

Farm Smarts: A Fresh Look at Farm Fundamentals Coming to Champaign County

This winter, the Champaign and Piatt County Farm Bureaus are bringing farmers a new, practical, and highly engaging educational series designed to sharpen decision-making and strengthen farm fundamentals. **Farm Smarts**, running January through March 2026, offers straightforward insights, real conversations, and the kind of information farmers can use the very next day.

All sessions begin at **6:30 p.m. at the Champaign County Farm Bureau**, and **dinner is provided!**

But this program isn't just about learning. It is also about rewarding members who invest in themselves. **Attend 4 of the 5 sessions and you'll receive a Farm Bureau swag bag. Attend all 5 and you'll be entered to win a \$250 Milwaukee tool bundle.** And for anyone who **joins Farm Bureau as a new member or renews during the series**, you'll be entered to win a **\$100 gift card** to the local restaurant of your choice. If gaining practical knowledge isn't reason enough to attend, walking away with new gear certainly sweetens the deal.

A Closer Look at the 2026 Farm Smarts Lineup

1. Marketing Beyond the Scale Ticket — January 20

Speaker: Greg Johnson, TGM

A deeper dive into commodity marketing strategies that go well beyond selling across the scale.

Takeaway: Learn how timing, tools,

and market trends can turn a “good enough” year into a great one.

2. Finding Funds in Unexpected Places — January 27

Speaker: Mark Hortin, Ag Finance Guru

Explore traditional and alternative financing avenues you may be overlooking.

Takeaway: Discover hidden financial tools and opportunities sitting right under your nose.

3. Crop Insurance: What Am I Paying For, Anyway? — February 5

Speaker: Doug Yoder, COUNTRY Financial

A practical breakdown of crop insurance coverage and how to get your money's worth.

Takeaway: Demystify your policy and learn how to make your coverage work smarter—not harder.

4. “We’re the Government, and

We’re Here to Help” (Really!) — March 5

Representatives from SWCD, NRCS, FSA, Rural Development, USFWS, and more deliver fast-paced TED-style updates, followed by a lively Q&A.

Takeaway: Understand which agency to call when opportunity—or trouble—comes knocking.

5. Diseases, Deficiencies & Dirty Fields — March 10

Speaker: Jill Henninger, Sunrise FS

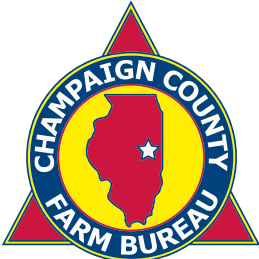
A field-tested refresher on agronomy fundamentals, soil health, and key questions to ask before the season kicks off.

Takeaway: Strengthen your agronomy IQ and boost yields while keeping your sanity intact.

With practical takeaways, expert speakers, great food, and chances to win useful gear, **Farm Smarts is shaping up to be an incredibly valuable winter program.** Farmers looking to sharpen

their skills, stay informed, and connect with fellow members won't want to miss it!

To register for the Farm Smart series, visit: <https://form.jotform.com/champaignCFB/farm-smarts>, call the Champaign County Farm Bureau office at 217-352-5235, the Piatt County Farm Bureau office at 217-762-2128, or email bailey@ccfarmbureau.com. RSVP's are due 3 days prior to the respective sessions.



Champaign County Farm Bureau

Annual Meeting Notice

Notice is hereby given that the 115th Annual Meeting of the Champaign County Farm Bureau is called for Thursday, January 15th, 2026 at the Champaign County Farm Bureau, 801 N. Country Fair Dr, Champaign, IL.

The business meeting will begin at 5:30 p.m. for the purpose of consideration of any business which may be properly presented.

Directors from the following townships will be elected:

- Crittenden
- East Bend
- Hensley
- Ogden
- Rantoul
- Tolono
- Urbana

Minutes of the 2025 CCFB Annual Meeting will be printed in the December edition of the CCFB newsletter.

Please fill out the information for the Proxy below and return by **Jan. 9th, 2026** to:

Champaign Co. Farm Bureau
801 N. Country Fair Dr.
Champaign, IL 61821

PROXY

KNOWN ALL PERSONS BY THESE PRESENT THAT

_____ (name of member) of _____ (address)

a voting member of the Champaign County Farm Bureau, a corporation organized under the law of Illinois, does hereby appoint and constitute Casey Hettinger of Urbana, Illinois, or failing him, Robert Barker of Champaign, Illinois, their true and lawful attorney to attend the annual meeting of the members of the Champaign County Farm Bureau to be held in the Champaign County Farm Bureau Building, Champaign, Illinois on the 15th day of January, 2026 and any and all adjustments thereof, and to vote for this member as its proxy and representative, the one vote which the member would be entitled to cast if actually present, upon any and all things competent to said member, as may in their judgement be necessary or advantageous for all interests of this corporation.

