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

Commodity market price drivers—

- **There have been a dearth of details** so far following the recent high-level meetings between Presidents Trump and Xi that concluded today. However, Trump did indicate that he had a "great meeting" with Xi but also did not answer any questions regarding the actual substance of the talks. His only comment to the media at their morning tea was "farmers would be happy." "Is no news good news?" rhetorically asked Ben Potter of Farm Progress. "Markets were certainly skittish Friday as traders awaited further details. Soybean prices were down double digits early on Friday before erasing most of those losses. Corn prices managed fractional gains, while winter wheat prices continued to erode moderately lower. Traders are still waiting for more details coming out of the latest Trump-Xi meetings, but generic platitudes from both leaders seemed to be enough to erase double-digit losses incurred in overnight trading. (More in following pages) On Thursday, private exporters announced to USDA the sale of 4.4 mil. bu. of soybeans for delivery to China during the 2026-27 marketing year, which began September 1. January futures inched ½¢ higher to $13.32½, while March futures eased ¼¢ lower to $13.39½¢.
- **On Wednesday, USDA will release** its quarterly Grain Stocks report, which will provide the corn and soybean markets with more clarity on 2025/26 ending stocks, along with potential revisions to last year's U.S. crop production. The USDA report will also provide a wheat market snapshot of the supply picture at the end of the first quarter of the 2026/27 marketing year. The stocks report in the past has often been a source of surprise for the grain and soybean markets. Protect your unsold bushels ahead of the report Sept. 30 at 11 am central time. The market will be watching.

- **US farmers are awaiting more details** on agricultural trade after Pres. Donald Trump and Chinese Pres. Xi Jinping concluded talks Friday without announcing a broader trade agreement. Reuters reports the countries extended their existing trade truce by 2 months, giving negotiators additional time to address tariffs, agricultural purchases and other disputes. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent (left) said China is meeting an earlier commitment to purchase 920 mil. bu. of US soybeans annually but is behind on a pledge to buy $17 bil. in other US agricultural products. China has yet to purchase US corn for the current marketing year, while sorghum purchases have lagged expectations, according to Reuters. Farm groups are seeking stronger purchase commitments and reduced Chinese tariffs on American agricultural products. The trade truce now runs through Jan. 10 as negotiations toward a broader agreement continue. Bessent said**,** "The détente, economic détente between the 2 countries, that was scheduled to end on November 10th…that is going to be extended until January 10th to give us more time to see what we can do on the economic front." Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-IA, (right) suggested the Chinese need some encouragement, including on soybeans, "I think that more can certainly be done. In fact, the report last week was less than the week before, as an example." USDA says China bought just 330 mil. of soybeans of its 920 mil. annual commitment through mid-September. Pres. Trump, upon welcoming China's Pres. Xi to the White House, was confident a new US-China 'Board of Trade' will boost ag trade, "Our teams have been working to encourage a more balanced trading relationship, including the new market access for American farmers and ranchers." (Berns Bureau Washington)

- **The American Soybean Association** welcomes the 2-month extension of the U.S.-China trade truce and looks forward to continued dialogue between the 2 countries. ASA hopes the discussions will build on that progress and deliver additional positive developments for U.S. soybean farmers and agricultural trade. "Soybean farmers want to see this momentum continue with strong purchases of U.S. soy and a lasting trade partnership with China," said ASA President Scott Metzger.
- **What does the extension really mean?** According to The Associated Press, the extension maintains a pause on new tariffs and trade restrictions while giving both leaders more time to negotiate at upcoming international meetings. US farmers and commodity groups are urging both countries to reach a more stable, enforceable agreement that improves market access and reduces tariffs on American farm products. Leaders from the Iowa Corn Growers Assn., US Soybean Export Council, and American Soybean Assn. say farmers need greater certainty and predictability in trade with China. However, analysts told Reuters that a major new agricultural deal appears unlikely.

