



Vol. 104, No. 7

801 N. Country Fair Drive, Suite A, Champaign, IL 61821

July, 2026



Agriculture and America's 250-Year Story

As our nation prepares to celebrate America's 250th birthday, communities across the country are reflecting on the people, values, and industries that have shaped our nation's history. While many stories will focus on politics, military service, and innovation, agriculture deserves a place at the center of that conversation.

Long before there were highways, skyscrapers, or even states, there were farmers.

For 250 years, agriculture has been woven into the fabric of America. The nation's founders understood the importance of a strong agricultural sector, recognizing that the ability to produce food, fiber, and fuel was essential to both economic prosperity and national security. Generations of farm families answered that call,

helping build communities, feed a growing population, and create opportunities for future generations.

Here in Champaign County, that legacy is easy to see. The rich soils of east-central Illinois have supported farming families for generations. Fields that were once worked with horses are now managed using GPS guidance, precision technology, and data-driven decision-making. While the tools have changed dramatically, the commitment to stewardship, hard work, and feeding others remains the same.

Agriculture's story is also America's story of innovation. Farmers have consistently adapted to new challenges, whether responding to changing markets, adopting new technologies, or improving conservation practices. The same pioneering spirit that helped settle the frontier continues to drive advancements in crop production, livestock care, sustainability, and agricultural research today.

As we approach this historic milestone, it is worth remembering that agriculture has never been solely about producing crops and livestock. It is about strengthening communities. Rural schools, local businesses, churches, fairs, youth organizations, and civic groups have all been supported by the success

and involvement of farm families. Agriculture remains an economic engine that creates jobs and opportunities far beyond the farm gate.

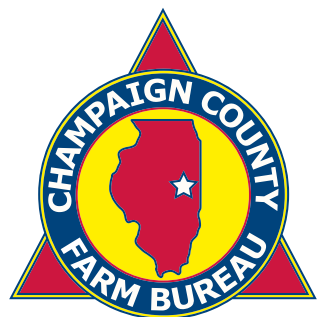
The next chapter of America's story will depend on the next generation of agricultural leaders. Whether they are farming, conducting research, developing new technologies, advocating for agriculture, or serving their communities, young people will play a critical role in ensuring our nation remains strong and resilient.

The Illinois and American Farm Bureau organizations have spent more than a century advocating for farmers and rural communities, helping ensure that agriculture continues to have a voice in shaping our nation's future. As we celebrate America's past, we should also look ahead with confidence. The values that have sustained agriculture for generations: innovation,

responsibility, perseverance, and community are the same values that will carry our country forward.

As the celebrations for America's 250th anniversary continue this month, let us take pride in the role agriculture has played in our nation's success. The story of America cannot be told without the story of its farmers, and the future of America will continue to be written in fields, barns, research labs, and rural communities across Champaign County and beyond.

For 250 years, American agriculture has helped feed a nation. With hard work and vision, it will help lead us into the next 250.



MEMBERSHIP APPRECIATION PICNIC

Join us for a picture-perfect day filled with food, outdoor activities, dairy barn ice cream and giveaways.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 2, 2026
4-7 AT HUDSON FARMS

1341 County Rd. 1800 E. Urbana 61802
 No Charge

Must have an Active Farm Bureau Membership to attend
 Please RSVP by July 24th by calling 217-352-5235

July Report



President, Doug Downs

Doug Downs, CCFB President

I could start this month's article complaining about all the rain this spring and such. Maybe I could say "it's been one of those years". Even though it has, it's probably likely that I've said such nearly every season of my career. There will always be something that makes every year a little different and distinguishable and seems to be the one that's unlike any other.