Member Name: _____

Member Address: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

This proxy can also be filled out electronically at
<https://form.jotform.com/champaignCFB/2024-ccfb-annual-meeting-proxy>

January Report

President, Doug Downs



Doug Downs, CCFB President

As the year ends, the season of winter meetings has kicked off with a big bang. I've just returned home from the Illinois Farm Bureau annual meeting in Chicago. As I reported last year, you will never be around such a fine group of people as you are there. It's an incredible experience. A few new younger faces joined our delegate team in 2025, and it was great to get them involved in such a historic event. This year, two Champaign County farmers brought home the top awards. The Charles B. Schuman distinguished service award and the young farmers achievement award. Among other county level awards, your county farm bureau also won a fundraising auction for use of the premier suite where we had a large legislative breakfast gathering with state senators and representatives from around central Illinois and a huge Sunday afternoon reception for our award winners. With guests attending from every corner of the state, we hosted several gatherings with friends and neighbors of Champaign County and all of Illinois. As we prepared for the business at hand, we built long lasting, powerful relationships and made connections that will benefit all of our members for years to come.

There is a new State President, and he is no stranger to the office. Philip Nelson of LaSalle County will step back into the top spot and Evan Hultine of Bureau County retained his vice president's seat. Four new directors were seated against incumbents, and one new director replaced a tenured director. Although there was excitement, anticipation, and anxiety around these elections, one thing really stood out and that was the graciousness of those who won as well as the respect and dignity shown to those who did not. It was a civil event with results that expressed a desire for change. At the end of the day (or maybe very early the next morning) I spoke with several who supported opposing candidates and most were anxious to move forward, repair images, work with other commodity groups and end the problems we face elsewhere. It's been a pleasure to have been able to make incredible relationships with those people from across the state. I am reminded of a statement made to me about a year ago by someone who said to me that the "delegates always get it right". Seems this year that may be more so than ever. I'm happy to be back home delivering my winter grain contracts, pushing snow, and getting final holiday plans together (well, actually I haven't even thought about the holidays, but we'll set that aside for now.)

The new year is upon us. I remember quite some time ago when I was a young boy and my grandfather was about my current age, he said with disbelief, "I can't believe it's going to be 1980" ...shows how old I am. Well, I can't believe it's going to be 2026, but I can tell you that after this past week and realizing that I am the older man in the crowd, that the future is bright for IFB and your County Farm Bureau.

Doug Downs
CCFB President

Prime Timers Meeting

No meetings are held in

January or February

Prime Timers will resume in March

CCFB Office - 217-352-5235

Women's Committee

The Champaign County Farm Bureau Women's Committee is open to all women interested in agriculture.

Calendar of Events

January 12 • 9:30 a.m.

General Meeting & Soup Potluck

CCFB Auditorium

Consider Joining The Women's Committee In 2026

If you are looking for new experiences as the New Year rolls in, please consider adding attendance at the Women's Committee on your calendar. We have a stimulating lineup of guest speakers scheduled for 2026. Where else can you support agriculture, engage in learning, and bolster your friendship circle all at the same time? Some of our speakers include Amber Oberheim on Women's health, Renee Fehl, author and attorney on domestic violence, Matt Riggs on agrivoltics and Jane Cade on how to make a barn quilt. We will tour Kountry Fresh and improve our flower arranging skills at Rural Rose. Please pay attention to the newsletter with the announcement of activities for the month ahead. Start by marking your calendar for our meetings on the 2nd Monday of each month. It is a choice you won't regret.

CCFB Calendar of Events

January 2026

January 12	Women's Committee	9:30 am
January 15	CCFB Annual Meeting	5:30 pm
January 20	Governmental Affairs	7:30 a.m.
Dec 24 – Jan 4	Holiday	Office Closed

FARM SMARTS: A FRESH LOOK AT FARM FUNDAMENTALS

JAN. 20

Marketing Beyond
the Scale Ticket

JAN. 27

Finding Funds in
Unexpected Places

FEB. 5

Crop Insurance: What Am
I Paying For, Anyway?

MAR. 5

"We're the Government, and
We're Here to Help" (Really!)

