

SEPTEMBER 2025 **B Section**

A Special Supplement to  
KPI Newspaper Group

# FARMERS' Quarterly

★ ★ ★ FALL HARVEST & LIVESTOCK ★ ★ ★

## It's time for fall harvest and livestock care

Fall harvest and "livestock" is a phrase that evokes rural life, agricultural rhythms, and traditional cycles of farming.

Fall is a critical time for farmers as it marks the culmination of the growing season. During this time, farmers gather the crops they've worked all spring and summer to grow.

### Common Fall Harvest Crops:

Grains: Corn, wheat, barley, oats

Vegetables: Pumpkins, squash, potatoes, carrots, beets

Fruits: Apples, pears, grapes

Legumes: Soybeans, dry beans

Along with crop harvesting, there are a number of fall activities that take place including,

Combining or picking crops

Drying and storing grains

Sorting and packing produce for markets

Preserving (canning, freezing, fermenting)

### Cultural Traditions:

Fall fairs, harvest festivals, and Thanksgiving celebrations often coincide with the harvest season, celebrating abundance and community.

### Livestock in the Fall

Fall is also a strategic time for livestock farmers, as they prepare animals

and facilities for winter.

There are many livestock activities that need to be completed

to prepare livestock for the late fall, early winter.

Weaning: Calves, lambs, and kids are

often weaned in the fall.

Sales: Animals may be sold at fall livestock auctions.

Culling: Farmers may reduce herd/flock sizes before winter to manage feed costs.

Vaccinations and Deworming: Pre-winter health checks are common.

Breeding: For spring births, breeding may take place in late summer or fall.

### Feeding:

Silage and hay harvested earlier are stored and rationed for winter feeding.

Grain rations may increase to help animals maintain weight and warmth.

### Shelter Preparation:

Repairing barns, securing windbreaks, and bedding areas for warmth.



## Grants available for high school students to focus on farm safety, rescue, health

*High school FFA, 4-H, and HOSA chapters eligible for Raising Hope grants*

FRANKFORT, Ky.

— Raising Hope, a Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) program focused on farm safety, farm rescue, and farmers' health, is providing grant opportunities for high school FFA, 4-H and HOSA — Future Health Professionals chapters to focus on those vital components, as well. Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell announced KDA's Raising Hope program is investing \$200,000 for the grants, an increase of \$75,000 over last year's funding.

“As Kentucky's Agriculture Commissioner, I am proud to support this initiative that empowers our high school student chapters to address vital issues

in agriculture,” Commissioner Shell said. “By focusing on farm safety, farmers' health, and farm rescue, we are investing in the well-being of our farming communities and ensuring that our next generation of leaders is well-equipped to face these challenges. These grants help with our commitment to safeguard the future of agriculture in Kentucky.”

KDA's Raising Hope program raises awareness about farm safety, health risks, and farm rescue, stressing the importance of training for farm-specific rescues to enhance safety for farmers, workers, and families. With the commitment of \$200,000 from Raising Hope, high school chapters for

FFA, 4-H, and HOSA can apply for grants to host events dedicated to farm safety, farm rescue, and farmers' health, both mental and physical. The money will be in allotments up to \$5,000 to winning chapters.

“Kentucky FFA is excited about the opportunities made possible through the Raising Hope Grant,” said Kristan Wright, Agricultural Education Consultant/State FFA Advisor. “We have witnessed the tremendous impact these grants have made across the state, whether through the Challenge Coin Program, farm safety days, or farm safety kits. This year, chapters will have the opportunity to continue saving lives. These efforts teach our members

the importance of giving back to their local communities and highlight the value of our farmers and agricultural professionals. The impact of this grant will be felt throughout the broader agricultural industry and the communities we serve.”

“By participating in the Raising Hope program, HOSA chapters across Kentucky are planting the seeds of innovation where agriculture and healthcare intersect,” said Susan Readnower, HOSA State Advisor. “HOSA — Future Health Professionals is more than a student organization; it's a pipeline preparing the next generation of leaders in medicine, public health, and allied health careers. With this opportunity,

we are empowering students to explore how rural health and sustainable agriculture directly impact community wellness — raising hope for a healthier tomorrow. We look forward to the good that will undoubtedly come from this partnership of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Kentucky FFA, Kentucky 4-H, and Kentucky HOSA.”

“4-H is focused on empowering youth with the skills, resilience, and confidence to thrive in a changing world,” said Carrie Derossett with Kentucky 4-H. “Kentucky 4-H is excited to partner with Raising Hope to provide grants to 4-H clubs across the state. These grants will pave the way, providing youth the opportunity

to make a difference in farmer safety, health, and rescue in our communities.”

Raising Hope, which began as a coalition between the Kentucky Department of Agriculture and other agriculture, education, and healthcare institutions to improve the mental and physical health of farmers, was moved fully under the KDA umbrella and joined with the Department's Farm Safety program in July 2024.

More information on the application process is found on the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Raising Hope website page at [kyagr.com/marketing/raising-hope.html](http://kyagr.com/marketing/raising-hope.html). The link for the grant application is under Forms and Documents on the right-hand side.



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# The importance of 4-H in local communities

Young people often are encouraged to participate in activities that can strengthen their minds and bodies and benefit their communities. Various organizations encourage children to become learners and leaders, including the youth development program 4-H.

**What is 4-H?**  
This is America's largest youth development organization with a focus on essential life skills and leadership abilities. The four "Hs" in the program's

name refer to missions involving head, heart, hands, and health.

**Who started 4-H?**  
The organization began in Iowa, where it was founded by school superintendent Oscar Benson. Benson was a leader in teaching demonstrations, and wanted to share this method of learning with young people as much as possible. In 1909, he was using a three-leaf clover pin to represent head, heart and hands as an achievement award for farm boys and

girls. Benson later worked with the Office of Farm Management in the U.S. Department of Agriculture and brought his clover. Benson ultimately engineered the first state college-federal agreement for the promotion of rural youth club work.

## Is 4-H just for farming communities?

While 4-H was originally conceived to introduce youth to agricultural work, it is not exclusively an agricultural organization. 4-H

continues to offer animal and plant science projects, but also has expanded to offer a wide range of programs in areas like arts and crafts, civic engagement, STEM, and healthy living. 4-H now reaches youth in urban, suburban and rural communities across the country. Through the website [www.4-h.org](http://www.4-h.org), interested parties can find their own local 4-H offices to get started. The program is delivered by Cooperative Extension, which is a community of more than 100 public

universities across the nation.

## Who is eligible for 4-H?

The program is geared to youth from kindergarten to one year out of high school (K-13). Members enroll in projects that match their ages and interests. Adult mentors provide guidance and support to youth along the way.

