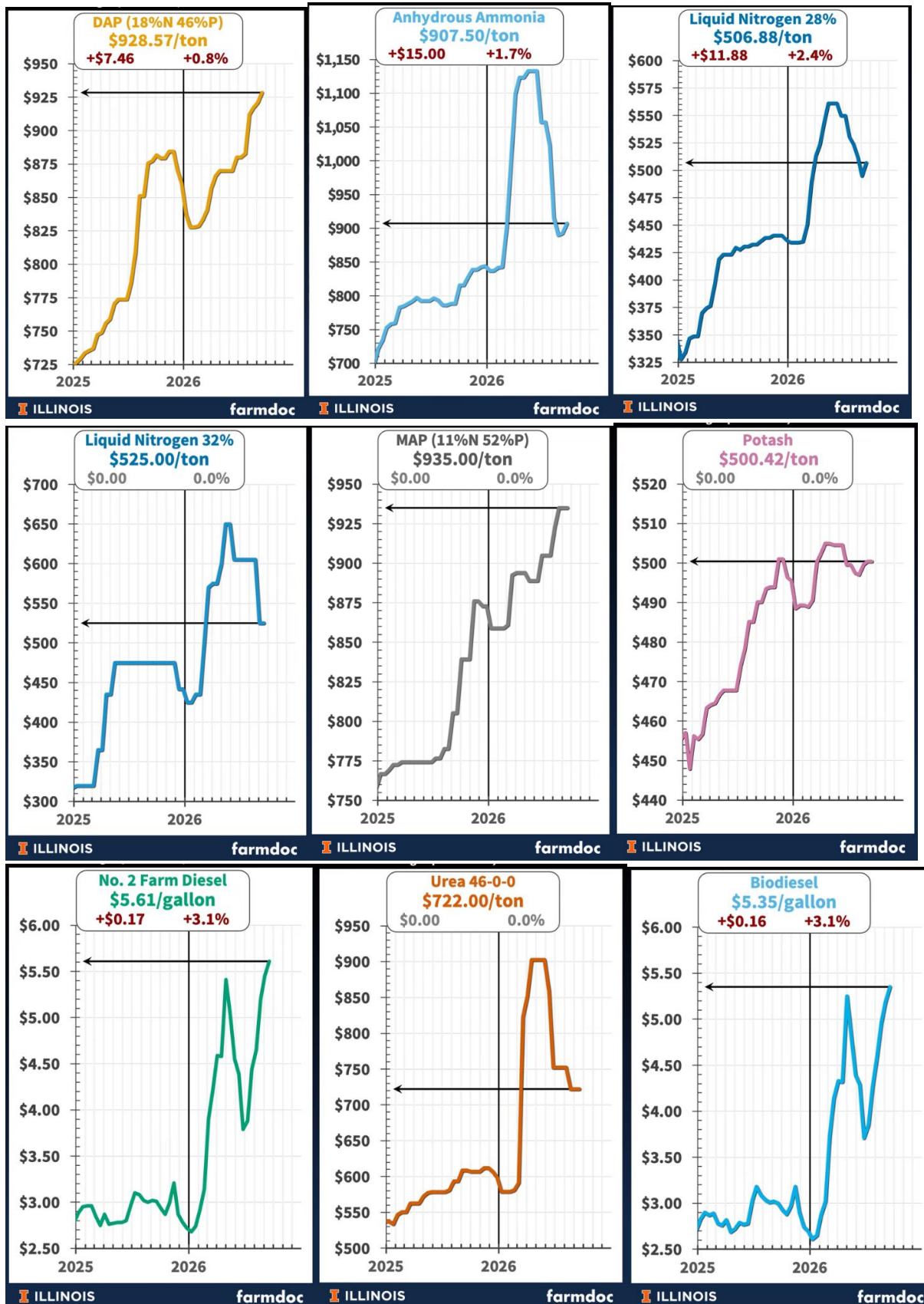
Farmers will receive the higher payment formula for either ARC or PLC regardless of which program they initially enrolled their crops in. The payment limit, which also was boosted in the enabling legislation to \$155,000, increases to \$160,000 for the 2025 crop year because of an inflation adjustment. Program payments should be released by USDA beginning in early October. Last year payments were delayed when Congress could not agree on the budget and payments were late. This year, Congress still has not agreed on the budget, but delayed the decision until mid-December, and funds are available to make farm program payments and maintain the government until Dec. 11. If you need help, consult your local FSA office. However, beware most offices are short of personnel, it may take several visits and stand in line to get the information you need. Start with the Farmers.gov website and work with that as far as you can get. [Here is some additional information.](#)