MAR. 10

Diseases, Deficiencies,
& Dirty Fields



ALL SESSIONS AT 6:30 PM

CCFB Auditorium • Supper Provided



EUCHRE

Join CCFB members
for Euchre!

2 p.m. – 4 p.m. @
CCFB Auditorium



2026

January 11 & 25

February 8 & 22

If there is bad weather call Gerald Henry at 217-778-6157

Announcing Champaign County Farm Bureau's Trips and Tours

Mark Your Calendars • 2026 Trips

February 12, 2026 – National Farm Machinery Show – Louisville, KY

Travel with fellow Champaign County Farm Bureau members to the National Farm Machinery Show and experience a full day of agricultural innovation, networking, & discovery.

Price for Members: \$75.00 *Non-Members: \$100.00*

April 8, 2026 - Kenny & Dolly in Harmony – White Pines Theatre – Mt. Morris, IL

Matinees Dave Karl & Wendy T are together once again at the Rock to recreate the incredible songs and the onstage playfulness of Kenny Rogers & Dolly Parton's "Real Love" tour. This tribute act has it all, the songs, the mannerisms, the vocals, the professionalism and of course, the charm, the magic and the on-stage playfulness of Kenny and Dolly!.

Price Per Person: \$150.00 *Deadline to Register or Cancel: March 13, 2026*

May 7, 2026 - Beef House on Broadway – The Beef House – Covington, IN

A concert celebrating 30 seasons! A show you don't want to miss!
Price Per Person: \$150.00 Deadline to Register or Cancel: April 17, 2026

June 4-5, 2026 - Gaither Vocal Band – Shipshewana, IN
****OVERNIGHT TRIP****

Since the early 1990s, the Gaither Vocal Band has served as a standard-bearer in the world of gospel music. Founded by legendary gospel songwriter and producer, Bill Gaither, this Grammy-winning vocal group has performed in the world's most prestigious venues, including the Sydney Opera House, The Kennedy Center, and Carnegie Hall. Today, the Gaither Vocal Band roster is comprised of five power-packed voices, including Bill Gaither, Wes Hampton, Adam Crabb, Todd Suttles and Reggie Smith. Individually, these men are gifted artists and men of authentic faith. Together, they are the known around the world for their stunning vocals, innovative harmonies and life-altering message... a message of grace, hope and redemption.

Enjoy a few hours of shopping on June 5th before heading back home!
Price Per Person: \$325 *Deadline to Register or Cancel: May 1, 2026*

**July 20, 2026 – A Tribute to the Best of the Best –
Starved Rock Lodge, Oglesby, IL**

Travel through the decades as Joe Nuccio honors some of the most iconic singers from the 30s to the 70s. Sit back and enjoy the songs of crooners and showmen like Louis Armstrong, Tony Bennett, Perry Como, Bobby Darin, Jimmy Durante, Nat King Cole, Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, Cab Calloway, and more. Then get your toes tapping rock and soul singers like Fats Domino, Jerry Lee Lewis, Ray Charles, Elvis, Roy Orbison, Tom Jones, Neil Diamond, and others. It's sure to be an afternoon filled with your favorite songs by the most popular artists of all time..

Price Per Person: \$150 *Deadline to Register or Cancel: July 3, 2026*

August 19, 2026 – The Buddy Holly Story – Drury Lane Theatre – Oakbrook Terrace, IL

Buddy – The Buddy Holly Story chronicles the life and music of rock and roll pioneer Buddy Holly from his early start in Texas to his meteoric rise to fame and untimely death at the age of 22. Experience the original sound that changed rock and roll music as we know it..

Price Per Person: \$150.00 *Deadline to Register or Cancel: July 24, 2026*

September 23, 2026 – Ring of Fire – Beef & Boards Theatre – Indianapolis, IN

Set to the legendary songs of Johnny Cash, *Ring of Fire* takes audiences on a heartfelt journey through the Man in Black's iconic career. From the early days of country and gospel to chart-topping hits that defined an era, this spirited musical revue features favorites like "I Walk the Line," "Folsom Prison Blues," and, of course, "Ring of Fire." Full of heart, humor, and the raw honesty that made Cash a legend, the show paints a rich portrait of love, struggle, and the uniquely American sound that still resonates today.