## What benefits come from 4-H participation?

The organization says their life-changing programs

help kids and teens learn skills and abilities to be resilient, adaptable and ready for work and life. According to the program, 4-Hers are more likely to feel competent, make healthy choices, contribute positively to their communities, and feel positive about their well-being.

In addition to participation in youth sports, scouting and other organizations, children and teens can get involved with 4-H to learn handy skills that can benefit them throughout their lives.

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# One Health coordination is key as New World screwworm remains outside U.S.; Kentucky producers urged to stay alert

*While the screwworm is concerning cattle producers, human infections remain extremely rare*

By Jordan Strickler and Jennifer Elwell

Lexington, Ky.— University of Kentucky Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment specialists and state partners are asking livestock owners and veterinarians to stay alert as New World screwworm (NWS) activity continues in parts of Central America and Mexico. No animal cases have been confirmed in the United States during the current outbreak, and Kentucky herds remain unaffected. However, experts warn that cattle producers should still remain vigilant.

The NWS fly is an obligate parasite whose larvae invade living tissue, "screwing" into wounds with mouth hooks that tear through healthy flesh. Untreated animals can suffer severe lesions, secondary infections

and death.

Cattle draw most of the attention; however, sheep, goats, horses, companion animals, wildlife and humans can also be affected. Even small wounds, such as tick or insect bites, ear tags, castration or dehorning sites, can attract egg-laying females. Livestock owners also need to be aware that natural openings such as the nose, eyes, ears, anus and genitalia can also be a draw. As larvae feed, wounds enlarge quickly and often carry a strong odor of decaying tissue.

NWS sits at the intersection of animal health, human health and the environment. One Health is the framework that links those pieces. In practice, this means veterinarians, physicians, epidemiologists, wildlife biologists, producers, laboratories and university researchers share information,

coordinate guidance and act quickly when something suspicious, such as NWS infections, appears.

"Cattle are large animals that may go some time between health checks," said Hannah Tiffin, assistant professor in the UK Department of Entomology. "Flies have ample time to lay eggs and allow the maggots to cause gaping wounds in several animals before the infestation is noticed. This is why knowing what to look for is so important, so that infestations can be caught and treated quickly before more animals are affected."

#### *Why One Health is front and center*

In Kentucky, that work is already in motion. The Kentucky Department for Public Health (KDPH), Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA),

Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Kentucky veterinarians from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service meet weekly with UK faculty to review new information on animal-to-human threats. These standing meetings now support screwworm monitoring, clinician alerts, laboratory routing and rapid reporting. The same playbook helps with ticks, mosquitoes and other vector-borne issues that affect people, livestock, pets and wildlife.

"Although the current risk to the general public is very low, there is the concern that people who travel to countries where this fly is either endemic or becoming more common are at increased risk," said Kathleen Winter, associate professor in the UK College of Public Health's Department of Epidemiology and Environmental Health and current state epidemiologist and director for the Division of Epidemiology and Health Planning with the KDPH.

The UK Department of Entomology has an updated fact sheet to help producers and animal owners recognize NWS and distinguish it from other wound-associated flies. It can be found at <https://entomology.o2.boa.ca.uky.edu/ef519>.

"It's important to note that not all fly larva (maggots) are screwworms," said Jessie Lay, extension animal health veterinarian in agriculture and natural resources. "While common blow fly larvae feed on dead tissue near the skin's surface, screwworm larvae tunnel into healthy tissue, which is why they're such a concern. We have not seen an animal case in the United States yet during the current outbreak, but are closely monitoring the situation at the southern border. For consumers, it is also

important to note that beef is safe to eat. Larvae do not persist on carcasses and processing facilities inspect animals at harvest."

#### *Where NWS stands now*

The United States has considered NWS eradicated since 1966 after sterile-insect releases, coined Sterile Insect Technique (SIT), collapsed wild populations. A permanent barrier zone in Panama, established in 2006, helps keep the pest to the south. When detections move north of that line, regional partners release additional sterile male flies to suppress local populations and re-establish control.

During the past year, NWS has been confirmed north of the barrier in Central America and into southern Mexico. That movement raises the chance of re-introduction via animal movement through legal and illegal trade, stray or feral animals crossing borders, wildlife dispersal and travel.

"NWS is an old foe," Tiffin said. "It used to affect animals, especially cattle in Texas and throughout the South but thanks to the advent of SIT, it was mostly eradicated from the US in the 1960s."

However, despite the human infection reported in Maryland, Tiffin says that human infections are nothing to keep one up at night.

"Human infestation is rare," Tiffin said. "You would typically know if you had maggots in a wound, in your nose, or other body part, usually prompting immediate medical attention in people who are mentally and physically capable of seeking help."

#### *Market context*

The stakes are not purely clinical. A 1976 Texas outbreak infested nearly 1.5 million cattle and more than 300,000 sheep and goats before it was contained, causing large producer and statewide costs.

Now recently, live-animal import policies were adjusted as conditions changed in Mexico—first paused in late November 2024, restarted at a reduced pace this February and halted again on May 11—tightening feeder supplies.

"Kentucky producers are watching feeder supplies and prices closely," said Kenny Burdine, extension professor in the UK Department of Agricultural Economics. "When news of a travel-associated human case in Maryland hit, futures dipped for a brief time the day of the announcement, but the response was limited because no animal cases have been confirmed in the United States. There really wasn't a supply or demand impact on the cattle market. Fundamentals still drive the market, though placements have been harder to predict since Mexican imports were first paused."

#### *What producers, veterinarians and clinicians can do*

Producers should check animals often for deep, rapidly enlarging wounds with maggots, foul odor, persistent irritation or head-shaking. Pay close attention to small wounds, the navel of newborn calves and natural openings of the head and perineum.

Call a veterinarian right away if something looks unusual; early detection supports animal welfare, protects neighboring herds and wildlife, and speeds any needed response.

When transporting livestock, follow USDA requirements for livestock, equids and pets and watch for agency updates while outbreaks persist in Mexico.

If one sees a suspected animal case in Kentucky, they should contact the office of the state veterinarian at (502) 573-0282 or USDA-APHIS Veterinary Services (Kentucky) at (502) 848-2040.

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# Farmers, farming honored at annual Kentucky Appreciation Day

*Farm Safety and Health Week September 21-27, 2025*

FRANKFORT, Ky. – Recently Commissioner of Agriculture

Jonathan Shell honored Kentucky's farmers and the work they do at a

Farmers' Appreciation and Awards Day at Murray State



Farmers' Appreciation and Awards Day, hosted by Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Raising Hope program, was at Murray State University's William "Bill" Cherry Expo Center on Wednesday. Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell, at left, honored John Croft, center, as one of three Farmers of Year. Also pictured are Croft's family, Katie Beth Croft and Kennedy Croft, Dale Dobson with Raising Hope, Miss Kentucky Ariana Rodriguez, and Joe Nichols.