## Risk Management and Crop Insurance—

- **The Margin Coverage Option (MCO)** is an [area-based crop insurance endorsement that provides protection against operating margin shortfalls](#), which can be driven by revenue decreases, cost increases or a combination of both. **The decision to buy MCO for crop year 2027 must be done by September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026.** For the 2027 crop year, the coverage band of MCO was changed, now providing protection from 95% down to 90%. This change reflects the fact that coverage for Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) increased to 90% from 86% and Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) changed to 95% down to 90%. The price discovery period recently ended and projected prices for crops and inputs have been determined, which allows for premium calculations. This article discusses the tradeoffs of using MCO in a farm operation's insurance portfolios. The Margin Coverage Option (MCO) offers area level coverage against operating margin shortfalls. It is based on crop futures prices, county yields, and input futures prices along with calculated input quantities based on expected county yields. MCO is available for corn, soybeans, spring wheat, cotton, rice and grain sorghum in selected counties. (Call your insurance agent about your county.) MCO is an endorsement to traditional crop policies (Yield Protection (YP), Revenue Protection (RP), Revenue Protection with Harvest Price Exclusion (RP-HPE) and Area Production History (APH). Given the coverage band overlap, it cannot be purchased with Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) but can be used with Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO). Like ECO and SCO, the MCO subsidy rate is also 80%. Inputs considered for margin calculations are urea (for corn only), diammonium phosphate (DAP), potash, diesel, and natural gas (for irrigated practices only). Input quantities are calculated by multiplying the county expected yield by input specific coefficients. Based on projected margins and revenues, a trigger margin is calculated. If the final margin is below the trigger margin, a payment is triggered. Final margin is calculated using RMA final county yields – typically released in June of the following calendar year (e.g. June 2028 for 2027 MCO coverage) – crop harvest futures prices in the fall (same as for COMBO products, ECO and SCO), and input futures prices in the spring (average during April of the relevant May futures contracts). MCO uses a fall projected price discovery period for crops and inputs. Projected prices for corn and soybeans are the average from August 15 to September 14, 2026, of December and November 2027 futures contracts, respectively. For inputs, projected prices are the average from August 15 to September 15 of May 2027 futures contract, when available. Potash is the exception, with its price being defined as an index of the other inputs' futures prices. The projected corn price is \$5.25 per bu. Soybeans fall projected price is \$12.33 per bu. Diesel and DAP 2027 projected at \$3.57 per gallon and \$778.29 per ton, respectively. Urea and Potash (an index of urea, DAP and natural gas) 2027 projected prices are \$435.50 and \$557.93 per ton, respectively. With projected prices set, trigger margins and premiums can be calculated. Aside from projected prices and expected yields, premiums depend on the base rate set by RMA, which reflects expected risk. Farmer paid premiums by crop and area are here: <https://www.margincoverageoption.com/>. Final payments will depend on actual county yields and final/harvest input and crop prices. Read the *considerations for adding MCO for 2027* in [Farmdoc description of MCO](#).

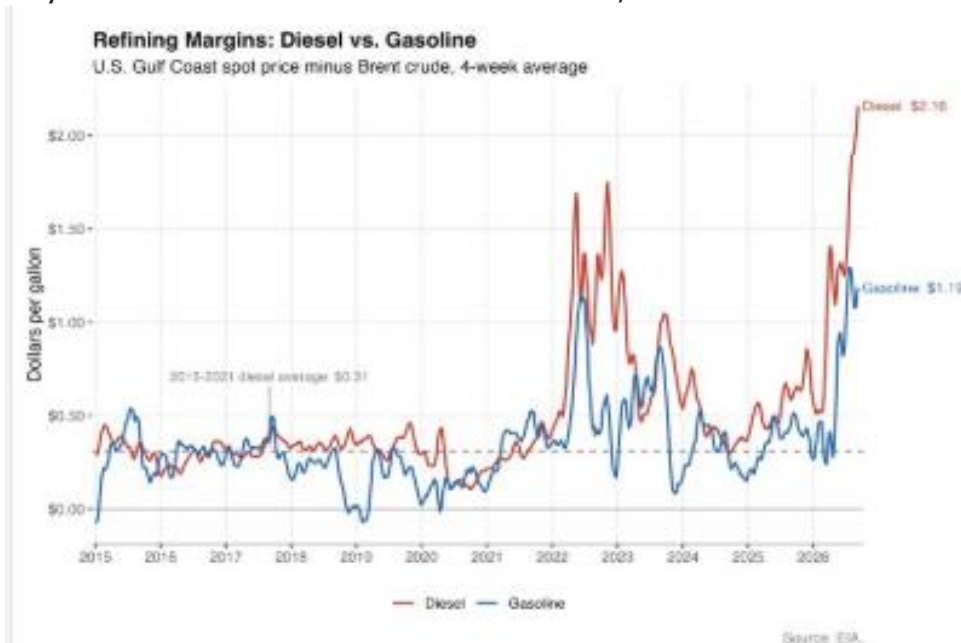
## Fertilizer Costs, Supply, and Dynamics—