Price Per Person: \$150.00 *Deadline to Register or Cancel: September 4, 2026*

November 20, 2026 – Holiday Cruise – Celebration Belle – Moline, IL

Enjoy a tradition holiday meal and listen to your favorite holiday tunes! Get ready for some holiday cheer with a Christmas Show presented by Aaron & Jade from Bloom. Join them for this fabulous combination of Christmas Spirit, music, and dance!.
Price Per Person: \$150.00 *Deadline to Register or Cancel: October 30, 2026*

Proudly Present:

The logo for Country Financial, featuring the word "COUNTRY" in a large, bold, serif font above the word "FINANCIAL" in a smaller, bold, sans-serif font, both enclosed within a dark oval border.

Andrew Deedrich
217-359-3941

A small icon of a clock face, indicating a time-related event.

January 22, 2026

4 PM – 6PM

A small icon of a five-pointed star, indicating a location or point of interest.

Aspen Taphouse

2001 S Neil St, Champaign

A small icon of a telephone handset, indicating a contact number.

RSVP by Jan 16th

217-352-5235

emily@ccfarmbureau.com

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FARM BUREAU AGRILINK

The Champaign County
Farm Bureau AgriLink group
connects local agribusiness
professionals to strengthen and
support our ag community.

The logo for Champaign County Farm Bureau, featuring a circular design with the text "CHAMPAIGN COUNTY" at the top and "FARM BUREAU" at the bottom. In the center is a silhouette of the state of Illinois with a white star in the center of the state.

www.ccfarmbureau.com

YOUNG LEADERS

Thursday
Jan 8

2026 KICKOFF MEETING
6:00 PM Young Leaders Event
801 N Country Fair Dr. Champaign, IL 61821

SPEAKER: CASEY HETTINGER

RSVP to emily@ccfarmbureau.com

The logo is a circular seal for the Champaign County Farm Bureau. It features a stylized map of Champaign County, Illinois, in the center, with a five-pointed star indicating a specific location. The words "CHAMPAIGN COUNTY" are written in a circular path around the top half of the map, and "FARM BUREAU" is written around the bottom half. The entire seal is rendered in a light gray tone.

SAVE THE DATE

2026 Illinois
Agricultural Summit

February 3, 2026

ILLINOIS
AGRICULTURAL
 EST. 2025 SUMMIT

Market your calendars for the first Tuesday in February for a full day of Ag information, education and networking. Look for updates to come at www.ILAgribusiness.com

AG in the Classroom

2025-2026

Providing hands-on learning opportunities that represent our industry in a truthful and modern way.

www.ccfbfoundation.com/aite

New Tower Garden

We received a generous donation for another Tower Garden. It will be placed in St. Joseph Elementary.



THANK YOU!

Locations

- Barkstall
- Holy Cross
- Unity West
- Stratton
- MSJH
- Fisher JH
- Eastlawn
- Kenwood
- Bottenfield
- Heritage
- Thomasboro
- Booker T Washington
- Martin Luther King Jr

Photo is of Eastlawn Elementary Music Classroom growing flowers and brussel sprouts.

2026 Sneak Peek

MAPPING ILLINOIS

Students learn the state's geography and commodities.

BASKETBALL AND AGRICULTURE

Students learn how agriculture is involved in the sport of basketball.

Beef CATTLE

Students learn about selective breeding and the science behind it.

Library

We have cataloged our 494 ag books in one place. Take a look at our titles here.



Grounded in Ag Breakfast

Thank you to our supporters! We enjoyed sharing the lessons and stories of the classroom with you this fall.



Upcoming

- January 7
Second Semester Begins
- January 20
Teacher Book Club Begins
- January 27
Teacher Incubator Training
- February 2
1st Incubator Cycle Begins



Sigma Alpha SORORITY

Sigma Alpha taught 2 lessons in the fall reaching 69 teachers with a total of 522 students.

Bird Beaks K-2nd
Students discover how birds act as pollinators and how their different beaks function.

Citrus 3rd - 5th
Students learn the history of citrus and how they got to the grocery store from the tropics.

Keep in Touch



QR Code to ccfbfoundation.com/aite


sarah@ccfarmbureau.com
julie@ccfarmbureau.com

Champaign County Ag in the Classroom



Champaign County
AG IN THE CLASSROOM
CCFB FOUNDATION

Thank you!



Retiring Foundation Board Members

The Foundation is grateful to recognize retiring board members Brian Arends, Tim Hughes, and Matt Hoose for their years of service to our mission. Their leadership, insight, and commitment have made a meaningful difference, and their impact will continue to be felt for years to come. We will truly miss their guidance and are thankful for all they have given to the Foundation.