Kentucky Department of Agriculture

University's William "Bill" Cherry Expo Center.

"The number of risks farmers face every day on the farm are numerous," Commissioner Shell said. "We are taking today to show our appreciation for the work our farmers do on a daily basis and to recognize the risk they take just doing their jobs. In Kentucky, we have made great strides to mitigate those risks and make farming safer than ever before, but one farm injury is one too many. We want farmers to know we see them and we appreciate them."

The Farmer's Appreciation and Awards Day, hosted by Raising Hope — a Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) program dedicated to supporting the physical and mental well-being of farmers — celebrated this important initiative.

For more than 25 years, KDA has encouraged safe practices on the farm through its Farm Safety and Rural Health Team, which provides educational resources and training to ensure the safety of farmers and their families. The team is always in high demand and on average appears in more than 100 events annually.

The awards program was held ahead of the National Farm and Safety and Health Week set for Sept. 21-27. With a theme of "Safety First, Avoid the Worst," the week encourages farmers and farm workers to always put their health and safety first.

In addition to the awards presentation, the day offered free health screenings, educational safety, health, and rescue booths, an agricultural career fair, and free lunch for attendees.

**Awards presented during the event included:**

#### **Honorary Commissioners**

The recipients of this year's Honorary Commissioner awards were honored for their work to promote agriculture safety and health, as well as their work in putting together the 2025 Farmers' Appreciation Day at Murray State University.

**The honorees include:**

Dr. Brian Hoover – agriculture systems technology professor with Murray State University's Hutson School of Agriculture.

Dr. Kristie Guffey – professor and a graduate coordinator with Murray State University's Hutson School of Agriculture.

Connie Gray – expo director with Murray State University's Hutson School of Agriculture.

Friends of Raising Hope Award recipients for the Friends of Raising Hope award are key partners in and behind the scenes of Raising Hope.

LaRue County FFA and LaRue County HOSA chapters -

LaRue County FFA was awarded one of the Raising Hope grants last year and shared the award with the LaRue County HOSA. The teams came together to host LaRue County Farmers' Appreciation Day.

Brandon Reed, Executive Director for KDA's Office of Agricultural Policy, has worked behind the scenes since the beginning of Raising Hope. He worked to get the program's first funding and has helped build the program.

Jay Hall, Executive Director of KDA's Office of Agricultural Marketing, is one of Raising Hope's team members. His work has helped ensure Raising Hope has all the resources it needs to be as successful as possible.

#### **Farmers of the Year**

Three Kentucky farmers were honored for their work to promote safety, and mental health benefits to their communities.

Mark Luckett, who has dedicated years of service to farming, agriculture safety, and advancing agriculture.

John Croft, who has dedicated his entire life and career to farm safety at 7 Spring Farms in Cadiz.

Dr. Dwayne Driskill, a former professor of agriculture safety program at Murray State University, whose work helped build the program.

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# The Food Connection publishes annual UK Dining report; UK partnership is 'national model' for local purchasing

*UK Dining, working in partnership with The Food Connection, remains committed to local purchasing to benefit stakeholders across campus and the Commonwealth*

By Bailey Vandiver

LEXINGTON, Ky.— The Food Connection — an applied food systems center that serves farmers, food producers, students and community members — recently published its 12th annual report about UK Dining's local procurement efforts.

The report's analysis tracks local food purchasing against predetermined benchmarks set forth by the University of Kentucky in partnership with food service partner Aramark.

The local procurement initiative began in 2014 in response to feedback from stakeholders, both on and off campus, regarding UK's role in Kentucky's agriculture and food system. The contract requires

that UK meet annual Kentucky Farm and Food Business Impact (KYFBBI) purchasing requirements, which means purchasing foods sourced from Kentucky farms and Kentucky-based food businesses.

The Food Connection, created as part of the Aramark contract and housed in the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment, leverages local food systems expertise to support the growth of the local farm and food economies across Kentucky — in keeping with UK's land-grant mission.

"Our team works closely with UK Dining to identify new Kentucky farm impact items to bring to campus and provides tailored technical assistance to Kentucky farmers who are interested in selling to large food

service operations like UK Dining," said Ashton Potter, executive director of The Food Connection.

Since 2014, the initiative has resulted in over \$31 million of direct investment in Kentucky farms and food businesses and has drawn national recognition and awards.

"The Food Connection x UK Dining Partnership continues to be a national model for institutional local procurement," Potter said.

*Some of the report's highlights include:*

Fiscal year 2025 marks the second year that UK Dining's contractual commitment for KYFBBI purchasing be at least 20% of total food and beverage purchases. In previous years, the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) required a specific

dollar amount rather than a percentage.

The actual fiscal year 2025 KYFBBI total was \$7,033,290, which represents 43% of UK Dining's total food and beverage spend — more than double the contractual commitment.

UK Dining spent \$1,536,258 on Kentucky Farm

Impact purchases.

"UK's land-grant mission calls us to strengthen communities across the Commonwealth," said Laura Stephenson, vice president for land-grant engagement and dean of Martin-Gatton CAFE. "The Food Connection and UK Dining partnership

demonstrates how we can live out that mission by connecting Kentucky farmers and food businesses with our campus community."

Access the full report at <https://bit.ly/4pqA7cL>. Learn more about The Food Connection at <https://foodconnection.ca.uky.edu/>.



POWER, The Food Connection and UK Dining hosted a cooking class on Oct. 22, 2024.

Photo by Carter Skaggs | UK Photo

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**TRACTORS:** Case Comfort King 841 – SN#8253560, narrow front, 3-pt., 540 PTO, propane Eng.; 1976 Case 995 – 6,815 hrs., David Brown diesel, 540/1000 PTO, dual hyd. remotes; Case 400 – SN#806372, gas, 540 PTO, dual hyd. remotes, 3-pt., seals disassembled; Case 400 – SN#8083818, gas, narrow front, 1 hyd. remote, 540 PTO; **COMBINES:** Case 660 combine – SN#8370167, gas, 2WD, with chopper; Case 660 combine – parts machine only; John Deere 244 corn head – 38-in. rows; New Idea 701 – 2-row corn picker; Case 425 – 40-in. mounted corn picker;