Farm Economy---

- **A new survey of corn and soybean farmers** finds financial pressure remains high despite recent improvements in commodity prices. The National Corn Growers Assn. and American Soybean Assn. report nearly 2/3 of growers are moderately or very concerned about the farm economy. 46% say they are more concerned about their farm financial situation than they were a year ago. The survey of 1,200 farmers, conducted by Farm Journal, found that recent grain price improvements have not eliminated concerns about high input costs. Growers also say expectations for the 2026 crop leave little room to absorb additional increases in production expenses. NCGA Chief Economist Krista Swanson says stronger corn prices can improve sentiment, but farm profitability doesn't reset with one market move or crop year. ASA Chief Economist Scott Gerlt says the results show how little margin for error farmers have, noting the cost of putting a crop in the ground remains high.

- **Farm Economy Concern Remains High:** 66% are moderately or very concerned about the farm economy, including 40% who are very concerned. Although those shares were 76% and 49% in 2025, the 2026 survey coincided with a major rally in corn and soybean prices.
- **Farm-Level Financial Concern Remains High:** 46% are more concerned about their farm financials than a year ago, compared with only 9% who are less concerned. The comparable 2025 shares were 65% and 4%. Even against the difficult 2025 baseline, nearly five times as many growers are more concerned than less concerned.
- **Profitability Expectations Remain Mixed:** 50% expect corn to be at least marginally profitable and 55% say the same for soybeans; roughly one-quarter to three in ten expect to break even.
- **Timing Shaped the 2026 Response:** 35% had already priced or purchased inputs before the spring fertilizer spike, while 34% continued their normal rotation or made no change.
- **2027 Decisions Are Still Forming:** Fuel and energy received the highest average concern score at 4.16 out of 5, and "not sure yet" was the most common planning response at 26%.

The Business of Farming—

- **"Back in June,** we shared our annual PCM Business Case for Conservation, including 11 years of IL data showing what tillage, nitrogen management, and cover crops mean for profitability on the state's highly productive soils. Now PCM is rounding out that analysis with a new look at IL lower-productivity fields — those with a Soil Productivity Rating (SPR) below 135, as defined by Univ. of IL Extension Bulletin 810," says Dr. Laura Gentry, of Precision Conservation Management. (Data follows, corn below, beans next page.)

When we average across all years of our low-SPR corn dataset, 2-Pass Light tillage systems seem like a clear winner in terms of profitability. But this trend varies year-to-year with fluctuating crop prices and machinery costs. In the most recent years, **Strip-Till** and **No-Till** have demonstrated the highest returns, especially when farmers keep their direct and power costs low.

By comparison, net profitability among high-SPR corn fields showed a much tighter range across tillage classes (1-Pass Light and 2-Pass Light differ by less than $10/acre in the 2015-2025 average), suggesting tillage choice carries more weight on lower-productivity soils.

CORN Low-SPR 2015-2025 Avg. Values	NO-TILL	STRIP TILL	1-PASS LIGHT	2-PASS LIGHT	2-PASS MODERATE	2+ TILLAGE PASSES
# fields	2,275	1,347	2,106	1,021	482	288
Yield per acre	195	209	197	205	204	208
GROSS REVENUE	**$832**	**$894**	**$840**	**$876**	**$867**	**$881**
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS*	**$423**	**$464**	**$433**	**$430**	**$441**	**$445**
Field Work	$0	$21	$12	$27	$32	$42
Other power costs**	$106	$109	$99	$97	$99	$98
TOTAL POWER COSTS	**$106**	**$130**	**$111**	**$124**	**$131**	**$140**
OVERHEAD COSTS	**$42**	**$42**	**$42**	**$42**	**$42**	**$42**
TOTAL NON-LAND COSTS	**$572**	**$636**	**$586**	**$596**	**$614**	**$627**
OPERATOR & LAND RETURN	**$260**	**$258**	**$254**	**$280**	**$253**	**$254**
Estimated Soil Loss (Tons/a)	*1.04*	*0.77*	*1.78*	*1.49*	*1.62*	*2.17*
Soil Carbon Index (-1 to 1, higher=better)	*0.78*	*0.87*	*0.7*	*0.62*	*0.56*	*0.47*
GHG emissions (metric tons CO2e/a)	*1.05*		*1.23*			*1.44*