Brian Arends
FlightStar
2020-2026



Tim Hughes
Premier Cooperative
2021-2026



Matt Hoose
Met Life Ag Finance
2020-2026



WE'RE INVESTING IN YOU

2026-2027 SCHOLARSHIPS are now open!

APPLICATIONS due JANUARY 31

Apply today at CCFBFOUNDATION.COM/SCHOLARSHIP



Deadline To Apply:

1/31/26
11:59pm



Nathan Hubbard
COUNTRY Financial
Agency Manager



Bret Kroencke
217-359-9391



Dan Punkay
217-328-0023

COUNTRY FINANCIAL REPRESENTATIVE TANNA SUITS

Each month the Champaign County Farm Bureau will highlight a COUNTRY Financial Representative from Champaign County. These monthly highlights will allow you to get to know each representative serving our members.

Tanna Suits is a COUNTRY Financial Representative located at 426 E Champaign Ave., Suite A, in Rantoul. Getting to know your local representatives is a great way to get connected with your finances and get started securing your future. Tanna and her family live in the community where she works which allows her to build relationships and trust with people she knows as friends stating “I’m truly passionate about helping individuals, families, and farms protect what matters most to them. Whether it’s reviewing policies, planning for the future, or simply answering questions, I’m committed to being a resource you can trust. My goal is always to make insurance feel approachable, understandable, and tailored to your real-life individual needs.”

Tanna started her career with COUNTRY Financial in 2022. Prior to joining COUNTRY, Tanna’s career in the insurance and financial service industry took off in 2008 with Farm Credit IL as a Sales & Services Specialist in Commercial Lending. In 2013, she joined The Gifford State Bank as a Credit Analyst in the Ag Lending Department. Altogether, Tanna has spent well over a decade serving clients in the insurance and financial services industry.

Growing up in a farm and livestock family, Tanna understands the daily ins and outs of this industry saying “it truly is my passion. I always knew that whatever career path I chose, it would be rooted in agriculture. Helping families and businesses in this community protect what they’ve worked so hard to build felt like a natural fit.”

Tanna specializes in farm insurance, livestock insurance, life insurance, home insurance, auto insurance, and business insurance. She also partners with Scott Jackson to provide financial services and retirement planning. Tanna takes the time to ensure clients have a well-rounded approach to protecting their future.

“I’m deeply rooted in our community and give back whenever I can. My husband, our twin boys, and I farm, raise, and show beef cattle as well as Quarter Horses, which gives me a firsthand under-



standing of the needs and challenges local families and businesses face. That real-world perspective helps me connect with clients on a level that goes beyond policies and numbers.”

Clients can expect to build a relationship with Tanna focused on trust and transparency. With a background in agriculture and deep roots in the community, Tanna understands the challenges families and businesses face. She will take the time to listen, explain options clearly, and make sure clients feel confident in the decisions they make together. Tanna stresses that “building relationships based on honesty and genuine understanding is at the heart of everything I do. I love sitting down with my clients to go through their policies and make sure they understand the coverages they have. Supporting their goals, families, and livelihoods is truly rewarding.”

Securing your financial future starts with a few simple steps. Tanna recommends “starting early and sitting down with a financial advisor. You don’t need to have a large amount of money to begin investing. COUNTRY has a specialized department that manages portfolios to help ensure you’re on the right track. Taking that first step—no matter how small—can make a big difference over time.”

Tanna is a licensed insurance agent in IL, IN, AZ, WI, MO, TN & CO

217-892-0200

tanna.suits@countryfinancial.com



Kolby Jackson
217-586-5030



Chris Greenwold
217-355-8675



Robert Lalumendier
217-352-3341



Preston Engel
217-974-7949



Andrew Deedrich
217-359-3941



Tim Osterbur
217-469-2033



Dawn Babb
217-892-0291



Jordan McDaniel
217-352-9817



Barry Karuzis
217-352-4555



Tanna Suits
217-892-0200



Tony Wesselman
217-352-3466



Scott Jackson
217-359-9335



Jordan Johnson
217-485-3010

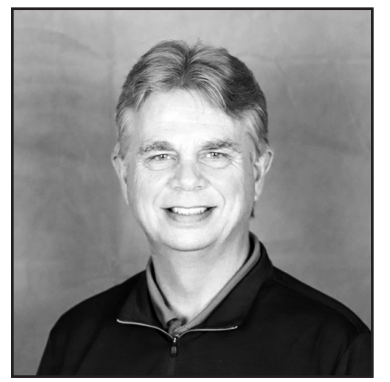


Tim Bridges
217-586-6170



Drew Arteaga
217-469-9800

SUNRISE



**JIM MEINHART,
GENERAL MANAGER**

From The Field

First off, from everyone at Sunrise FS, I would like to wish every reader a Happy and Prosperous New Year! I would like to pose a question to producers. How will you improve your yields this year while maintaining profitability at the local level? Farm budgets may be tighter this year than in previous years. I want to remind producers of some of the key takeaways from the 2025 growing season as we are in the middle of prepay season, and many management decisions for 2026 are being finalized.