Time changes your perceptions of many things. I've experienced things the last few years in this position that I never dreamed of. Kind of like these weather events you can't believe that happen all the time. "Never imagined that" comes across my mind a lot. As busy as farming has become now, the cell phone, texting, and instant messaging keeps us in constant communication with the world around us. As I might plant 350 acres one day or spray 700 acres the next, I may also have many conversations with a county president from Dekalb, Mt. Vernon, Watseka or Quincy all in that same day. Happens a lot. We talk about the weather, local issues, and how the crops are progressing, but the crux of the call is always "hey what do you all think about this or that". There's always an avenue of communication occurring. I've preached this here before, but please make sure we have a way of communicating with you via email or text message so that you are aware when an action request or other important event occurs. Communication among us and having a voice is of utmost importance. Farm Bureau is the "Voice of Agriculture". It's an invaluable tool.

That voice, that Farm Bureau projects, comes from you. This summer presents several local opportunities to gather informally and formally and talk amongst your peers in social and relaxed settings. There is a local "Burger Bash" near you that's a relaxing evening and there is also the traditional tool shed meeting coming up. I'm going to encourage you all to attend this toolshed meeting if you never have. These meetings have been a tradition that has never gone away in Champaign County, but attendance has waned the past few years. I've made it a priority to make sure this year we have someone for everyone, and that it's not just "another free lunch". Nobody is pitching anything or selling you anything and it's the opportunity for you to speak up or sit back and learn and be informed. This year we have what I consider to be the "A team" coming down from Bloomington to be available and to address everyone. IFB President Phillip Nelson will be there as he has made it a priority to be out in the countryside this summer and available to all the members. Our meeting will coincide and 'kick off' his series of "Farm Talk" local meetings to be held around the state. Our director of National Legislation, Rebecca Barnett will be in attendance for the new farm bill updates and everything in Washington DC. Bill Bodine is Director of Business and regulatory affairs. He is the source of accurate information regarding anything from Wind Turbines and solar farms to Data Centers and Nuclear Power Plants. And Mark Raney is associate director of state legislation and will give an update on everything Farm Bureau has going on in Springfield. All of these people will be around for you to speak to individually as well. They all work for us and now is your chance. State senators, representatives, congressional members....as well as others..... have been invited to attend this event. Communications will be coming around soon, and I hope to see you all July 14 south of Philo. RSVP if you can please, but most importantly, put it on the calendar now. Your friends and neighbors will be there, and I hope you will all as well. Please don't pass this opportunity up.

Doug Downs
CCFB President

Prime Timers Meeting

July 9, 2026 • 10 am

CCFB Auditorium

Speaker: Clearview Farms/Peoples Company

Entertainment: Konnie Krist & Haley Krist

Please RSVP by July 6

Fried Chicken Buffet Lunch – Cost \$8 per person

No Walk-Ins

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

Meeting: July 13 – 9:30 a.m.

Let your Creative Self Shine

Speaker – Jane Cade

Topic – How to make a barn quilt

Lunch Following – Longhorn Steakhouse

CCFB Calendar of Events July 2026

July 3	Office Closed - Holiday	
July 9	Prime Timers	10 am
July 13	Women's Committee	9:30 am
July 16	Full Board Meeting	6:30 pm
July 21	Governmental Affairs	7:30 a.m.

- Dinner
- Games
- Kiddie Tractor Pull

COUNTY FAIR DINNER

**MONDAY
July 27th 5:30PM**

**This event is for all
Fair/Livestock
Exhibitors**

1234 CR
100 N

FARM WATCH

REPORT SUSPICIOUS
ACTIVITY OR
VEHICLES TO

(217) 333-8911

If you live in a rural setting and don't have a clearly legible address sign, stop by the CCFB and purchase a rural road sign. For \$30, make sure that friends, the mail deliverer, and first responders can find your home!

Stop by the CCFB office and pick up a Farm Watch sign. This FREE sign, has the Champaign County Sheriff's non-emergency number on it.