**PLANTING & TILLAGE:** John Deere FBB grain drill – 17-disc, double-disc openers, hyd. lift, grass seeds, SN#066107M; White 5100 – 4-row wide corn planter, dry fertilizer, double-disc openers, no-till coulters, liquid fertilizer setup; Hiniker Econo Till – 4-row wide row crop cultivator; Case 314 – 3-bottom plow; Clark 7-shank chisel plow – pull-type; Case 10-ft. wheel disc – good blades; Case F219-147 disc – with 3-bar coil-tine harrow, SN#625659; Rolling basket – 12-ft.; Custom-built 10-ft. 3-pt. airway tool; Yetter 15-ft. rotary hoe – 3-pt. mount; Homemade side dresser toolbar; Custom-built toolbar; **HAY EQUIPMENT:** New Holland 404 hay crusher conditioner – 7-ft., PTO driven; Hesston 1010 haybine – 9-ft., hydraulic swing, center pivot, steel bottom roll, rubber top roll; New Holland 273 Hayliner square baler – SN#206722, small square bales; New Holland 56 Roll-A-Bar rake – ground driven, SN#35765; Hay wagon – with airplane tires; Bush Hog 7-ft. 3-pt. mower; King Kutter bale spear – for bucket; **ATTACHMENTS & ACCESSORIES:** Dunham-Lear loader – for tractor, 7-ft. bucket; 13.6-38 clamp-on duals – for Case tractor, step-down rims, 34-in.; Case clamp-on axle duals – two sets; Homemade Category 2 quick hitch; **WAGONS:** Grove Economy 510 gravity wagon – approx. 90 bu.; Husky 165 gravity wagon – with John Deere gear; Hopper wagon – approx. 110 bu.; Hopper wagon – grooved chassis, 90 bu.; McCurdy hopper wagon – box; Ficklin 231 hopper wagon; **GRAIN HANDLING & AUGERS:** Coe Brothers seed swing-away auger; 4-in. grain auger; 8-in. cross auger; 8-in. grain auger; 8-in. x 50-ft. transport auger – PTO driven; Dual screen DMC grain cleaner – electric motor; Clipper seed cleaner – motor driven; Farm Fans AB8 grain dryer – 6-in. fill auger, 120 bu.; **SPREADERS & FERTILIZER:** Herd 3-pt. seed spreader; Cyclone seed spreader; Pull-type fertilizer spreader – stainless steel bed, wheel-driven; Case 125 single-axle manure spreader – rear discharge; Better Built honey wagon – 750 gal., single axle; Custom-built nitrogen trailer – 400-gal. tank, PTO, no pump; **LIVESTOCK EQUIPMENT:** Osborne 2-ton hog feeder; Osborne 1.5-ton hog feeder; Misc. rotary hog feeders; **FEED & PROCESSING:** Gehl 65 feed grinder – swing-away auger, SN#37221; Roller mill; Brady 206 soybean extractor – PTO driven; **3-POINT IMPLEMENTS:** 3-pt. post hole digger; Heavy-duty 3-pt. log splitter; Custom-built 3-pt. 8-row sprayer boom; 3-pt. concrete mixer; **MISCELLANEOUS:** Custom-built 10-ft. compost turner – PTO driven; Grass seeder; McCurdy corn drags; 500-gal. propane tank – on gear; Custom-built trailer – wooden floor & sides;

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**TRACTORS:** 2011 John Deere 9430 tractor-2,705 hrs, 4 remotes, cab, heat/air, radio, articulating, 2nd owner, This tractor is in excellent condition and has been very meticulously maintained, SN#1RW9430PLBP023487; 2017 8245R tractor-2,128 hrs, powershift transmission, 4 remotes, 1000 PTO, quick hitch, rear duals, front fenders, LED lights, cab, heat/air, radio, This tractor is in excellent condition and has been very well maintained, This tractor will be used this fall in harvest so hours will go up slightly. SN#1RW8245RCHP121210; 2004 John Deere 8120 tractor-4,418 hrs, powershift transmission, 4 remotes, 1000 PTO, rear duals, front fenders, quick hitch, cab, heat/air, radio, JD link, this tractor is in excellent condition and has been very well maintained, This tractor will be used this fall in harvest so hours will go up slightly. SN#RW8120P022809;

**COMBINE:** 2019 John Deere S760 Combine, 1,415 Engine Hours, 1,104 Separator Hours, Floater Tires, 2wd, power folding grain extensions, fore, aft, lateral tilt feeder house, single point hookup, Active Vision Camera, 4600 display center, Combine advisor package, grain and tailings cameras, Auto guidance ready, 333 Hp engine, beacon lights, Runs and Operates Well Maintained One Owner Machine, Hours will go up slightly will be used for 2025 harvest, SN#1H0S760SKK0805120;

**PLATFORMS & HEADS:** 2022 John Deere RD35F Draper Head, Fore/Aft Reel, hydraulic adjustable reel, poly finger reel, marker lights, single point hook up, pto, hookup, Head sells separate from cart, Header will be used for 2025 Harvest, SN:1H0RD35FHN0820196; 2022 John Deere C8R corn head, 8 row, 30 IN. rows, single point hook up, Was purchased new and has been meticulously maintained SN#1H00C8RXLM0815279;

**AIR SEEDERS:** 2013 John Deere 1990CCS 40 FT. air seeder, 15 IN. rows, CCS seed metering, bulk fill, single disc openers, this planter is in excellent condition and has been very well maintained, SN#1A81990SEDM755129;

**FERTILIZER APPLICATOR:** 2012 Case 2800 fertilizer applicator, 15 knife, 30 IN. on center, 1,500 gallon poly tank, Green Star rate controller, Excellent condition SN#YCD064133;

**SPRAYERS:** 2004 John Deere 4710 sprayer-2,443 hrs, 100FT. booms, 800 gallon stainless steel tank, hydrostatic transmission, side fill, SN#N04710X006367;

**HEADER CARTS:** 2018 J&M 4WS15 All Steer Header Cart, 38ft long lights, adjustable feet and adjustable, rail height, SN# 1803256; J&M header cart, 21 FT. long, was used for 8 row corn head, SN#6486;

**GRAIN CART:** 2022 J&M X812 grain cart, 850 bushel, PTO driven auger, hydraulic folding auger, tarp, LED lights, auger camera, backup camera, ladder, \*\*They purchased this grain cart new. It is in excellent condition and has been extremely well maintained,\*SN#2210709;

**SEMI TRAILER:** 2019 Timpte Super Hopper 40Ft Long, 68 inch sides, 24 inch hopper clearance, aluminum wheels, power tarp, clean well maintained trailer. VIN#1TDH40027KB162160;

**SEMI:** 1999 Kenworth T800 614,611mi. Caterpillar Engine, 8 Speed Transmission, Heat, Air, Radio, wet kit, aluminum wheels, adjustable fifth wheel, Runs and Operates, VIN#1XKDBB9X6XJ797607;

**TILLAGE EQUIPMENT:** J&M TF212 rolling basket, 32 FT. working width, hydraulic raise and lower, hydraulic fold, Low use on this implement and meticulously maintained, SN#2040006; Landoll 30 foot, folding soil finisher, 3 section, hydraulic raise & lower, 3 bar spike drag, rear hitch;