Soil Fertility

During this past fall, many producers completed almost all the fieldwork required, including fall applications of Anhydrous Ammonia. Anhydrous Ammonia (NH_3): For much of this past fall, we saw soil conditions that were warmer and drier than desired for practical fall NH_3 application. Many growers were wondering if we could see a repeat of the fall of 2024, where virtually no anhydrous ammonia was applied. However, fall conditions improved, allowing many to complete field work prior to what seems like an above-average start to winter, given the received snowfall thus far. In the month of December, we were hopeful that we might be able to complete any remaining field work, but for most, this opportunity did not present itself. If growers still need to apply the bulk of the nitrogen needs prior to this spring. A few questions about spring-applied nitrogen usually center around the following.

“Do I still need a nitrogen stabilizer?” and “Are spilt applications necessary?”

The short answer is YES! Soil microbial activity starts to become active once soil temps warm to about 50°F, but once the soil warms up above 70°F, they are entirely active. These naturally occurring soil microbes include the ones that are responsible for converting applied forms of nitrogen from anhydrous ammonia, urea, and UAN to undesirable forms that are prone to loss. Loss may occur from the leaching of nitrate, denitrification (nitrate converted to gaseous forms of nitrogen, nitrous oxide, a greenhouse gas or N_2 , and volatilization of ammonia gas. The goal of including a nitrogen stabilizer is to delay this natural process to ensure the applied nitrogen will remain in the system long enough for plant uptake. Much of corn's peak demands for nitrogen do not begin until sometime around growth stage V8. Research from the University of IL suggests that nitrogen loss in saturated soils may be as much as 5% daily. I ask growers, can you afford to lose 5% of your applied nitrogen per day? I think most growers will agree that often when rain events occur in the springtime, fields do not dry up in a day's time. This documented 5% loss can add up quickly, leading to some major losses of nitrogen just through denitrification. Just like the approach of layered soil residual herbicides with the goal of preventing weed germination. Spit application of nitrogen can achieve similar results by keeping nitrogen in the systems longer into the growing season. Close to the time of peak demand from corn plants. Match nitrogen stabilizers to the appropriate form of nitrogen as well as the application method. For example, if liquid UAN is broadcast on the soil surface and incorporated immediately, a denitrification inhibitor may only be required. However, suppose liquid UAN is broadcasted on the soil surface and not incorporated. In that case, an inhibitor that will protect against denitrification and volatilization is required to prevent unnecessary loss that is likely to occur. I strongly encourage growers to speak with a Crop Specialist now about their spring nitrogen needs, especially if fall applied NH_3 did not occur. Another guidance I would like to offer growers is if there are any opportunities for NH_3 applications this winter and spring to avoid conditions that may create air pockets below the soil surface from wet soils. These soil conditions may create zones of free ammonia, which is known to lead to ammonia burn of corn seedlings. To prevent this condition, applications should be applied at a slight angle from normal traffic patterns to avoid planter rows landing directly or near NH_3 application.



Sulfur, Boron, and Zinc

In-season nutrient testing from NuTracker Plus in 2025 indicated Sulfur, Boron, and Zinc are deficient in many fields locally. Sulfur has quickly become a “macronutrient,” much like NPK. Growers should be aware that the sulfate forms of sulfur are plant-available and that the elemental forms of sulfur are not. They require time and active soil microbial activity to convert elemental sulfur to sulfate for plant uptake. Sulfate forms of sulfur are best applied to actively growing crops. Elemental forms are best applied in the fall for next year's crop use. Corn will benefit from 1 pound of applied sulfur for every 10 bushels of expected yield (250

bu/A corn will need 25 lbs/A of sulfur). Soybeans also greatly benefit from sulfur applications, requiring 4 lbs of sulfur for every 10 bushels of expected yield (70 bu/A soybeans will need 28 lbs/A of sulfur). Boron and Zinc, in most cases, are needed in much lower quantities, oftentimes only a few pounds per acre. Avoid the application of boron anywhere near corn or soybean seeds. Boron is highly toxic to seedlings and must be avoided. Zinc is a cation, making it a good candidate to even apply with fall fertilizer. The response that growers see from these key nutrients beyond NPK continues to improve crop yields and remain profitable.