No-Till = no tillage; **Strip Till** = less than full-width tillage of varying intensity; **1-Pass Light** = 1 pass w/low-disturbance tillage; **2-Pass Light** = 2 passes w/low-disturbance tillage; **2-Pass Moderate** = 2 passes (1 low-disturbance tillage + 1 high-disturbance tillage); **2+ Tillage Passes** = more than 2 tillage passes, any intensity level.
***Direct Costs** = fertilizers, pesticides, seed, cover crop seed, drying, storage, and crop insurance
****Power Costs** = tillage, fall fertilizer application, spraying, planting, cover crop planting, spring fertilizer application, harvesting, & grain hauling

Just like our low-SPR corn fields, the most profitable tillage class in low-SPR soybean fields on average is the **2-Pass Light class**. Additional tillage passes did not produce enough of a yield bump to offset the additional costs incurred, costing producers roughly $20/acre in lost return.

No-Till is the most represented tillage class in our dataset for both corn and soybean fields, and it is a strong performer despite yielding slightly less than the top classes. The complete absence of field work costs largely offsets that yield gap. We'll take a closer look at No-Till data on the next page.

SOYBEANS Low-SPR 2015-2025 Avg. Values	NO-TILL	STRIP TILL	1-PASS LIGHT	2-PASS LIGHT	2-PASS MODERATE	2+ TILLAGE PASSES
# fields	4,686	102	1,027	627	390	348
Yield per acre	62	63	62	64	65	63
GROSS REVENUE	**$655**	**$709**	**$661**	**$684**	**$694**	**$679**
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS*	**$188**	**$223**	**$185**	**$174**	**$195**	**$172**
Field Work	$0	$23	$13	$26	$32	$43
Other power costs**	$80	$90	$78	$77	$80	$75
TOTAL POWER COSTS	**$80**	**$113**	**$91**	**$103**	**$112**	**$118**
OVERHEAD COSTS	**$35**	**$38**	**$35**	**$35**	**$35**	**$35**
TOTAL NON-LAND COSTS	**$304**	**$373**	**$311**	**$312**	**$342**	**$325**
OPERATOR & LAND RETURN	**$351**	**$336**	**$350**	**$372**	**$352**	**$354**
Estimated Soil Loss (Tons/a)	*1.61*	*1.25*	*2.08*	*2.75*	*3.52*	*3.18*
Soil Carbon Index (-1 to 1, higher=better)	*0.51*	*0.62*	*0.47*	*0.27*	*0.14*	*0.11*
GHG emissions (metric tons CO2e/a)	*-0.17*		*0.05*			*0.24*

No-Till = no tillage; **Strip Till** = less than full-width tillage of varying intensity; **1-Pass Light** = 1 pass w/low-disturbance tillage; **2-Pass Light** = 2 passes w/low-disturbance tillage; **2-Pass Moderate** = 2 passes (1 low-disturbance tillage + 1 high-disturbance tillage); **2+ Tillage Passes** = more than 2 tillage passes, any intensity level.
***Direct Costs** = fertilizers, pesticides, seed, cover crop seed, drying, storage, and crop insurance
****Power Costs** = tillage, fall fertilizer application, spraying, planting, cover crop planting, spring fertilizer application, harvesting, & grain hauling

In this analysis, we look at the top 25% most profitable corn & soybean fields with low soil productivity ratings.

As with high-SPR soils, **1-Pass Light Tillage** is the most represented tillage class amongst the most profitable corn fields.

For soybean fields, 57% of the most profitable low-SPR soybean fields were managed with **No-Till**, a notably higher share than the 48% seen on high-SPR fields.

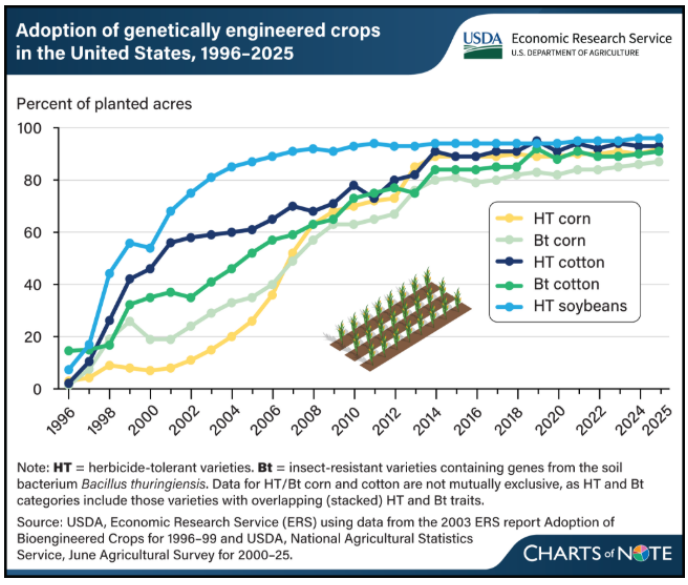
Regardless of crop type, more intensive tillage systems were rare among the top performers: just 5-7% of the most profitable low-SPR fields were managed with 3 or more tillage passes. This is great news for farmers wondering how they can **profit more while doing less**!