**GRAVITY WAGONS:** Killbros 385 Gravity wagon mounted on Killbros 1386 running gear, 385 bushel, front ladder, lights, Shur Lok Roll Tarp, Rear hitch, 385/65R22.5 Tires; Killbros 385 Gravity Wagon, Side discharge, Rainbow Industries Roll Tarp, Front Ladder Rear Hitch, lights; Rotary Mowers: Bush Hog 296 Rotary Mower 3 point mount, 540 PTO, rear wheel, SN: 12-06378; GPS Receivers: Starfire 6000 Receiver with SF 1 activation; John Deere Starfire 6000 Receiver with RTK Activation;

**MOWER:** Husqvarna PZT60 Zero Turn Mower, Hours unverified, ROPS, 60 inch deck, Hydro trans, Runs and Operates, SN# 021315f001344;

**PUMPS:** Briggs and Stratton Gas Powered Pump; Rate Controllers: Raven SCS440 Rate Controller with nozzles, and plugs; Storage Tanks: 1600 Gallon Poly Tank, center top fill, 2 inch outlet;



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# From concept to classroom:

## UK Agricultural Education and Advocacy students gain valuable skills through statewide initiative

By Jennifer Elwell

LEXINGTON, Ky.— In support of the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's (KDA) All in for Agriculture Education Week programs, students from the University of Kentucky Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment created several lessons and activities to teach elementary students about agriculture. After a successful program run in March 2025, KDA planned a second week of activities and promotion, which takes place from Sept. 15-19.

The initiative, designed to grow agricultural literacy and connect classroom learning to real-world skills, invited students in the Agricultural Education and Advocacy degree program in the Department of Community and Leadership Development (CLD) to develop dynamic and age-appropriate explorations of food systems, livestock and plant science.

"Our students considered different learning styles, what they knew about the learners, how long they can stay entertained and what activities would be good for those age groups," said Rebekah Epps, associate professor for agricultural education

and CLD director of graduate studies.

Epps said many of her students wanted to teach their lessons in an elementary classroom, such as "Let's Learn About Kentucky Agriculture" and "Let's Learn About Horses," among other farm-related subjects.

"It was a learning curve," Epps said. "Someone came back and said the activity didn't work. And I said, 'Yes! That's what I like to hear from someone becoming a teacher.' That's how we write curriculum. If it doesn't work, tweak it and make it better."

Agriculture education student at University of Kentucky.

Agricultural Education and Advocacy student Kennedy Springs said this lesson development process for transformative for her education.

For senior Kennedy Spriggs, the experience was transformative.

"This is really a full circle moment for me," Spriggs said. "Planning a lesson and executing it for All in for Agriculture Education Week has been such a great opportunity to utilize my strengths, develop vital skills and gain experience before stepping into an agriculture classroom of my own."

Epps believes the lesson creation and



Associate professor for agricultural education Rebekah Epps worked with aspiring teachers to create several "Let's Learn About Kentucky Agriculture" lessons made available to volunteer agriculture educators who visit classrooms. Photo provided by UK Community and Leadership Development.

refining process not only sharpened teaching skills but also underscored the importance of agricultural education in shaping informed consumers.

"I taught high school in metro Atlanta, and I knew my kids were two or three generations removed from the farm," Epps said. "That was perfectly fine, but they were all going to be consumers, and I wanted them to be educated consumers."

The experiential learning also highlighted the value of working with statewide government organizations like the KDA, especially for students pursuing advocacy roles.

"We try to push our students to take their passion and turn it into influence," said Sarah Sprayberry, assistant professor and director of undergraduate studies in agricultural education. "When you make those connections, it allows you to bridge gaps within the community. A lot of people don't actually have true agricultural literacy, so when we make those bonds, it allows our students to understand the impact of those connections and teach people about agriculture."

In late 2024, the agriculture education degree program added "advocacy" to its name to better reflect the needs of agriculture employers.

"We truly are trying to build a new pathway," Sprayberry said. "We have students going into ag law, sales and nonprofits. We're offering classes on social media campaigns and policy advocacy. For students who love education but don't want to be traditional teachers, we are their home."

The ripple effect of the first All in for Agriculture Education Week extended far beyond individual classrooms. In a

partnership among Commissioner of Agriculture Jonathan Shell, Lieutenant Governor Jacqueline Coleman and Commissioner of Education Robbie Fletcher, the initiative aimed to reach every public elementary school in Kentucky through lessons, field trips, contests and community engagement activities.

"As the spring All in for Ag Education Week unfolded, it became clear the support from the agriculture industry, educators from across the state at every level and the community itself was unprecedented," said Bethany Mattingly, director of KDA Agriculture Education and Outreach. "The UK Agriculture Education and Advocacy program helped lead the way in what agriculture education can look like at the elementary school level."

Educators and agriculture community stakeholders are once again focusing on the impact of farming this week and throughout the fall.

"Our college is proud to be a part of Commissioner Shell's vision for strengthening agricultural

education across our state," said Laura Stephenson, vice president for land-grant engagement and dean of Martin-Gatton CAFE. "When children understand where their food comes from and the role agriculture plays in their communities, we are preparing not only future farmers, but informed citizens and leaders. This partnership reflects the heart of our land-grant commitment to Kentucky."

In addition to the student-created lessons, UK Martin-Gatton CAFE is donating a Kentucky agriculture poster to be part of "harvest crates" full of teaching resources, which will be distributed to every public elementary school in Kentucky.

Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service agents will also take part in local educational and advocacy events over the next several weeks.

To learn more about the agricultural education and advocacy program, visit <https://cld.ca.uky.edu/ukaged>. To learn more about the All in for Agriculture Education Week, visit <https://www.kyagr.com/marketing/Ag-Education-Week.html>



Teaching assistant Hannah Grace Childress, left, discusses the curriculum project with students Leslie Monhollen, center, and Jake Lyons, right.

# Kentucky horse owners urged to plan ahead as weather challenges hay supply

*Equine specialists are stressing the importance of purchasing hay earlier this year.*

By Jordan Strickler

Lexington, Ky.—Horse owners across Kentucky should start planning now for their winter hay needs as this year's supply is shaping up to be highly variable.

Bob Coleman, equine extension associate professor with the University of Kentucky Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment said that weather has been the driving force behind uneven conditions.

"Some areas have gotten plenty of rain, while others have been extremely dry," Coleman said. "That means the hay crop is going to look different depending on where you're buying it. To expect it to be the same as last year or years ago is not a good assumption. Where inventories are smaller, some people are keeping hay back to sell later, or they just don't have as much to begin with."

