



RICFB member Eirik Oleson presents to elementary students at the John Deere Pavilion during the 2015 AgXPerience about the John Deere combine and why we need them, who makes them and what we used before these machines were developed. Oleson has been presenting for 10 years and donating his time to sharing the many facts of harvesting crops with a John Deere combine.



Second from left and to the right: RICFB Members Caroline Neumann, Wanda Bohnert, and Steve Simpson are just a few of the more than 100 volunteers needed to pull off the AgXPerience. Caroline and Wanda served lunches each day while Steve helped with setup and a multitude of tasks – including the timekeeper role to keep all 900 students moving on time over the three-day event.



11th annual AgXPerience in the books

LEFT: AgXPerience is made possible thanks to dedicated members and “advocates” who believe in the power of educating future consumers about how farming helps feed, clothe, fuel and power the world. From left: Jim Bohnsack, Lillie Beringer, Sarah Fitzgerald of Rock Island County Soil and Water Conservation District, Tara Bohnert Yoder, Sheryl Solomonson, Adam Lloyd, Chelsea Vyncke, Alyssa Gustus, Demi Powers and Becca Riggs. Presenters not pictured include Todd Baldwin, Mary Beth DeBaillie, Greg Mueller, Diane New and Jan Fuhr.



Farm Bureau member Darryl Anderson takes a minute to do a massive “selfie” with students on Thursday afternoon after his big welcome! Darryl and wife, Karen, have been instrumental in bringing retired teachers in as class escorts for the AgXPerience for the last 10 years.

Understand farmland assessments

Rock Island County farmland owners received a Change of Assessment notice showing changes to their 2015 real estate tax assessments payable in 2016. And many of you will find that your cropland soils are going up at a rate that is either higher or lower than the anticipated 10 percent change from last year’s values. The amount of change will depend on the soil type. Poorer soils will see a higher than 10 percent increase while better-producing soils can expect an increase of less than 10 percent from the preceding year’s value. So, how and why did this happen?

The simple explanation is that the Illinois Farmland Assessment law changed. This change is the result of a legislative amendment that passed in 2013. An amendment was necessary to help protect the intent of the Farmland Assessment law that allows farmland to be assessed based on its productivity rather than on its market value.

The change applied to the 2015 values was the result of a 2013 amendment, now Public Act (PA) 98-0109, which limits value changes of all cropland Productivity Index (PI) soils to 10 percent of Illinois’ median cropland soil PI, which is PI 111. Prior to PA 98-0109, each individual PI was limited to a change of no more than 10 percent from its own prior year’s value.

In 1977, the Illinois Farmland Assessment Act was enacted to value farmland, for the purpose of taxation, based on its ability to produce income rather than on its market value. An assessed dollar value was assigned to each soil type based on that soil’s Productivity Index. The farmland assessment formula produced “Calculated” values that represent the cropland’s ability to produce an income based on its soil quality and type.

In 1986, the law was amended to limit increases or decreases in assessed value for each soil type to no more than 10 percent per year. The application of the 10 percent limit produced “Certified Values.” Since 1986, the assessed values of farmland have frequently been based on those “Certified Values.” Taxing districts supported this change to limit large annual swings in their tax base and to provide more stability from year to year.

Between 1986 and 2014, the 10 percent limit continually increased the gap in value between the “Certified” values assigned to highest and lowest productive soils.

The Illinois Department of Revenue recognized that a substantial change was required to correct the assessed values of farmland. If nothing was done to fix the system, increased pressure from taxing districts and others could jeopardize the continued viability of the Farmland Assessment Law. A return to assessments based on one-third of market value would economically devastate most farm operations. That impact would be most drastic in urban areas where farmland values are influenced by development pressures.

In 2013, the IDOR introduced, and the Illinois General Assembly passed, Senate Bill 20. This legislative change will eventually bring the “Certified” values, that are used to assess cropland, to the level of the “Calculated” values produced by the Farmland Assessment formula.

It is likely that, for the next several years, the assessed values for all soils will be adjusted by no more than 10 percent of PI 111’s prior-year certified value. Farmland owners who have questions about this new assessment process can contact the Rock Island County Farm Bureau at 309-736-7432 or email dbloomberg@ricofarm-bureau.org.

Independent Map Amendment petitions

Individuals wishing to pick up petition forms and collect signatures for the Independent Map Amendment initiative may do so here at the Rock Island County Farm Bureau. Completed petitions also may be returned to the local office.

“Our grassroots policy has long supported restructuring the Illinois legislative redistricting process and we feel the Independent Map Amendment coalition’s proposal is a balanced approach to the process,” said Kevin Semlow, director, state legislation, Illinois Farm Bureau. “We believe a change in the way maps are drawn will benefit our members, and hope they will take an active role in helping to make that change.”

IFB and the Rock Island County Farm Bureau is working with the coalition to reach the goal of gathering 600,000 signatures of registered voters by April 2016. The Illinois Constitution requires that any petition seeking to amend the Legislative Article of the Illinois Constitution gather at least 290,216 valid, registered voter signatures.

To gather the necessary signatures, the Rock Island County Farm Bureau is asking interested individuals to circulate, collect and return petitions to the Rock Island County Farm Bureau office.

“It really is a simple process for any of our members wishing to help with the effort,” Semlow said. “Any legally registered voter in Illinois is eligible. People who sign the petition must use their full address without abbreviations, should include the address where they are registered to vote and information should be legibly written.”

Once completed, the petition sheet should be signed by the person circulating the petition and notarized and returned to the Rock Island County Farm Bureau no later than December 2015.

The proposed constitutional amendment would create an 11-member independent redistricting commission to draw legislative districts for General Assembly members. The commissioners would be selected at the same time of each federal decennial census, with the first commission appointed in 2021.

New districts drawn by the commission would be contiguous and substantially equal in population and would comply with federal law. All of the commission’s meetings and records would be open to the public. After a majority of commission members approve a plan, the new districts would be established.

Calendar of Events

OCTOBER

21 Regular monthly board meeting; TBA

NOVEMBER

16 Regular monthly board meeting
19 Market Outlook with Kevin Van Trump at Lavender Crest; 6:15 p.m. -- SAVE THE DATE FOR A TOP-NOTCH SPEAKER.

26-27 Office closed in observance of Thanksgiving holiday

DECEMBER

5-8 IAA Annual Meeting at Palmer House in Chicago

15 Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy with Lauren Lurkins; 10 a.m.; Milan Community Center

17 On the Road with Kevin Rund; 9 a.m. Reynolds Legion

21 Farm Bureau board meeting