Grain Management Priorities—

- **We are all dealing with the same weather,** says Jim Voigt, a career grain quality manager. He says, "Cool the grain. Keep moisture even. Watch the bin after filling it. Check your forecast and your bins." His advice from 50 years in the grain industry:
  - ✓ **The situation**: Central IL just came through a hot, dry stretch. Mature grain dried quickly, and a lot went into bins with field heat still in it. That is not a normal late-September setup here. The next stretch looks like fall: highs in the low to mid-70s, rain chances, humidity near 80%, light wind, and lows of 52–56. Drydown will slow. Field differences will grow. Dry corn in the field should not re-wet. The husk, cob, and ear surface may but not internally. Rain and humidity do not raise kernel moisture overnight. Watch lodged fields and weak stalks. Those ears can get into trouble faster. Mature beans can take on moisture. A little rewet after a hard dry spell can reduce shatter and splits. Too many wet-dry cycles can tear seed coats, stain beans, and drop pods. Yesterday's moisture may not be today's.
  - ✓ **Grain in the field:** Hit fields that will lose quality first: weak stalks, lodged corn, ear mold, insect damage, poor drainage, and mature beans facing rain.
  - ✓ **Grain in the bin:** If hot, dry corn is already in the bin, be careful what goes on top. Do not put cooler or wetter grain on warm, dry grain and expect fans to fix it later. Keep moisture and temperature even. Run aeration until the cooling front moves through. Temperature gaps cause moisture movement and condensation. Beans act more like a sponge than corn. Wetter beans on very dry beans will equalize, leaving a wet layer that can crust or heat if not cooled. A 13–15% harvest range is workable. For storage, target 12–13%. Above 13% needs a drying or marketing plan. If later fields come off wetter, move that grain. Dry it if needed. Cool it quickly. Do not let wet grain sit unattended. Natural drying is weaker now. Late in harvest, the dryer may cost less than waiting on the field. Do not chase 10% or 11% beans on a few sunny afternoons. Cut mature beans at moisture you can handle. Morning and evening humidity can add saleable weight and reduce shatter. Cool weather helps only after grain is dry enough to store. Cool grain keeps better than warm grain, but cool, humid air is not a dryer.

Agronomy—

- **Deciding whether to let corn continue drying in the field** or begin harvest at a higher moisture level comes down to closely monitoring both grain moisture and crop condition at physiological maturity. When the black layer forms, kernel moisture is typically around 35%, although it can vary depending on environmental conditions and hybrid characteristics. Corn drydown is tightly linked to GDU accumulation. For this reason, corn that matures earlier should dry down faster, while later maturing corn has fewer warm days and will dry down at a slower rate. Ideally, growers begin scouting fields two to three weeks ahead of their expected harvest date to identify potential issues and prioritize fields before losses occur. With harvest already underway in parts of the Cornbelt — and weather delaying fieldwork in others — scouting should continue as harvest progresses. Wet fall weather delays grain drying and thus subjects the crop to an extended period in the field following maturity, potentially leading to increased stalk and ear rots, dropped ears, harvest delays and increased field losses. Dry weather is conducive to fast drydown and timely harvest. However, drought stress can cause poor stalk quality, and the crop may deteriorate rapidly due to standability or grain quality issues. In either situation, closely monitoring individual fields can help growers determine which acres may need to move up in the harvest order. Both wet and dry conditions can cause weak stalks, and stalk lodging can result in significant harvest losses. Weak stalks can be detected by pinching the stalk at the first or second elongated internode above the ground or pushing the plant sideways eight to 12 inches at the ear level. The stalk collapsing or failing to return to the vertical position indicates stalk rots, and that field needs to be prioritized for early harvest. "With the challenges of the 2026 growing season, stalk rots and standability issues are a potential concern for this year," said Ryan Bates, Pioneer agronomy innovation manager. "You will need to get out to your fields and push on the corn stalks. If you find plants that are collapsing, split crowns and stalks, and look at the tissue to see if stalk rots are developing."
- **Genetically engineered (GE) seeds** were commercially introduced in the US for major field crops in 1996, with adoption rates increasing rapidly in the years that followed. USDA, Economic Research Service (ERS) reports information on GE crops in the data product Adoption of Genetically Engineered Crops in the United States. Today, more than 90% of corn, cotton, and soybean acres are planted using at least 1 GE trait. Traits other than HT and Bt have been developed, such as non-Bt resistance to insects; resistance to drought, viruses, or fungi; and enhanced protein, oil, or vitamin content. However, HT and Bt traits are the most commonly used traits in U.S. crop production.