Announcing Champaign County Farm Bureau's Trips and Tours

Mark Your Calendars • 2026 Trips

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

FARM TALK SERIES WITH PRESIDENT NELSON

FARM TALKS

Featuring President Nelson with IFB Governmental Affairs & Commodities Department leaders Rebecca Barnett, Mark Raney, and Bill Bodine

TUESDAY, JULY 14

440 County Road 1700 E., Philo, IL 61864

 SHERWIN-WILLIAMS UP TO 20% OFF	 KETTLE KORN STOP 10% OFF OF EVERYTHING EXCEPT METAL TINS	 RED WING SHOES 10% SAVINGS AT THE CHAMPAIGN LOCATION	 IESC ILLINOIS EXCAVATION SEPTIC CONCRETE (217) 278-1889 \$500 OFF MINIMUM JOB OF \$5,000	 Sidney Dairy Barn \$1 OFF OF A \$10 PURCHASE	 CONTRACTORS SUPPLY FREE MILWAUKEE SHOCKWAVE BIT KIT WITH ANY PURCHASE OVER \$100
 Gordon Farms SEED COMPANY 10% ON SEED. A FEW EXCLUSIONS	 refinery 10% OFF OF ROOM RENTAL PACKAGES	 ROUTE 45 WAYSIDE Pesotum, IL Est. 2007 10% OFF OF FOOD, EXCLUDES ALCOHOL.	 A.G. ELECTRIC Commercial, Residential, Ag SAVE \$25 OFF OF \$250, \$50 OFF OF \$500, \$100 OFF OF \$1,000	 SLEEPY CREEK VINEYARDS SleepyCreekVineyards.com 10% OFF	 Culver's FROZEN CUSTARD BUTTERBURGERS™ 10% OFF OF ORDER
 WYLDWOOD CELLARS st. joseph, il 10% OFF ENTIRE PURCHASE	 Don's Auto Center, Inc. 10% off of Labor	 Sun Singer Champaign, Illinois Restaurant - Wine Bar 10% OFF THE PURCHASE OF 6 OR MORE BOTTLES OF WINE	 BUFORD'S PUB 10% OFF OF FOOD, EXCLUDING ALCOHOL	 STONEY SALOON EST. 2005 10% OFF OF FOOD, EXCLUDING ALCOHOL	 SHOP BY KNIGHT CHILDREN'S BOUTIQUE 10% OFF OF ALL PURCHASES
 THE BLEND SPOT 10% OFF ORDER	 The Apple Dumplin - 10% Discount	 INTERSTATE ALL BATTERY CENTER SAVE 5-20% OFF OF RETAIL PRICING	 CHARLIE'S GRUB & SUDS 10% OFF OF FOOD, EXCLUDING ALCOHOL	 The Rural Rose 15% OFF OF FRESH FLORAL ORDERS. 15% OFF OF \$100 OR MORE ON BOUTIQUE PURCHASES. SOME EXCLUSIONS APPLY	 CaptainHook Roll Off Boxes \$40 OFF OF ANY DUMPSTER RENTAL
 Lincoln Street Lounge Restaurant and Bar 217-834-3010 Free beverage included with daily special	 BUILT Ford TOUGH \$500 OFF NEW FORD TRUCKS	 BECKTECH A BARBECK COMPANY 10% OFF OF MOTOROLA RADIOS & 15% DISCOUNT ON ACCESSORIES	 ASTER + INDIGO candle co. 15% OFF ORDER	 Beyond Bonded PERMANENT JEWELRY 15% OFF OF ALL PURCHASES.	 WESTERN SHOP Pard's \$25 OFF OF \$100 PURCHASE

planting a legacy



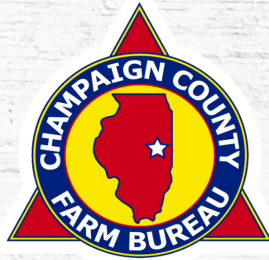
CCFBFOUNDATION.COM | CCFBFOUNDATION | CCFB_FOUNDATION

THANK YOU!