The result is a hay supply that varies not only in availability but also in quality. In some fields, hay was cut later than usual because of wet conditions. While it



Horse owners need to be ready for this winter as the state's hay supply is off from previous years. Photo by Matt Barton.

may be free of dust and mold, the crop is more mature and less nutrient-rich than horse owners might expect. Coleman noted that this does not make the hay unusable, it simply means horse owners need to be realistic about what they are buying.

"People may find that their hay isn't as green as they're used to, or that the nutrient profile doesn't quite match past years," Coleman said. "That doesn't mean it isn't safe to feed. It just means

you need to know what you're dealing with."

To avoid guesswork, it is strongly encouraged horse owners get their hay tested. Local Cooperative Extension Service offices can provide the tools and advice for collecting a sample and will help interpret the results from the horse perspective. This allows owners to balance their animals' diets properly and make the most of the hay's nutrients.

In addition to nutrition concerns, weeds are another issue. Coleman said that foxtail has been showing up in more hay fields. This plant can cause irritation and mouth sores in horses, making it a problem in the hay. He urged horse owners to closely inspect hay before purchase.

Knowing the weight of the bales one is buying is just as important as knowing the type of hay.

"If you're purchasing 100 bales, there's a big

Portrait of Jordan Strickler

difference between 50-pound bales and 40-pound bales," Coleman said. "That's 5,000 pounds of hay versus 4,000 pounds. If your horses require 4,500 pounds of hay, using the heavier bales would result in a slight surplus, while the lighter bales would leave you short. You really need to know what you're getting, both in quality and in weight."

Coleman also recommends more controlled feeding practices.

"Rather than

offering free-choice hay, measure out what your horses need each day," he said. "That helps reduce waste and makes your supply last longer. Also remember that hay from a second or third cutting could be different than the first. This makes it important for horse owners to make gradual changes to give horses time to adapt the same as if you were switching them from hay to grain."

Due to all of these factors, Coleman advises horse owners to act early.

"If you know you're going to need hay, don't wait," he said. "Line up your supply now and be prepared to work with more than one seller if necessary."

For those who cannot secure enough hay, alternatives are available. Processed forage products such as alfalfa cubes, alfalfa-grass cubes or commercial hay pellets can help fill the gap.

For more information about hay testing and feeding strategies, contact your local county extension office.



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# UK Agricultural Education and Advocacy alumni prepared to share, teach 'to anyone who will listen'

*Graduates from the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment program are prepared for careers in the classroom and beyond.*

By Bailey Vandiver

LEXINGTON, Ky.— Throw a dart at the map, and someone with an Agricultural Education and Advocacy degree from the University of Kentucky just might be working there.

The program, which is housed in the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment Department of Community and Leadership Development, prepares students for many career paths, said Rebekah Epps, associate professor and director of graduate studies.

After first being known as career and technical education then as agricultural education, the program added advocacy to its degree name in 2024 to more accurately represent where its graduates ended up — as teachers but also beyond “the four walls of a classroom.”

“Agricultural education can take place as a commodity educator for pork or tobacco or soybean. It can take place as an Extension agent or sitting on the back of a pickup truck talking with a local farmer,” Epps said. “We’re working on advocacy so that they learn to teach the importance of agriculture to anyone who will listen.”

## *Teaching and training the next generation*

Growing up in Taylor County, Samantha Clark Gaddie knew as a high schooler that she wanted to be an agriculture teacher. Like many others, she was influenced by her own ag teachers.

“I had two really good ag teachers, and they were both instrumental in my life,” Gaddie said. “I wanted to be able to shape and give back in that same way.”

Gaddie graduated from UK in 2014 and has since worked at Green County High School.

As an undergraduate, Gaddie had the chance to do research and present at a conference. She and her research partner were very excited to receive an award for innovative ideas.

“I think that’s what really sparked my interest in research and was probably the first step in me considering getting a doctorate,” said Gaddie, who earned her doctorate in agricultural education from Texas Tech.

Gaddie said it’s very rewarding to see the impact that her classes have on her students’ lives. One FFA student completed an agriscience project that fostered her interest and led to her

studying food biosciences at UK. Other students are currently in college to be agriculture teachers themselves.

“It’s really awesome, when a student sees you work in your job and they’re like, ‘I want to do that job,’” Gaddie said.

## *Using education as an Extension tool*

Lindie Huffman’s grandfather, the only other member of her family who had attended college, went to UK — so of course Huffman went to UK, too. Deciding what to study was slightly more difficult.

“I couldn’t select just one area of agriculture — because my passion was for all of it and for sharing its impact with others,” Huffman said. “Agriculture is rewarding in so many deep ways: It is rooted in family tradition, grounded in community and filled with the promise of tomorrow through the faith of planting seeds or tending livestock.”

Huffman found the right fit in agricultural education: “the perfect opportunity to explore the breadth of agriculture while also engaging with people.”

As a student in 2011, Huffman had two life-changing experiences: completing an internship with the



UK agricultural education and advocacy students and professor Rebekah Epps, right, work on an assignment together.

Photo by Mark Pearson

Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service and studying abroad in Scotland.

“That experience opened my eyes to the power of community development — something I once found intimidating, but instead showed me how education can drive meaningful, lasting change,” Huffman said. “When I discovered how Extension blends agriculture, education and real community impact, it felt like a natural fit.”

Since graduating in 2012, Huffman has been the agriculture and natural resources agent for the Pendleton County Extension Office. The agricultural education program gave her a “strong foundation” that she uses every day, thanks to the program’s flexibility that allowed her to

take courses in everything from agricultural economics to forages to leadership. That broad exposure to agriculture helped her meet people where they are — a crucial part of Extension work.

“Choosing Extension allowed me to continue my passion for agriculture and education, but in a much more informal setting — where I can teach outside the classroom, connect with diverse audiences, and create programs that are practical, hands-on, and rooted in real community needs,” Huffman said.

## *Being innovative in agricultural education*

As a child, even though no one in his family was an educator, Brian Welch would put his stuffed animals in a circle, give them paper and teach them school lessons. By the time he was a high schooler involved in FFA and 4-H, Welch knew he wanted to be an ag teacher.

“I’ve been very goal oriented ever since then to get as much exposure and experience in ag education as I possibly could,” Welch said.

Originally from Owensboro, Welch graduated from UK in 2015 — after four years in the program,

even though he was so excited to get into the classroom as a teacher that he almost graduated a year early. Mentors like Epps encouraged him to stay and take advantage of more opportunities, like studying abroad in Australia.

Welch is now entering his 10th year at Madisonville North Hopkins High School, which is where he did his student teaching. He primarily teaches the school’s ag power pathway, which includes small engines, construction skills and agriculture structures.

This pathway has allowed Welch to reach students whether they want to be farmers or not.

“It’s all the same concepts they could then take back onto the farm if they’re building their own pole barn but also reaches a kid that’s maybe not going into specifically ag,” Welch said. “But they’re going to have that foundational work ethic that ag likes to teach people and has the ability to teach people that they can apply to whatever world they want to go into.”