- **Soybean fields can seem healthy while hidden yield robbers** are already at work underground. Plant-parasitic nematodes often go unnoticed until yield maps reveal the damage. As growers begin planning for next season, Logan Dinkla, an agronomy service representative for Syngenta, said nematodes are often considered a hidden threat to soybean performance, "Unlike other diseases where there's an obvious foliar symptom, whether it's a lesion or an insect causing damage, nematodes do their damage below the soil, making it really difficult to detect. Many growers don't even realize they have a nematode issue until we get to the end of the year, we're at harvest, and the soybean field just didn't quite yield how we might have liked. So, you start looking at yield maps, and you can kind of pick out some issues. Soybean cyst nematode, for example, remains the most damaging pest in the US, while root-knot nematode is becoming a bigger concern as we look at warmer geographies. Using Iowa, for example, where I'm located, it's estimated that 70-plus% of fields have soybean cyst nematode in them. A lot of people don't even realize it. The damage they're causing is that they feed on plant roots, which reduces water, reduces nutrient uptake, as well as creating increased susceptibility to other diseases like sudden death syndrome." Soil sampling is an important part of managing nematodes, especially in the fall, "Nematode injury can be mistaken for a lot of different things as we're looking at a field, unlike an aphid or grasshopper, where you see the impact it's causing. Nematodes are below the soil and feeding on the roots, which can look like a lot of different things. Fall soil sampling really allows us to set a baseline for one: do we have nematodes? And two: how high is the pressure, and what kind of plan do we need to make for next year and future years?" Dinkla said growers should use an integrated strategy to manage SCN and other nematodes, "So, once we get soybean cyst nematode, for example, we aren't able to get rid of them out of the field. There is no way to eradicate them. It's all about how we manage them and reduce the yield impact that they are causing, and there are several ways to manage it. A lot of times, we like to use multiple approaches. Start with soil sampling to figure out what we have. Crop rotation to a non-crop host like corn, for example, helps a lot, versus going beans on beans year after year, which can really cause populations to increase. Use an SCN-resistant variety and then use an effective seed treatment nematicide like Victrato." He said Victrato is an important part of a successful nematode management strategy, and provides strong protection against multiple different nematode species, especially soybean cyst nematode, as well as it's protecting us against key yield-robbing diseases like SDS, red crown rot, helping prevent that feeding, which leads to larger roots and ultimately increased yields at the end of the day." (Syngenta)

Conservation, Environment, and Carbon—

- **The Natural Resources Conservation Service** launched its CEMA 216 (Conservation Evaluation Monitoring Activity) program to provide producers with data on the biological, chemical and physical characteristics of the soil, rather than relying on any single measurement. NRCS has 2 soil health testing incentives, a basic test of $520 for 3 samples or an advanced test of $770 for 3 samples. The basic test includes measurements such as total organic carbon, reactive carbon (POXC), wet aggregate stability, soil respiration, ACE protein, soil pH and soil texture. And the advanced test does the same. but it can add either PLFA analysis or selected soil enzyme analyses. A composite sample is meant to represent a relatively uniform area. Exact soil types, landscapes or management zones should be sampled separately when farmers want to compare those areas. The program allows for more long-term soil monitoring. Farmers can take an initial sample before a management change, such as cover crops, and resample over the time to track changes.