19TH ANNUAL
CCFB FOUNDATION

gala

Diamond Sponsors



l.a. Gourmet CATERING

Platinum Sponsors



Gold Sponsors



BARTELL POWELL
LLP | ATTORNEYS AT LAW



Silver Sponsors



Bronze Sponsors





Nathan Hubbard
COUNTRY Financial
Agency Manager



Bret Kroenke
217-359-9391



Dan Punkay
217-328-0023



Kolby Jackson
217-586-5030



Austin Beaty
217-352-2652



Chris Greenwold
217-355-8675



Jordan McDaniel
217-352-9817

Ways to Explore Car Insurance Savings

by COUNTRY Financial

Gas prices, tight budgets and rising inflation continue to affect household expenses. According to a recent COUNTRY Financial survey¹, 9 out of 10 people express concerns about achieving financial goals due to current economic conditions. With expenses running high, many people are looking for ways to reduce car insurance costs.

Some states restrict or prohibit the use of credit scores in insurance pricing. Check with your insurance representative to understand how credit may factor into your rates in your location.

3. Consider insurance costs when buying a vehicle

Luxury vehicles, sports cars and newer models are typically more expensive to purchase and repair, which can result in higher insurance premiums. However, newer vehicles with advanced safety features like sensors and collision avoidance systems may qualify for safety discounts, potentially helping offset insurance costs.

When you're car shopping, consider calling your insurance representative to get rate estimates for the specific make and model you're considering. Auto insurance is one component of vehicle ownership costs, and factoring it into your decision early may help you make a more informed choice.

If you're evaluating whether a specific vehicle fits your budget, our vehicle affordability calculator can help you explore the total cost of ownership.

4. Look for car insurance discounts

Many companies offer car insurance discounts, and in some cases, you can qualify for more than one discount for greater savings. For example, when you insure multiple cars or bundle your home and car insurance, you could get a discount. Taking a defensive driving class, keeping a good driving record, being a good student or having a certain career may qualify you for additional discounts. Check with your insurance agent to explore which discounts may apply to your situation.

Explore your car insurance options

Whether you're looking for auto insurance or need to review your existing insurance coverage, contact your local COUNTRY Financial representative for a quote or to review your coverages or auto insurance discounts.

Car insurance is a regular expense, but if you're exploring ways to approach car insurance costs, these tips may help you consider potential options.

1. Follow the speed limit

Speeding tickets and other traffic violations are among the most common reasons insurance rates may increase. Violations are recorded on your driver's record with the state, which is reported to insurance companies. Multiple traffic offenses may indicate higher risk, which can affect your insurance rates.

Some insurance companies offer programs that measure your driving habits in real-time and may offer discounts for safe driving. These programs use data from

your smartphone or a device that connects to your car to monitor driving behaviors. Safer driving habits may result in lower car insurance rates.

COUNTRY Financial offers this type of program, the COUNTRY Financial® DriverIQ program. Enrollment may qualify you for a car insurance discount, which could vary based on your driving habits and state of residence. Ask your representative about availability and discount amounts in your state.

2. Be aware of how credit scores may affect your rate

Your credit score may influence your car insurance rates in most states. Maintaining good credit standing by paying bills on time and regularly reviewing your credit history for accuracy may help. You can access your credit report for free at annual-creditreport.com.



Barry Karuzis
217-352-4555



Robert Lalumendier
217-352-3341



Tanna Suits
217-892-0200



Preston Engel
217-974-7949



Tony Wesselman
217-352-3466



Andrew Deedrich
217-359-3941



Scott Jackson
217-359-9335



Jordan Johnson
217-485-3010



Tim Bridges
217-586-6170



Drew Arteaga
217-469-9800



Tim Osterbur
217-469-2033



Dawn Babb
217-892-0291

SUNRISE



**JIM MEINHART,
GENERAL MANAGER**

Making the Most of Foliar Applications in Corn and Soybeans Following a Wet June

June has brought above-average rainfall across much of the Corn Belt, providing both opportunities and challenges for corn and soybean growers. While adequate moisture is critical for maximizing yield potential, prolonged wet conditions can increase disease pressure, reduce root activity, create nutrient deficiencies, and add stress that limits crop performance later in the season.