- Fertilizer and fuel costs for week ending Sept. 18, from Jim Raftis, IL Dept. of Ag.



## Energy Supply and Cost Issues—

- **Diesel Prices Surpass \$6 per Gallon**, say [USDA transportation economists](#). For the week ending September 14, the U.S. average diesel fuel price rose 31.8¢ from the previous week to a record \$6.285 per gallon—254.6¢ above the same week last year. While up across all U.S. regions, diesel prices were highest on the West Coast. For the week ending September 4, U.S. distillate fuel inventories were 106.3 mil. bbls.—13% below the 5-year average. Shipping through the Strait of Hormuz has dropped to its lowest since the U.S.-Iran conflict began: 4 commodity vessels transited the strait on Monday, down from 10 the previous day and down from roughly 125 large commercial vessels per day before the conflict—according to preliminary data. The closure of Saudi Arabia’s crucial oil pipeline has placed further pressure on global oil supplies. Reduced shipping activity has had ripple effects: constrained crude oil flows increase oil prices, which raise fuel prices. Higher fuel prices, in turn, elevate shipping costs, and higher diesel prices can impact harvest, drying, and hauling expenses for farmers.
- **Why are diesel prices so high?** [KS St. Univ. ag economist Greg Ibendahl](#) offers his insight. “U.S. retail diesel rose \$2.25 per gal. from February to the week of September 7, reaching \$5.97. Crude oil accounts for 68¢ of that increase. The refining margin — the gap between wholesale diesel and the crude it is made from — accounts for \$1.71. The 2026 episode began as a crude shock and has become a refining shock. Measured against WTI, crude drove roughly half of the increase through May and less than a third since July. The supply losses are specific to refined products. Russia banned diesel exports by producers in July after Ukrainian attacks on its refineries, and the EU closed the loophole that allowed



third countries to refine Russian crude for the European market. Net diesel exports from the Gulf fell to just over a quarter of their pre-war level in August. Europe, which replaced Russian diesel with Middle Eastern supply after 2023, is

now drawing on U.S. barrels: U.S. distillate exports to Europe rose 76 percent in the first half of the year. U.S. refineries are running at the highest rates since 2018, yet national distillate days of supply set the lowest level for the season since 1991 in each of the last 5 weeks.