NRCS CEMA 216 soil health test package and price

MO. COVER CROP COST-SHARE PACKAGE ($110/SAMPLE)	NRCS CEMA 216 BASIC PACKAGE ($110/SAMPLE)
Total organic carbon (dry combustion) Reactive carbon (POXC) Wet aggregate stability (web sieving) Soil respiration (3D incubation KOH base trap) Autoclaved citrate extractable (ACE) protein Potentially mineralizable N (7D incubation) Soil texture (particle size, pipette method)	Total organic carbon (dry combustion) Reactive carbon (POXC) Wet aggregate stability (web sieving) Soil respiration (4D incubation KOH base trap) Autoclaved citrate extractable (ACE) protein Soil pH (1:1 water and 0.01M CaCl2 salt) Texture (particle size, pipette method)
SOIL FERTILITY PACKAGE INCLUDED ANALYSES	**ADVANCED PACKAGE ($180/SAMPLE)**
Soil pH (1:1 water and 0.01M CaCl2 salt) Buffer pH (neutralizable acidity) Organic matter Mehlich-3 P, K, Ca, Mg, S, Na, Zn, Mn, Fe, Cu, B, Al Cation exchange capacity (CEC) Base saturation, CEC-based soil texture	Phospholipid fatty acid (PLFA) **or** Enzyme analysis (Any **three** from the following) • β-Glucosidase (C cycling) • Acid and/or alkaline phosphatase (P cycling) • Arylsulfatase (S cycling) • Protease (N cycling) • N-acetyl-β-D-glucosaminidase (C and N cycling)

- **Regenerative agriculture is being pushed by ADM,** which says, it has "expanded collaboration across the value chain through new partnerships, including initiatives with PepsiCo and Mars, and General Mills and Walmart. These collaborations bring together farmers, ADM and downstream customers to help scale regenerative agriculture while creating value across the supply chain. In 2025, ADM's regenerative agriculture programs engaged more than 56,000 farmers across approximately 4.6 mil. acres, 11 countries and 10 crops. Compared with regional benchmarks, the programs resulted in approximately 946,000 metric tons of CO_2 reductions." ADM's full 2026 Regenerative Agriculture Report can be read here.

- **Archer Daniels Midland** plans to enter the voluntary carbon dioxide removal market with credits generated from its corn complex in Columbus, NE, the company announced on Monday. ADM said the plant is the largest bioethanol carbon capture facility in the world, with more than 800,000 tons of annual carbon removal capacity. The company said its credit offering on the voluntary market expects to be one of the largest of its kind. ADM would join the likes of other ag companies in the voluntary market, including Indigo Ag, Corteva Agriscience, Perdue Farms Arva Intelligence and Agreena. The announcement comes as the USDA under the Trump administration continues to eliminate and restrict funding for greenhouse gas reduction programs. The agency canceled climate-smart farming grants in April 2025, including the $3 bil. Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities program. In the new program, CO2 is captured from ethanol fermentation at ADM's corn-processing facility and then purified, compressed and transported to Tallgrass's eastern WY sequestration hub for underground storage via CCS wells regulated under a WY Department of Environmental Quality Class VI permit.

USDA—

- **USDA Friday announced an investment of $5 mil.** in partnerships to help agricultural producers and private landowners restore and steward wetlands and floodplains through conservation easements. These projects, funded by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), direct-to-producer benefits while improving water quality, reducing flooding risks and providing habitat for wildlife. "Producers and landowners know their land better than anyone, and these partnerships give them extra support to do what they're already committed to — protecting their fields, keeping water clean, reducing flooding, and building a stronger future for their operations and their communities," said NRCS Chief Colton L. Buckley. NRCS is providing funding through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) and the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program. ACEP received a boost from the Working Families Tax Cut Act that delivered the largest long-term investment in NRCS conservation programs in decades, including $625 mil. for ACEP this year, $650 mil. in fiscal year 2027, $675 mil. in 2028, and $700 mil. per year from fiscal year 2029 through 2031. These easement programs promote the restoration, enhancement, protection, maintenance, and management of wetland, floodplain, and other habitat and associated uplands that would contribute significantly to functions and values of these habitats." Applications are due Nov. 19, 2026. NRCS anticipates making selections by December 17 and expects to award funds by February. For a full list of eligible entity types, additional details, and to apply, visit the Grants.gov opportunity.
- **The Supplemental Disaster Relief Program** aids producers for necessary expenses due to losses of revenue, quality or production of crops due to weather related events in 2023 and 2024. Producers with indemnified losses can apply during the first stage. Stage 1 will leverage Federal Crop Insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) data as the basis for calculating payments. Producers with non-indemnified (including shallow losses), uncovered (uninsured), and quality losses can apply for Stage 2 assistance. The deadline to apply for Stage 1 and 2 is September 30, 2026.