As fields continue to receive timely rainfall, many growers are evaluating foliar fungicide applications while also considering the addition of biostimulants and foliar nutrition products. When used appropriately, these tools can help protect yield potential, improve plant health, and maximize return on investment during key reproductive growth stages.

Understanding Disease Risk Following Wet Conditions

Fungal diseases thrive when extended periods of leaf wetness, high humidity, and moderate temperatures are present. The wet conditions experienced throughout June have created favorable environments for several important corn and soybean diseases.

Corn Diseases to Watch

Common diseases that may develop under wet conditions include:

- Gray Leaf Spot
- Northern Corn Leaf Blight
- Tar Spot
- Southern Rust (depending on geography and weather patterns)

Many of these diseases begin in the lower canopy and move upward as conditions remain favorable. Once disease reaches the ear leaf and upper canopy during grain fill, significant yield losses can occur.

Soybean Diseases to Watch

Soybean fields experiencing frequent rainfall and dense canopies may be at greater risk for:

- Frogeye Leaf Spot
- Cercospora Leaf Blight
- Septoria Brown Spot
- White Mold (where environmental conditions favor development)

Regular scouting remains critical. Disease presence, field history, hybrid or variety susceptibility, and weather forecasts should all be considered before making fungicide decisions.

Timing Is Critical for Fungicide Success

The greatest return on investment from fungicides generally occurs when applications are made proactively rather than reactively.

Corn Fungicide Timing

For most corn acres, the VT to R1 growth stage remains the optimum timing for fungicide applications. This application timing helps protect the ear leaf and upper canopy during grain fill when photosynthesis contributes heavily to final yield.

Protecting leaf area during this period can:

- Preserve photosynthetic capacity
- Improve stalk strength
- Enhance standability
- Increase kernel depth and test weight

Soybean Fungicide Timing

In soybeans, the R3 growth stage remains the most common timing for fungicide applications. At this stage, plants begin pod development and protecting healthy foliage becomes increasingly important.

Research consistently shows that maintaining green leaf area later into the season can improve:

- Pod retention
- Seed fill
- Seed size
- Overall yield potential

Applications made before significant disease development generally provide the most consistent results.

Beyond Disease Control: The Plant Health Benefits of Fungicides

Modern fungicides provide more than just disease suppression. Many products contain active ingredients that offer physiological benefits often referred to as “plant health effects.”

Growers frequently observe:

- Improved stress tolerance
- Delayed leaf senescence
- Enhanced photosynthetic activity
- Improved water-use efficiency

While these benefits may vary depending on environmental conditions, they can become particularly valuable during years where crops experience multiple stress events.

Following a wet June, fields may appear excellent today, but excessive moisture can lead to shallow root systems and greater vulnerability if hot, dry conditions develop later in the summer. Maintaining healthy foliage can help crops better withstand these changing environmental conditions.

Why Foliar Nutrition Deserves Consideration

Excessive rainfall often affects nutrient availability and uptake. Saturated soils can reduce root activity while also contributing to nutrient loss through leaching or denitrification.

Even fields with adequate fertility programs may experience temporary nutrient deficiencies during periods of prolonged wet weather.

Key Nutrients Often Impacted

Nitrogen

In corn, nitrogen loss becomes a major concern following extended saturated conditions. While foliar nitrogen is not a replacement for soil-applied nitrogen, supplemental foliar applications may help support plant metabolism during critical growth stages.

Sulfur

Sulfur deficiency has become increasingly common throughout the Midwest. Because sulfur is mobile in the soil profile, excessive rainfall can move sulfate beyond the active root zone.