- **Your required reading** is a deep look at how to save diesel fuel expenses, newly authored by [IA St. Univ. ag engineer Kurt Rosentrater](#). "This document integrates various IA St. Univ. Ag Decision Maker and Integrated Crop Management sources and incorporates supporting peer-reviewed and other university publications. An Excel-based tool has been developed to track your own fuel cost savings." Let's walk through his suggestions:
  - ✓ **The most direct fuel savings** come from eliminating field passes that do not add agronomic or economic value. Reduced tillage, strip-till, no-till, one-pass systems, and pass consolidation reduce fuel use by reducing the number of acres driven rather than by making each tractor-hour more efficient.
  - ✓ **Shift up and throttle back** when load allows Shift-up/throttle-back, also called gear-up/throttle down, uses a higher gear and lower engine speed to maintain the same field speed when the tractor is partially loaded. This practice alone can easily improve fuel savings by more than 10% under partial drawbar load.
  - ✓ **Maintenance is a low cost**, universally applicable fuel-saving practice. ISU research reports that spring tractor maintenance (including the engines, filters, cooling systems, and fuel systems) can save 5–15% or more of fuel, and that timely engine air and fuel filter replacement can save 3–4% when filters are overdue.
  - ✓ **Correct ballast and tire inflation** improve tractive efficiency by keeping wheel slip within the recommended range and reducing excessive sinkage. Lower tire pressure is beneficial only when it matches the tire manufacturer load-inflation table and the tractor is operating in the field. Road transport may require higher pressure.
  - ✓ **Guidance systems can substantially reduce overlap**, reduce skips, lower operator fatigue, and improve field consistency and efficiency.
  - ✓ **Diesel Exhaust Fluid (DEF)** and Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) systems are emissions-control technologies. DEF is not a fuel-saving additive. It is consumed as an additional fluid, and peer-reviewed and university evidence reports DEF consumption of 4.3–7.9% of diesel volume in PTO tests. However, SCR can allow engine designers to optimize combustion while meeting nitrogen oxide emissions standards. We recommend that producers maintain DEF quality, avoid contamination, and prevent freezing-related downtime through proper storage.
  - ✓ **Central tire inflation systems** allow operators to lower pressure for fieldwork and raise pressure for transport without manually adjusting each tire.
  - ✓ **Auto-steer payback** should include both fuel and non-fuel benefits. The companion workbook uses an editable default of \$3 per acre for non-fuel input and time savings and allows users to change system costs, acres, fuel savings, diesel price, and baseline fuel use.
  - ✓ **Producer Decision Tool.** The companion Excel Decision Tool, [go.iastate.edu/AGDMA343DT](https://go.iastate.edu/AGDMA343DT), provides farm-specific calculations. It contains separate sections for fuel savings, tractor operations, CTIS payback, and auto-steer ROI. Inputs are editable, allowing producers to replace planning values with their own records.

## Agronomy—

- **Many farm fields are similar throughout IL and the Cornbelt** and farmers are having similar problems. Corn quickly dried in the late August and early September heat and was put into the grain bin hot. It needed the cool night air, but did it get it? Early maturing soybeans were the same way. They were dry, splits were abundant and needed grain management. Jim Voigt, a career grain handling authority, provides extensive grain management suggestions in a [13-minute video interview that is important for all farms.](#)
- **A new study led by Univ. of IL scientists** reveals [critically low genetic variation](#) in one of the country's primary breeding stocks for corn. The finding relates specifically to grain yield in intermediate-maturity hybrids, which dominate commercial production in the U.S. and represent nearly a third of the world's corn production. The researchers say it's a crisis waiting to happen. "Our study reveals a significant genetic weakness that threatens maize breeders' ability to develop high-yielding hybrids, especially in the context of climatic challenges projected for the U.S. Cornbelt," said the [study's](#) lead author, Jenifer Camila Godoy dos Santos, a postdoctoral researcher (pictured below with Univ. of IL corn geneticist Martin Bohn). Modern corn breeding relies on heterosis, also known as hybrid vigor. This means that when parents from different genetic, or heterotic, groups are crossed, the



hybrid offspring far outstrips either parent's performance in the field. For several decades, new [corn](#) hybrids have been generated by crossing parents from two specific heterotic groups: stiff-stalk (SS) and non-stiff-stalk (NSS). These groups are genetically distinct from one another — a necessary ingredient to ensure the most productive corn hybrids — but the inbred lines within each group are genetically similar. And therein lies the problem. Over time, breeders

have selected and reused the strongest performing lines as parents, gradually reducing the overall variability within each heterotic group. Theoretically, with lower in-group variation, cross between the groups would no longer guarantee strong hybrids. Godoy dos Santos and her collaborators suspected variation was waning but didn't know by how much and how it might affect certain traits. The big takeaway? Genetic variability related to yield was lacking in intermediate-maturity SS lines, the most commonly grown maturity group in the U.S. Cornbelt. The researchers say this important heterotic group could fail to contribute to the development of new hybrids that meet yield goals under future challenges. On a more positive note, they found plenty of genetic variability remaining across traits in early- and late-maturing inbreds in both SS and NSS groups. Corn geneticist Martin Bohn suggests the USDA Agricultural Research Service's [Germplasm Enhancement of Maize](#) program, a publicly funded effort that strategically introduces germplasm from around the world into elite heterotic groups. "While this study is a warning sign, it does not signify the end of maize breeding, which has been making tremendous progress for more than 100 years," Godoy dos Santos said.