In his classroom, Welch emphasizes community service. One of his favorite projects was converting a shipping

see ADVOCACY,  
page B13



UK agricultural education and advocacy students share the agriculture teachers who impacted them.

Photo by Mark Pearson

**ADVOCACY,**  
from page B12  
container into a medical clinic, which is now in use in Liberia. He and his students have also framed houses for Habitat for Humanity.

Sharing his students' work with the community is a vital part of advocating for agriculture, Welch said.

"We don't necessarily go the traditional route," he said. "So part of our thing is to keep innovative and to let people know we are doing things is to tell our story."

*Advocating for the agriculture industry*

When Misty Bivens was a state FFA officer, people were always saying to her, "When you're an ag teacher..." even though she didn't want to be an agriculture teacher.

She's now in her 25th year in that role at LaRue County High School.

"I can't imagine doing anything else," she said. "The impact, as an ag teacher, you get to have on students is unlike most jobs."

Twenty people pose together for a group photo. All are in professional dress and hold up a white piece of paper with a name or multiple names written on them.

Studying agricultural education at UK was an important step along the way. Even as the university and the agriculture industry changes, the connections Misty made during her education remain vital.

"I tell my students that are going to college that it's as much about the connections you make as it is about what you learn," she said.

While a UK graduate assistant, Misty started dating her now husband Ryan Bivens, also a Martin-Gatton CAFE graduate. Though both had agriculture in their background — Misty in Garrard County and Ryan in Spencer County — neither had a family farm to move back to.

"I was determined: I wanted to farm the rest of my life," Ryan said.

Once they settled in LaRue County, Ryan published an ad in the paper: "Ambitious young farmer looking for a start." The first year the Bivens planted soybeans, it was on 34 rented acres. This year, they planted about 7,600 acres — 1,500 of which they own.

The family's on-farm experience is useful to Misty in the classroom and to Ryan in his role as a Kentucky state representative. Ryan said his perspective as a farmer allows him to be a voice for agriculture.

"We've stood up and we've advocated for

our industry," Ryan said. "It's not just about what me and Misty are doing today. It's about the groundwork we're laying for the next generation."

#### *High expectations*

Epps said the highlight of her role as a UK professor is seeing students grow and develop, both during their time as undergraduates and beyond.

"We have high expectations of our students," Epps said. "We've learned that if you set high expectations, they will meet them."

Learn more about UK agriculture education and advocacy at <https://cld.ca.uky.edu/ukaged>. Learn more about Kentucky's All in for Agriculture Education Week at <https://www.kyagr.com/marketing/ag-education-week.html>.

# # #

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A woman in jeans and a blazer smiles while presenting at the front of a conference room. The screen to her right says "What's your why?"

Photo provided by Lindie Huffman

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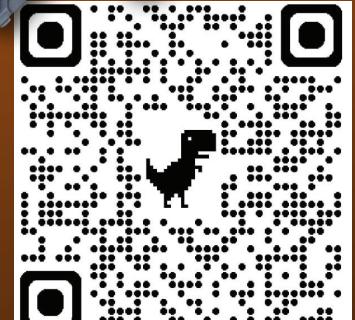
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# Kentucky Soybean Promotion Board meets, elects executive committee

The best thing about the Kentucky Soybean Board is its people. This organization is fortunate to have a number of dedicated, involved farmer-leaders who volunteer their time to further the best interests of all soybean growers – with Kentucky soy at the forefront of those efforts. Those farmer-leaders are tasked with a big job: investing Kentucky's portion of the soybean checkoff.

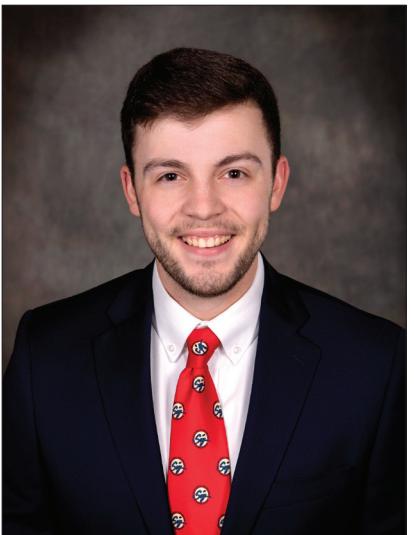
Did you know that the farmer-created soybean checkoff generates, according to a third-party study, more than \$12 in added value for every dollar invested? The national soy checkoff has been hard at work, increasing inclusion rates for soy and soy components in



Brent Gatton



Fred L. Sipes



Johnathan Reynolds

2025-2026. Brent Gatton was elected Vice-Chairman, and Jonathan Reynolds was elected Secretary/Treasurer. The Board thanked Barry Alexander for his two years of service as Chairman of the organization and expressed appreciation to retiring directors Glenn Howell and Allen Pace for their years of service.

In addition to officer elections, the Board reviewed proposals from national and international partners and made appropriate investments to continue increasing demand for renewable, sustainable U.S. Soy. To learn more about the work of the Kentucky Soybean Board, visit [KySoy.org](http://KySoy.org).

everything from animal feed and asphalt to tires, shoe treads, firefighting foam, chainsaw oil and more. At the state level, the farmer-leaders of the Kentucky Soybean Board invest the Commonwealth's portion of the checkoff into research, education, promotion, and building demand, both domestically

and internationally. The Kentucky Soybean Promotion Board is appointed for a two-year period, running from July 1 to June 30. Kentucky Soybean Board members for 2025-2027 include Kentucky Soybean Association appointees Jonathan Reynolds of Clinton, Clay Wells of Clay, Drew Langley of Magnolia, Jeff King of Corydon, and Fred

Hendricks of Russellville. Kentucky Farm Bureau reappointed Larry Thomas of Elizabethtown and appointed Larry Clark of Greensburg. Commissioner Jonathan Shell reappointed Andrea Williford of Clinton. American Soybean Association Directors Caleb Ragland of Magnolia, Jeff King of Corydon, and Fred

L. Sipes of Ekron, along with United Soybean Board Directors Barry Alexander of Cadiz, Brent Gatton of Bremen, and Keith Tapp of Sebree also hold seats on the Promotion Board by virtue of those positions.

At their meeting on August 6, the members of the board elected Fred L. Sipes as Chairman for

## Kentucky Fish and Wildlife fall auction set for Oct. 6

FRANKFORT, Ky. — The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources will host a live auction to sell surplus items and confiscated hunting and fishing equipment on Monday, Oct. 6, 2025. Registration opens

at 7:30 a.m. (ET), and the auction of surplus property and confiscated items will begin at 9:30 a.m. (ET). The auction will be held outdoors, rain or shine, on the department's headquarters campus at 1 Sportsman's Lane in Frankfort.