- **Enrollment is now underway** for acreage in either the ARC or PLC safety net programs. It's time to pick—ARC or PLC, "Running through December 11th, the opportunity will be open for farmers to make elections and to enroll in one or the other of the programs." USDA Farm Production Undersecretary Richard Fordyce, "ARC is more based on the revenue of that acre of whatever that crop is. So, take into account a little yield and a little price, and basically, it's a calculation that says what the revenue should be. And if you're below that, then you're eligible for a payment." While PLC, or Price Loss Coverage, focuses more specifically on what prices should be. But Fordyce says this signup will be different than prior ones due to base acre changes enacted last year, "The legislation said, you've got 30 mil. acres; you'll have to prorate those acres." With a prorated reduction of nearly 3.7% to account for the added acres. And planning's already underway for next year's signup, "For the 2027 crop year, that signup for elections and enrollment in the 2 programs will start on November 2nd, and that will run through March 15th of 2027." More details to follow at FSA offices or online at 'farmers.gov.'
- **USDA is beginning the largest expansion of commodity program** base acres in more than 2 decades. The addition of 30 mil. acres eligible for Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage is expected to increase support for farmers nationwide. USDA Undersecretary Richard Fordyce explains how the new acres were calculated and which regions stand to benefit the most, "I think it's great news. I was super happy to kind of see where we came out from that total. And because the total universe of eligible acres was not much more than 30 mil., we had to make a prorated reduction, but it was only at 3.69%. So as an example, if you had 100 acres of eligible new base, we had to reduce that by 3.69. So, you would have 96.31 acres of that total 100-acre eligibility. So not much of a reduction. So, I think that's really good news." Fordyce says some states saw particularly large gains because of major changes in cropping patterns over the last 20 years, "So we did see some states that had pretty significant increases: ND, SD, WI, NE. I think it had to do with a couple of things. One was areas of the country where their cropping systems have changed. It's been over 20 years since we've added any additional base acres. When we look at ND, for example, 20 years ago, a lot of dry land wheat, cereal grains; now, that state grows a lot of corn and soybeans. And so, I think that's one of the reasons. And then in some other states, like a dairy heavy state, for example. Maybe that farm, all the production from that farm actually went into feeding the dairy herd or some livestock operation. And so maybe those acres had not been captured back 20 years plus ago. But now with a lot of focus on acreage reporting related to other kind of programs, those farms had been reporting those acres." Because this is the first base-acre update in decades, Fordyce says several organizations are expected to study the effect on farm profitability and rural economies, The Economic Research Service, the Agricultural Research Service here at USDA will do an analysis on what that impact is to farms, but also to rural communities because farms are more profitable, their rural community seems to do better.