- **The University of IL College of ACES** has created a \$2 mil. investment in the [IL ACES Land Grant Initiative](#) to fund 4 3-year projects co-led by ACES researchers and Extension staff. [The initial 4 projects](#) designed to help IL crop and livestock producers are:
  - ✓ **Strengthening dairy management:** develop and test a camera-based monitoring system that helps producers identify early signs of metabolic instability before visible symptoms appear and will create a practical decision-support tool that helps farmers make earlier, more informed management decisions. Extension partners will work directly with dairy producers to evaluate usability, build trust in the technology, and translate findings into statewide educational programs, strengthening Illinois' leadership in digital livestock agriculture and workforce development.
  - ✓ **Integrating satellite-based disease detection and economic decision tools for soybean disease management:** Red crown rot and sudden death syndrome are major soilborne diseases of soybean, causing patchy, localized yield losses across fields. Because seed treatment decisions are typically made for entire fields, farmers often lack information on how much of a field is affected and whether higher-cost inputs are economically justified. This project will combine satellite imagery, field data, and machine learning to create a decision-support system that helps producers target disease management investments more effectively. Through the Crop Protection Network, the team will deliver two practical tools: a Disease-Area Estimator that maps affected portions of fields and an ROI Calculator that evaluates treatment decisions based on disease extent, risk, input costs, crop prices, and expected returns. Working with Extension, industry partners, and producers, the project will promote more precise, economically sound soybean disease management across the region.
  - ✓ **On-farm Extension-research on nutrient management:** create a five-step Extension-research workflow that brings researchers, Extension professionals, farmers, and agricultural stakeholders together to identify needs, co-design solutions, implement on-farm trials, synthesize results, and communicate findings. Through on-farm demonstrations, stakeholder feedback, and Extension educator training, the team will build durable infrastructure for farmer-centered research and outreach. Supported by the IL Nutrient Stewardship Alliance, and thus IL Farm Bureau and IL Corn Growers Association, the project aims to strengthen university-community partnerships, accelerate adoption of practical nutrient management strategies.
  - ✓ **Smart weed management for Illinois specialty crops: Integrating AI, laser weeding, and precision spraying: designed** specifically for specialty crop operations, where existing technologies are often too expensive or poorly suited to production conditions. This project integrates safety considerations for laser weeding and optimizes operational conditions for field implementation. Reduce labor demands while improving weed control.

## Farm and Commodity Organizations—

- **The IL Agricultural Leadership Foundation** selected its Leadership Program Class of 2028. [IALF's flagship program](#), established to prepare professionals for effective leadership roles within agriculture and rural communities, will provide these participants with a rigorous 2-year educational experience. The curriculum integrates seminars on economic, political, social and global issues affecting IL agriculture, as well as national and international-study travel components.
    - ✓ Alan Bailey of Springfield, Midwest solar specialist at American Farmland Trust
    - ✓ Mike Carlson of Arlington Heights, manager of customer experience at Nutrien
    - ✓ Alissa Fosdick of Fairbury, team leader, credit ag lending, at Compeer Financial
    - ✓ Lucas Fuess of Chicago, senior dairy analyst at Rabobank
    - ✓ Matthew Geiger of Sandoval, agronomist/retail sales rep at Syngenta Crop Protection
    - ✓ Michael Gill of Camp Grove, partner at Gill Farms
    - ✓ Caleb Harre of Nashville, global multimedia manager at PTx
    - ✓ Charlie Hensley of Peoria, manager of the Peoria County Farm Bureau
    - ✓ Troy Hoene of Sigel, senior credit officer at Farm Credit Illinois
    - ✓ Bradley Horton of Freeburg, engine & ATS engineering and integration engineer at CNH
    - ✓ Ben Hugenberg of Liberty, farmer owner/operator of Hugenberg Farm Inc.
    - ✓ Bradley Ingram of Tuscola, owner/founder of Scars of Valor Foundation
    - ✓ Brian Johnson of Rio, agronomic value lead, corn & soy, at John Deere
    - ✓ Connor Kaeb of Chenoa, associate manager, government relations, at GROWMARK, Inc.
    - ✓ Beatrice Kamau of Beecher, CEO/founder of Multiple Harvest Farm and LPN at Multiple Harvest LLC
    - ✓ Elliott Kauffman of Belleville, associate relationship manager at CoBank
    - ✓ Emily Laird of Decatur, director, CO2 origination and market development, at ADM
    - ✓ Matt Lamont of Carmi, seed advisor at Beck's Hybrids
    - ✓ Jack Lanxon of Millstadt, farm operations manager at Eckert's Inc.
    - ✓ Joshua Maschhoff of Nashville, regional director of operations at The Maschhoffs
    - ✓ Eileen Pabst of Bloomington, market development manager at the IL Soybean Assn.
    - ✓ Karen Peditto of Lindenhurst, produce coordinator at Glenview Park Dist. – Historic Wagner Farm
    - ✓ Trisha Rentschler of Charleston, senior product manager at Kahler Automation
    - ✓ Madison Schultz of Buckingham, precision agronomy specialist at Advanced Agrilytics
    - ✓ Danielle Solis of Germantown, communications manager at The Maschhoffs
    - ✓ Reid Stephenson of Chicago, regional sales manager, industrial nitrogen, at Nutrien
    - ✓ Andrew Van Thyne of Decatur, vice president at ADM
    - ✓ Ian Vandeford of Collinsville, director of sales operations at Prairie Farms Dairy, Inc.
    - ✓ Jenny Worth of Bloomington, agribusiness market manager at COUNTRY Financial
    - ✓ Joshua Wurmnest of Melvin, region business manager at GROWMARK
- The Leadership Program Class of 2028 will kick off its 2-year leadership journey in November 2026, followed by orientation in December. For more information about the IL Agricultural Leadership Foundation and the Leadership Program, visit [www.agleadership.org](http://www.agleadership.org).