A complete list of items available for sale is on the department's Surplus and Confiscated Items Auction webpage. Items are sold as-is and will not be available for hands-on inspection prior to the sale. Under state law, only qualified Kentucky residents may bid on confiscated items. Some items will require a criminal background check.

Accepted forms of payment include cash, check, certified check, credit card or debit card. Final pricing will include a buyer's premium and surcharge for credit or debit card use. Checks over \$5,000 will require a bank letter guaranteeing payment.

Under state law, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife may conduct auctions as necessary to sell surplus and confiscated property. Surplus items include equipment and materials no longer

needed by the agency. All confiscated items are obtained through court order and as the result of a violation of fish and wildlife laws.

By law, proceeds from Kentucky Fish and Wildlife auctions are directed into the department's game and fish fund and subject to auditing by the state Auditor of Public Accounts. The fund is used for the department's normal operating expenses including

fish and wildlife conservation and related recreation programs across the Commonwealth.

Parking will be limited to designated areas on the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife campus. Game Farm Road west of the upper and lower sportsman's lakes will be restricted to residential traffic only on the day of the auction. Portable restroom facilities will be available to

the public.

For more information, visit the department's website at [fw.ky.gov](http://fw.ky.gov) or call 1-800-858-1549, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (ET) weekdays, excluding holidays.

Media Note: For any media who intend to cover the event, please be prepared to show proof of employment with a media outlet to be allowed closer parking to the auction area.

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# Illinois Department of Agriculture STAR Tool to advance statewide soil health initiatives

Springfield, IL

— The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) has officially designated the STAR Tool as the required soil health assessment for all state-funded conservation practices, in accordance with the Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts Act (70 ILCS 405). This decision marks a significant milestone in the commitment to sustainable agriculture and environmental stewardship in Illinois.

The STAR Tool now plays a central role in supporting key conservation programs across the state, including the Partners-for-Conservation Cost-Share program (PFC), the Illinois Healthy Soils Initiative (PA 103-00494), and the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRS).

“The Illinois Department of

Agriculture is proud to elevate the STAR Tool as the standard for assessing soil health across all state-funded conservation programs,” said IDOA Director Jerry Costello II. “This decision reflects our deep commitment to advancing sustainable agriculture, supporting farmers with science-based tools, and protecting our state’s vital natural resources for generations to come. By aligning our efforts through STAR, we’re not only improving soil health and water quality—but also empowering producers with the data, resources, and support they need to thrive.”

Developed with Illinois-specific science and farmer input, the STAR Tool evaluates field-level management practices—such as tillage, cover cropping, nutrient application, and crop



rotation—through its STAR Field Form. Each field receives a STAR Rating from 1 to 5, with 5 STARs reflecting exemplary conservation practices that improve soil health and water quality. In Crop Year 2024 (CY24), 498 producers received STAR Ratings on 1,197 fields covering 65,698 acres, averaging a 3.45 STAR Rating. Of these, 87% of producers and 67% of fields participated in the PFC program.

“The STAR Tool is an excellent example of responsive government programs at work,” said Jen Walling, Executive Director of the Illinois Environmental Council. “A program like the STAR Tool invests taxpayer dollars in an effective, science-based approach that delivers real environmental benefits for farmers and the rest of us. We all need clean water and healthy soil, and

this tool is an important part of Illinois’ work to reduce nutrient pollution, curtail erosion, and build resilient farm communities.”

To ensure credibility, STAR conducts randomized field verifications while maintaining strict data privacy protocols. Farmers retain full ownership of their data, and only anonymized, aggregated results are shared publicly.

“The Illinois Corn Growers Association appreciates the enhanced partnership between STAR and the Illinois Department of Agriculture,” said Mark Bunselmeyer, Vice President of Illinois Corn Growers Association. “Having tools that allow farmers to self-evaluate and compare conservation practices across different fields is an important step in supporting practical on-farm decision

making.”

Beyond assessment, the STAR Tool empowers producers with a Resource Directory and a Conservation Innovation Plan (CIP) feature, which connects farmers to financial, educational, and technical support tailored to their goals. STAR Navigators are available statewide to provide local, hands-on assistance.

The STAR Tool is free and accessible to all corn, soy and small grain producers in Illinois. Expansion efforts are underway to include urban agriculture and grazing lands. With field forms already available in eight other states—and grazing forms launching soon in three more—STAR is poised to serve producers in 11 states nationwide.

The STAR Tool is currently available for Crop Year 2025 and can be used at [www.STARtool.ag](http://www.STARtool.ag).



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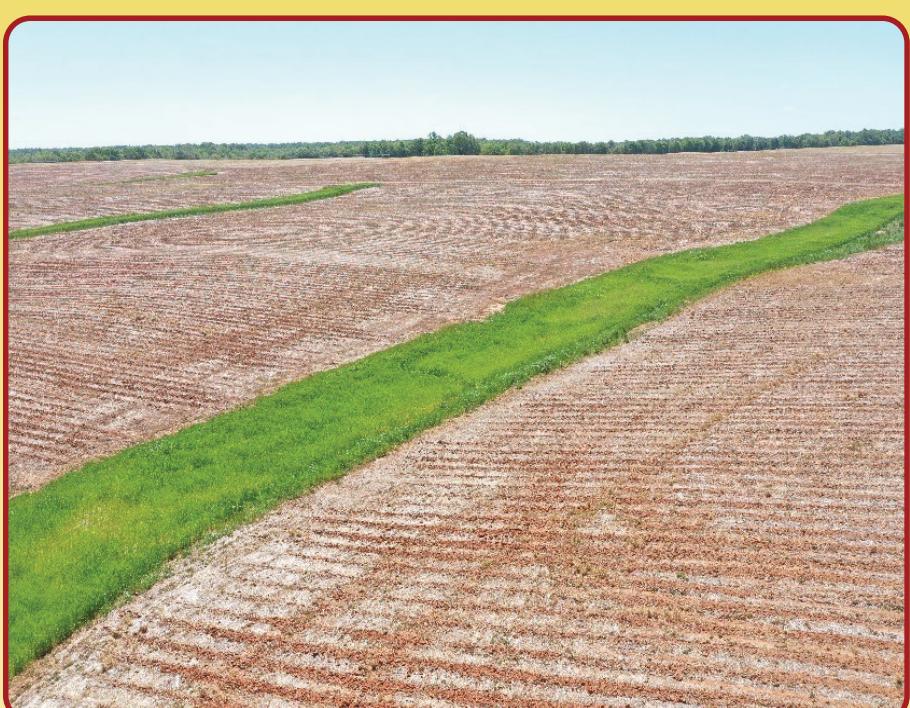


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