Sulfur plays an important role in:

- Protein synthesis
- Chlorophyll production
- Nitrogen utilization

Potassium

Potassium supports water regulation, disease tolerance, and stalk strength. Wet soils can sometimes limit root uptake even when soil potassium levels test adequately.

Micronutrients

Micronutrients such as zinc, manganese, boron, and copper may become less available under certain environmental conditions.

Deficiencies can impact:

- Photosynthesis
- Reproductive development
- Enzyme activity
- Overall plant vigor

Tissue sampling can provide valuable information when determining whether supplemental foliar nutrition may be warranted.

The Growing Role of Biostimulants

Biostimulants have gained considerable attention over the past several years as growers seek additional ways to improve crop resilience and efficiency.

Unlike fertilizers, biostimulants are not primarily intended to supply nutrients. Instead, they help plants utilize nutrients more effectively and better respond to environmental stress.

Common biostimulant categories include:

- Seaweed extracts
- Humic substances
- Fulvic acids
- Amino acids
- Microbial products
- Plant growth regulators

Potential Benefits Following Excessive Rainfall

Wet conditions can stress crops in ways that are not immediately visible. Root systems often suffer oxygen deprivation in saturated soils, limiting nutrient uptake and overall plant function.

Biostimulants may help support:

- Root recovery
- Nutrient efficiency
- Stress tolerance
- Plant metabolism
- Overall crop vigor

While responses vary depending on environmental conditions and product selection, many growers report the greatest benefits during periods of environmental stress.

Combining Fungicides, Nutrition, and Biostimulants

One of the most practical opportunities for growers is combining fungicides, foliar nutrition, and biostimulants into a single application.

Benefits may include:

- Reduced application costs
- Improved operational efficiency
- Enhanced plant health management
- Greater convenience during busy summer schedules

However, compatibility should always be verified before tank mixing products. Review product labels carefully and conduct jar tests when necessary.

Working with your agronomist to evaluate product compatibility and economic return remains essential.

Focus on Return on Investment

Every input decision should ultimately be evaluated through the lens of profitability.

Questions growers should consider include:

- What is the disease risk in this field?
- What is the crop's yield potential?
- Have excessive rainfall events created nutrient concerns?
- Does the field have a history of responding to fungicides?
- Are environmental conditions likely to favor continued disease development?

Fields with strong yield potential generally provide the greatest opportunity for positive returns from fungicides, foliar nutrition, and biostimulant programs.

Final Thoughts

The above-average rainfall experienced during June has helped establish strong yield potential across many corn and soybean fields. At the same time, those same conditions have increased disease risk and created challenges related to nutrient availability and plant stress.

As crops approach key reproductive growth stages, growers should continue scouting fields, monitoring disease development, and evaluating opportunities to protect yield potential. Foliar fungicides remain an important management tool for preserving plant health and controlling disease pressure, while foliar nutrition and biostimulants can provide additional support when crops are recovering from excessive moisture stress.

Every field is unique, and the best management decisions will be based on field history, crop stage, environmental conditions, and economic considerations. By taking a proactive approach now, growers can position their corn and soybean crops to capitalize on the strong yield potential that favorable moisture has helped create.

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

*Eric Beckett, CPag, CCA-4RNMS
Agronomist, Sunrise FS
217-318-9100*



Raised on Flags, Fields & Freedom

The patriotic-wrapped tractor combined two of our son's favorite things: The Magnum-model Case IH tractor and the U.S. flag.

America's 250th anniversary gave me one of those Mom moments where delight comes from anticipating your child's joy. I snapped photos and videos of our son solo and with Grandpa by the showstopper at the 2026 National Farm Machinery Show in Kentucky. Afterward, I worked obsessively from my phone to order the replica flag-wrapped toy, which had sold out the previous day.

Our son's admiration for the American flag first became evident when he picked out t-shirts with the symbol as a child. Then, it was hats with flags. Patriotic swim trunks. American flag decorations for his room, and a flag image on his first credit card. For a 4-H project, he made wooden U.S. flags out of 13, 1-by-2-inch strips of wood, a butane torch and red- and blue-colored wood stain.