## Noteworthy—

- **Congratulations to Stephanie Porter**, outreach agronomist for the IL Soybean Assn., IL Certified Crop Advisor of the year. Agronomist Karen Corrigan nominated Porter for the CCA Award for her expertise in plant pathology and her effective, timely communication with farmers. "She (Porter) has been a key source of information on the spread of red crown rot in soybeans in IL," Corrigan wrote in her nomination. "She is the go-to for help with identification for other CCAs as well as farmers on crop disease." As the 2026 CCA Award winner, Porter will be recognized in Chicago at the IL Farm Bureau Annual Meeting in December and will be under consideration for [International CCA of the Year](#).



- **Congratulations to Howard Buffett** who steps into the Chairmanship of Berkshire Hathaway, after the retirement of his father Warren. For many years, Howard has been involved in agriculture. Several decades ago, he was an executive with the grain bin company GSI at Assumption, IL, then recruited to become an executive at ADM by Dwayne Andreas. He gradually increased his farmland, enjoying day-to-day fieldwork and creating new on-farm technology and agronomic systems, while also helping farmers in other parts of the world. Early in the Ukraine war, Buffett met with Ukrainian leaders to solve issues of getting grain into Europe. Railroad



gauges in Ukraine and European countries are different, and Buffet engineered a system of vertical grain transfer from a Ukrainian hopper car to a European top loading grain car parked beneath. He also ventured into cocaine areas of South America personally subsidizing farmers to raise other crops instead of coca, shifting regional economies away from cocaine. He has retained his IL farmland and may periodically take a break from the Berkshire Hathaway world at Omaha to climb into a tractor or combine cab for a change of perspective.

## Farm Safety—

- **Do you have a car or truck without an AM band radio?** There are millions on the roadways and none of them would be able to receive critical weather or another emergency alert. That is because such alerts are only effective on an AM band radio where radio waves travel much further than FM radio waves. Many car and truck manufacturers have eliminated AM band radios to reduce cost of production, at your expense of safety. But finally, Congress has heard the pleas of the broadcast associations, and the House has approved a bill. The AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act, H.R. 979, passed the House on a voice vote and now moves to the Senate. Supporters say keeping AM radio in vehicles is a matter of public safety. Rep. Brett Guthrie was among the lawmakers making that case. He tells colleagues that AM radio remains a trusted source of all kinds of information, "Tens of millions of Americans tune in to broadcast AM Radio every day. Farmers use AM radio for weather forecasts, local information, crop reports, while older Americans rely on it for local news and programming. Most importantly, AM Radio is a critical tool for emergency communications. When a disaster hits and a broadband network goes dark, AM radio can continue providing critical emergency information to communities." Rep. Lizzie Fletcher says emergency communication is exactly why Congress should require automakers to preserve AM radio access in new vehicles. "This bill, the AM Radio for Every Vehicle Act, recognizes the essential role of AM radio and ensures that consumers will continue to have AM radio available in their vehicles. It directs the Secretary of Transportation to issue a rule that requires vehicle manufacturers to install equipment to receive AM radio signals in all new passenger cars made or sold in the United States." The Senate has passed similar legislation, which will be merged with the House language in a conference committee. Now you will get tornado warnings, even in your new electric pick-up truck!

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.*