Noteworthy—

- **The 99th Annual FFA National Convention will be Oct. 21-24 in Indianapolis**, and dozens of IL FFA members will be introduced on stage as national finalists for top awards.
  - ✓ Among the final 4 for national Star awards: Justin Myers of Forreston for Star Farmer, Benjamin Biros of Seneca for Star in Agribusiness, and Jaron Black of Streator for Star in Ag Placement.
  - ✓ National Finalists in AgriScience: Sydney Kearby and Pipe Shaffer of Southeastern FFA; Isabelle Morrow of Taylorville FFA, Taylor price and Darilis Knobloch of Stark Co. FFA; Luke Short and Charlee Ryan of Taylorville FFA, Jada Wells and Nellie Bunnell of Southeastern FFA; Jake Primo of Stark Co. FFA; Ezha Biyok of Olney FFA; Connor Griswold and Nolan Stephens of Southeastern FFA; Madison Ensey and Annalynn Terwilliger of Stark County FFA; Hayden Jarboe and Chase Campbell of Southeastern FFA; Olive Ryan and Levi Paulek of Taylorville FFA; Creighton Stahl of Stark County FFA; Henry Waters of Pleasant Plains FFA, Jaxon Carder and Cash Kinsella of Stark County FFA; and Emma Herrdrman and Owen Kocher of Olney FFA.
  - ✓ National Finalists in Proficiency: Plant Systems: Luke Short of Taylorville FFA, Ag Sales: Aidan Knobloch of Herscher FFA; Diversified Crop production: AJ Harris of Franklin FFA; Diversified Livestock production: Molly McCalla of Staunton FFA; Equine Science: Shaylen Rowland of Mt. Vernon FFA; Outdoor Recreation: Alex Amettis of Maroa-Forsyth FFA; Swine Production: Kolby Causemaker of Geneseo FFA, and Specialty Crop Production: Madelyn Davin of Staunton FFA.
  - ✓ National Finalists for Chapter Awards: Cambridge Middle School FFA, Blue Ridge FFA and Pontiac FFA for Model of Excellence; and Bureau Valley, Eastland, Goreville, and Cambridge Middle School all for Premier Chapter.
  - ✓ Owen Torrance of the West Prairie FFA chapter is a candidate for National Office.
  - ✓ 231 IL FFA Members will receive their American FFA Degree
  - ✓ FFA members selected for the National FFA Band include Tanner Winter of Highland FFA, Isaac Becker of West Carroll FFA, Lydia Carton of Geneseo FFA, Beckett File of DuQuoin FFA, and Trayce McFadden of Warrensburg-Latham FFA.
  - ✓ Selected for the National FFA Chorus was Lewis Anderson of the Somonauk-Leland-Sandwich FFA Chapter.
  - ✓ Receiving their Honorary American FFA Degree are Lucas Allen, Mr. Ralph Allen, Cash Biros, Sarah Biros, Jason Black, Megan Black, Mrs. Lori Copsy, Mr. Willam Harmon, Dave Myers, Gail Myers, Robert Strong, Mrs. Lucy Thompson, and Mrs. Tammy Yard. Mr. Mike White will receive the 2026 VIP Citation.

Mark Your Calendar! --

- **Regenerative grazing is the topic of a Sept. 29 webinar, 1-2 pm,** presented by the Soil and Water Conservation Society. It will focus on getting started, which practices help bust the age-old myth that livestock keeps you tied to the farm, and the top questions that come up as producers implement grazing systems. Details and register.
- **New Univ. of IL research** using Precision Conservation Management field data validates cover crops and carbon, vis-a-vis farmer compensation. Dr. Laura Gentry and Dr. Saurav Raj Kunwar break down the costs and value of cover crops, what it means for evaluating cost-share and carbon program payments, and why a bigger PCM dataset makes the case stronger for every enrolled farmer. The Oct. 6 webinar will be 9-10 am. Register here.
- **Oct. 9 is the date for a Climate change adaptation workshop** to prepare your farm for unpredictable weather, changing pest pressures, and extreme climate events. The event is from 9 am to 1 pm at Caledonia, IL, including lunch with a $15 registration fee. Details.
- **Cultivating caution webinars will be** Oct. 14 on farmer mental health and Nov. 11 on manure pit gases. Register here for those webinars.
- **USDA has announced a new data modernization plan.** Anyone concerned about the impact is encouraged to listen to an Oct. 21 webinar, presented by the National Ag Law Center at the Univ. of AR. Webinar Opportunity (October 21): Several private attorneys will present "Agricultural Data Rights: A New State Law Landscape." To register, click **here**.
- **ARC & PLC decisions will need to be made,** and Farmdoc ag economists will help with that during an Oct. 22 webinar 11 am to 12 noon. The Farm Service Agency has officially opened the enrollment period for the 2026 Commodity program decision with a deadline of December 11th, 2026. Ag economists will offer this webinar to cover the final payments from the 2025 program year and discuss considerations and provide guidance on the ARC/PLC program decision for 2026. Register here to get the webinar 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).

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