The flag stood as something bigger than the cloth (and wood) itself even if he didn't yet fully understand the feeling of home, pride, identity, safety, belonging and history. I can only credit rural patriotism, as rural Americans proudly display flags on front porches, fire stations, county fairgrounds and farm bins. We associate the feeling it delivers with church potlucks, sweet corn stands, small-town Friday night football and a slice of pie filled with homegrown cherries.

I gifted my husband a flagpole in the front landscaping for his 40th birthday. Our daughter was "stationed by the flag" as the FFA state reporter, so we put her jacket in a shadow box with a flag retired from the state capitol and folded by local veterans. As much as we love the flag, we also know loving America



means acknowledging we haven't got everything right. In the end, America is something we steward, like farmland itself and our freedom to improve it.

At the farm, we own a roll of patriotic net wrap for making flag-wrapped round hay bales for decoration at our community ag festival. The bales, flipped on end with flag poles in them, emulate the festival's feeling of Americana – home, tradition, pride and simple joys like homemade pie, tractors, apple peeling and free family fun.

As a birthday surprise six weeks after the farm show, our son received a three-pack of flag-wrapped toy tractors – a second of which also appeared at the show: a 1976 Case 1570 from America's 200th anniversary. I hope he can tell his grandkids he witnessed a full century of history when the 300th anniversary edition makes its debut.

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

Industry & Grant Opportunities

USDA Base Acre Increase

FSA has announced that eligible landowners have from June 1 until Aug. 31, 2026 to review and consider base acre increases on farms enrolled in the ARC and PLC programs, as authorized by provisions included in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

The Act provides landowners with the opportunity to update and increase base acres in preparation for enrollment in ARC and PLC beginning with the 2026 and future crop years. Nationwide, up to 30 million new base acres can be added by eligible farms.

FSA has begun to notify landowners by mail that Base Allocation Summaries outlining potential base acre updates will be available for review beginning 6/1. Landowners can contact their FSA office to obtain this summary starting 6/1.

To be eligible for new base acres, a current covered commodity must have been planted or prevented from being planted on the farm during the 2019 through 2023 crop years. The farm's average planted and prevented planted acres during that period must exceed the total existing base acres for all covered commodities in effect on Sept. 30, 2024, excluding unassigned base

acres. FSA farm total base acres cannot exceed the farm's total cropland acres. If eligible requests exceed the nationwide cap of 30 million acres, USDA will apply an across-the-board, prorated reduction to all approved new base acres.

For more information contact your county FSA office. The Champaign FSA office's phone number is: 217-352-3536.

USDA Conservation Innovation Grants

The USDA has announced the availability of \$65 million in funding this year for new tools, approaches, practices and technologies to further natural resource conservation on private lands through the Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program.

Farmers for Soil Health

Farmers for Soil Health, the farmer-led initiative launched in 2022 to double cover crop acres on U.S. farmland by 2030, has reopened enrollment for 2026 with increased per-acre payments and a simplified one-year contract designed to remove barriers for growers. Enrollment is open May 1 through Aug. 31.

Payment rates have increased to \$35 per acre, per year, up to 2,000 acres, better reflecting the actual on-farm costs of cover crop adoption and the contract period has been reduced to a single year, with the option to renew annually for the duration of the program, giving farmers flexibility to participate on their own terms at a consistent payment rate.