Weed Control

This is the time of year when many weed management plans are made for the next growing season. I ask growers: were you happy with your weed management plan in 2024? If not, the following are some key ways to maximize herbicide applications in 2026.

1. Target effective active ingredients to match known weed pressures. If a particular field is known to have problems from grasses, large-seeded broadleaves, and small-seeded broadleaves, it is likely that 3 to 4 different sites of action may be required for effective control.
2. Match full labeled rates of soil-applied residuals to field-specific soil types. Often, if herbicide premixes are utilized, this may require the use of individual active ingredient products to max out rates.
3. Apply soil residuals shortly before planting or shortly after planting. Remember that once soil residuals are applied, the countdown timer begins for the length of effective control, most lasting 21-30 days. Be sure to use the approach of overlapping residuals. This means applying another residual before the prior residual has lost its effective control.
4. Most soil-applied herbicide residuals do not require incorporation. When soil residuals are not effective, one of two things often occurs: one, the herbicide was buried too deep with tillage and diluted by too much soil mixing, or two, there was not enough soil moisture for herbicide application.
5. Proper adjuvant selection for post-applied herbicide. Many herbicides are considered to be weak acids and require the pH of the water carrier to be lowered because of the calcium cations found in many local water sources, which may tie up herbicides. Most post-herbicide applications require 1-3 pounds per acre of spray-grade ammonium sulfate to achieve the necessary water conditioning. Post-applied herbicides often require the addition of some surfactant to aid in coverage and absorption.
6. Target post-applied herbicide applications before weeds reach 4 inches in growth.
7. Successful post-applied herbicide applications, especially for waterhemp control, include more than one different effective site of action, not simply different active ingredients. An example would be approved formulations of 2,4-D and glufosinate.
8. Also, remember to use the proper gallons per acre to match tank-mix components and spray tip selections.

The last item I would encourage growers to consider is implementing new products or practices. While it's a great idea to try new things, it's also a great idea to avoid products or practices that are not proven or, at very least, provide a break-even return on investment. For example, if a new product is being considered and yield data is presented, does it meet the following criteria?

1. Was the research conducted in an area similar to your operation? Were the growing conditions similar to yours, such as soil fertility, planting methods, and so on?
2. Was multiple locations and multiple years' worth of data collected? If only one location and one year's worth of data are presented, the outcome may not be repeatable.
3. Finally, what statistics represent the data that may indicate repeatability? The following link from Bayer CropSciences provides a great explanation.

<https://www.cropscience.bayer.us/articles/bayer/plot-results-evaluation>

If readers of this newsletter have questions or concerns about management strategies for 2025, Illini FS or I would welcome the opportunity to partner with you. If readers want to contact me personally, please utilize my contact information below.

*Eric Beckett, CPag, CCA-4RNMS
Agronomist, Sunrise FS
217-318-9100
ebeckett@sunrisefs.com*



Kitchen Legacies

Homemade dishes outlive generations

Field meals deliver their own form of heroism, and Mom saves the day. She dishes out the seasonal suppers spring and fall with guidance from her sidekicks – women past and present who submitted their kitchen’s best recipes to a church cookbook. Leah’s fiesta bake, Marie’s orange salad, Debra’s pizza casserole and Ann’s marble squares have fueled our field crew for years.

Out here in farm country, the names of past landowners often carry forward, becoming part of the land’s identity long after ownership has changed. For instance, the “Lievens Back Bottom,” which my parents have owned half my life, was previously tended by the late Mr. and Mrs. Lievens. I’ll spare you 50 more examples. My point: the same goes for good, home-cooked food.

Thanks to small-town recipe books, home cooks earned their own version of legacy status without needing acreage on a balance sheet. Instead, they claimed a kitchen, embraced a passion and created recipes or refined family ones in 9×13 batches that fed and delighted the local masses.

Long before Google became a verb, churches published cookbooks filled with personal recipe submissions, each tied to a name. No digital versions exist of these limited-edition paper relics. There are no pictures. No reviews. Each recipe stands solely on the credibility of the cook who submitted it as a time-tested family favorite – and that alone serves as a built-in 5-star rating.