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FARM BUREAU NEWS

(USPS 099-840)

801 N. Country Fair Drive, Ste. A, Champaign, IL 61821
Published Monthly by the
Champaign County Farm Bureau
801 N. Country Fair Drive, Ste. A,
Champaign, IL 61821

SUBSCRIPTION RATE -- \$3 PER YEAR
Periodicals Postage Paid at Champaign
(ISSN 1078-2966)

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to "Farm Bureau News" 801 N. Country Fair Drive, Ste. A, Champaign IL 61821-2492

OFFICERS

Doug Downs, Ayers..... President
Bob Barker, Champaign..... 1st Vice-President
Jason Watson, Crittenden..... 2nd Vice-President
Casey Hettinger, Philo..... Secretary
Greg Johnson, Rantoul..... Treasurer

Ayers-Doug Downs; Brown-Mark Hortin; Champaign-Bob Barker; Colfax-Kaitlyn Tharp; Compromise-Jeff Suits; Condit-Meg Hansens; Crittenden-Charlie Mitsdarfer; East Bend-Chris Sommer; Harwood/Kerr-Josiah Hesterberg; Hensley-Nate Bidner; Ludlow-Matt Schluter; Mahomet-Mike Litchfield; Newcomb-Campbell Cruse; Ogden-Layne Ingram; Pesotum-Lucas Meharry; Philo-Casey Hettinger; Rantoul-Greg Johnson; Raymond-Dennis Riggs; Sadorus-Greg Stierwalt; Scott-Byron Mackey; Sidney-Daniel Herriott; Somer-Adam Sharp; South Homer-Michael Wendling; Stanton-Les Siuts; St. Joseph-Brandon Hastings; Tolono-Jeff Fisher; Urbana- Dirk Rice; Marketing-Joe Burke; Prime Timers-Gerald Henry; Women's Committee Co-Chair-Paulette Brock; Women's Committee Co-Chair-Ronda Scott; Young Ag Leader Chair - Jackson Craig

CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FARM BUREAU

Hours: Monday - Friday
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Manager - Bailey Edenburn
Director of Engagement - Emily Cler
Administrative Assistant - Debbie Styan
Communications Director - Lesley Gooding
Foundation Director - Kirk Buita
Ag in the Classroom Director - Sarah Kaper
Ag in the Classroom Educator - Julie Adcock

Contact us at (217) 352-5235
www.ccfarmbureau.com

Women's Committee Tours Delight Flower Farm

The Women's Committee toured Delight Flower Farm and saw firsthand the hard work that goes into creating stunning bouquets.



WOMEN'S COMMITTEE RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Submitted by Jackie Watson

Spinach Salad

Ingredients

- 1 bag baby spinach
- 10 slices bacon, fried and crumbled
- 3 hard-boiled eggs, chopped or sliced
- Dressing:
- 3/4 c oil
- 3/4 c sugar
- 1/3 c ketchup
- 1/4 c white vinegar
- 1 T Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 c finely chopped onion

Preparation

Prep ingredients, refrigerate and assemble at serving time.

Golf FORE Ag

Thurs. - August 6, 2026
 UI Orange & Blue Golf Course
 11:00 Lunch - 12:30 Shotgun Start



\$400/Team / \$100/Individual

Register: www.ccfbfoundation.com/golfforeag

Don't miss the best party on the fairways!
 Register today and secure your team's spot!

PEACHES!

25 LB BOX - \$40
 COBBLER MIX - \$10
 PEACH CRISP MIX - \$10

DELIVERY: THURSDAY,
 AUGUST 13TH @ NOON
 MUST PICKUP THIS DAY!

PLEASE CALL THE OFFICE TO
 PLACE YOUR ORDER
 217-352-5235

GOLF CART RAFFLE

Support Scholarships & Ag in the Classroom!

GRAND PRIZE:
 NEW STREET LEGAL GOLF CART

\$100 / TICKET
 FOUR CHANCES TO WIN!

Additional Prizes:
 Blackstone Grill Package, Deal Pizzas Oven & Cook!
 Drawing Time/Location: Tuesday, September 8, 2026 at
 Flight Night for Agriculture of Riggs Beer Company
*Do not need to be present to win.

Sponsored By:

DO YOU HAVE YOUR LUCKY TICKET YET?
 Tickets sell out fast. Buy yours TODAY!

Click the QR Code to Purchase Online
 or visit our website:
www.ccfbfoundation.com/raffle