I have proof with Lorraine’s broccoli soup, Pam’s pizza crust, Lou’s cool cucumber pasta and Mary’s Thanksgiving dressing. Mom and I made 12 batches of Kathy’s hash brown au gratin for a farm wedding. I adore Susan’s corn

Congratulations Emily on being selected for the 2026 ALOT Class!

AGRICULTURAL Leaders

OF TOMORROW

CLASS OF 2026 ANNOUNCED

Emily Cler Champaign	Nicolas Gvillo Madison	James Maher Peoria
Aaron DeGroot Christian	Courtney Sandidge Mason	Zach Rincker Shelby
Ed Dubrick Ford-Iroquois	Oliver Kragelund McLean	Mallie Pyles Tazewell
Chase Ochsner LaSalle	Matt Miller McLean	
Brian Grotefendt Madison	Michael Gill Peoria	

LEADERS

YESTERDAY. TODAY & ALWAYS



CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FARM BUREAU NEWS

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casserole and chuck wagon baked beans. And Grandma’s published recipe for frosted banana bars is better than bread. It freezes well, too.

The book entries tell stories. Ingredients like strawberries, zucchini, rhubarb and blackberries signal home gardeners and wild blackberry pickers who love to cook. The salad section proves that Jell-O and Cool Whip absolutely qualify as salads by Midwestern standards.

I own hundreds of pages of local recipes in five cookbooks. Mom has a dozen. Grandma’s stash fills a cabinet, and my aunt collects them. The recipes are worth repeating, the novelty worth preserving and the pages a testament to the women who – in their quiet heroism – fed a community. And still do.

About the author: Joanie Stiers farms with her parents and brother in Knox County, where they grow corn, soybeans and hay, raise beef cattle and operate side businesses related to the family operation.



National Farm Machinery Show – Bus Trip

Thursday February 12, 2026

Travel with fellow Champaign County Farm Bureau members to the National Farm Machinery Show and experience a full day of agricultural innovation, networking, and discovery.

Schedule

- Departure: Bus leaves at 5:00 AM from the Farm Bureau office – back parking lot
- Return: Leave at 4:30 PM ET from NFMS
- Breakfast: Pastries, fruit, and drinks included

Note: Discounted price available only for members in good standing only

Members: \$75

Non-Members: \$100

Limited spots available! Contact our office to RSVP

WOMEN’S COMMITTEE

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Submitted by Sandra Chesnut

Blueberry Stuffed French Toast Casserole

Ingredients

- 12 slices bread
- 1 – 8 oz pkg cream cheese
- 2 C. fresh or frozen blueberries
- 10 eggs
- 1/3 C. maple syrup
- 2 C. milk

Sauce

- 1 C. water
- 2 T. corn starch
- 1 C. sugar
- 2 C. fresh or frozen berries
- 1 T. butter
- ½ t. cinnamon
- Whipped cream (optional)

Preparation

Cube bread. Spray bottom of 9 x 13 glass baking dish with vegetable spray and place half of bread cubes in dish. Cube cream cheese and put on top of the bread. Put blueberries on the cream cheese. Place remaining bread over blueberries. Beat eggs, add maple syrup and milk. Pour mixture over bread & cream cheese. Place plastic wrap over dish and refrigerate overnight. Bake casserole, covered with foil, in preheated 350 degrees oven for 30 minutes. Remove foil and bake another 30 minutes or until it is puffed & golden. Let sit about 10 minutes before slicing.

Sauce: Cook water, corn starch, sugar & 1 C. blueberries until it thickens. Add remaining 1 C. blueberries, butter and cinnamon. Pour sauce over the individual pieces. Top with whip cream if desired. Makes 8-12 servings.

IAA Annual Meeting

Illinois Farm Bureau hosted its Annual Meeting in Chicago at the beginning of December. Several Champaign County Farm Bureau delegates attended the meeting. Highlights include:

- John Reifsteck received the Charles B. Shuman Distinguished Service Award which honors those individuals who have given dedicated service to agriculture on the local, state, and national levels.
- Daniel Herriott & Constance Herriott received the Illinois Farm Bureau Young Leaders Achievement Award. This award recognizes an outstanding Young

Leader who has demonstrated leadership and excellence in production agriculture, their county farm bureau, and in their community.

- Jacob Dickey, CCFB member & WCIA weatherman was the runner up for the Young Leader Discussion Meet.
- CCFB members also attended a legislative breakfast and enjoyed great conversation.
- Kacie Claire was spotted, our former assistant manager at CCFB and current Ford-Iroquois Farm Bureau manager.



Women's Committee

The Women's Committee December meeting featured a breakfast potluck and played table games.

