



**Illinois Fertilizer &
Chemical Association**
Supply • Service • Stewardship



Illinois Ag Retail Survey

2023 will be the inaugural year of the Illinois Ag Retail Survey. A percentage of ag retail facilities will be randomly selected to participate every year, with liaisons traveling to these selected facilities in the months of January through March to conduct the survey. Any location selected will be notified ahead of time and contacted to schedule a quick meeting with the regional liaison. The survey takes minimal time to complete and is supported by IFCA, Illinois Farm Bureau, Illinois Corn Growers, Illinois Soybean Association, Illinois Pork Producers, Illinois Beef Association, Illinois Council on Best Management Practices (CBMP) and the Illinois Certified Crop Adviser Program.

The purpose of the survey is to accumulate information related to agricultural practices in our state. The survey is entirely anonymous and provides an opt out clause for the grower. We ask that retail members participate given how important it is for us to have a voice when it comes to nutrient loss in our state.

As 2025 nitrogen and phosphorus loss reduction goals near, there is increased pressure to provide accurate measurables related to practice adoption outlined in the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRs). This new survey allows for our industry to accumulate this data and help tell our story.

More about the survey will be discussed at the upcoming IFCA Winter Convention during the CCA session. Please feel free to reach out to KJ Johnson at **309-827-2774** if you have any questions regarding the survey.

Registration is open for the IFCA Annual Meeting and Tradeshow

Show dates are January 17-19th. Visit www.ifca.com and click on the drop-down menu under the 'Convention' tab. There you will find the agenda, information about our speakers, a list of exhibitors participating on the tradeshow floor, and registration. Also, the IFCA Welcome Reception will be in a designated area on the tradeshow floor on Tuesday, January 17th at 4:45 pm. Everyone is welcome and we look forward to seeing you there!



Attention Retail Location Managers – Give your applicators a day away from the shop and relieve some of those wintertime blues. IFCA has added an applicator session on the morning of Thursday, January 19 to the Convention schedule. Registrants will start their day with a hot breakfast and a chance to walk around the tradeshow floor. They will then make their way to the classroom where they will listen to professionals in the industry speak on nozzles, spray drift, applicator safety, and equipment cleanout. The cost for this session is \$30; \$20 if attending Tuesday or Wednesday.



ANHYDROUS AMMONIA

Spring 2023 Anhydrous Ammonia Safety Schools

Each spring and fall, IFCA partners with the IL Dept of Ag to offer ammonia safety courses throughout the state. Those who attend the training program and pass the exam receive a 3-year certificate from IDA as a “Competent Attendant” to handle anhydrous ammonia.

We have set the dates for the Spring 2023 ammonia courses, so please make a note on your calendars. Registration will open January 02, 2023.



Date and Location

January 19
IFCA Convention
Peoria
(Registration through IFCA Convention)

February 27
Asmark Agricenter
Bloomington

March 01
The Pavilion
Marion

March 02
Rolland Lewis
Community Building
Mt. Vernon
(New Location)

March 03
Unique Suites
Charleston

March 07
Civic Center
Mendota

March 08
Knox Agricenter
Galesburg

March 09
Holiday Inn
Quincy

March 04
Prairie View
Reception Center
Chatham
(New Location)

March 20
Asmark Agricenter
Bloomington



NTSB Publishes Final Report on Beach Park Ammonia Release

As many of us remember, on April 25, 2019, there was an accidental release from dual nurse tanks on a single trailer in a Lake County neighborhood near Beach Park, IL in transit by a farmer. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) initiated an investigation in 2019 regarding the incident that took place on a public roadway near Beach Park, Illinois. While there were no fatalities, NTSB reports that a total of eighty-three injuries including fourteen first responders were treated for exposure.

NTSB has issued a final report. No safety recommendations were issued. The report identifies post-accident actions taken by various entities. The NTSB is aware of the 12,505 individuals that went through certified grower training, which is quite the accomplishment by our industry. To read the full report [click here](#).



2022 Election Recap

State Government

With all the votes casted, returns showed Illinois Democrats will hold every statewide elected office and maintain supermajorities in the General Assembly while extending their majority on the Illinois Supreme Court.

Gov. JB Pritzker won his second term against Sen. Darren Bailey 54.1% to 43.2%. Pritzker's second-term task will be easier by the success of Democrats in the General Assembly.



Illinois Governor JB Pritzker

In the Senate, it appeared Republicans would gain at least two seats, decreasing the Democratic supermajority from 41 members to 39-20.

Republicans had viewed taking the state Supreme Court as their best chance for enacting redistricting reform for future elections, but the two seats that were up for votes on election day both went to Democrats.

Judge Elizabeth Rochford defeated former Lake County Sheriff Mark Curran in the 2nd District by close to nine percentage points.

Mary Kay O'Brien, in the 3rd District, won by about 8,000 votes over Republican incumbent Michael Burke. That would put the court majority at 5-2 in favor of Democrats and would create the first majority-woman court, also by a 5-2 margin.

Democrats appeared poised to extend their supermajority from 73 of the 118 members of the House of Representatives to 77. The lack of success in that chamber prompted a next morning announcement from Rep. Jim Durkin, the Western Springs Republican who has served as House minority leader since 2013, that he would not seek another term leading the House Republicans.

Two of Durkin's top lieutenants – Reps. Dan Brady, of Normal, and Tom Demmer, of Dixon – will also be leaving the General Assembly after unsuccessful bids at statewide office. At least four others from his leadership team had either chosen not to seek another term or lost primary or general elections.

As for other races, the Democrats maintained the offices of comptroller, treasurer, attorney general and secretary of state. Each of the Democrats – incumbents Susana Mendoza, Michael Frerichs, Kwame Raoul, and newcomer Alexi Giannoulias all won by large margins.

Union groups also claimed victory on a constitutional amendment guaranteeing a right to collectively bargain in Illinois. The amendment passed after receiving support by more than half of those voting in the election.

Federal Government

The Illinois' U.S. Senate seat was called shortly after polls closed on election night for Democratic U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth. Duckworth won re-election to a second term, defeating political newcomer and lawyer Kathy Salvi, a Republican, and Libertarian candidate Bill Redpath.

Duckworth had received 56% of the vote. Duckworth, an Iraq War veteran who lost both legs when her helicopter was shot down in 2004, has served in Congress for nearly a decade. Between 2013 and 2017, she represented Illinois' 8th Congressional District, northwest of Chicago.

13th District

Democrat Nikki Budzinski defeated opponent Republican Regan Deering in the election for the U.S. 13th Congressional District in Illinois.

Nikki Budzinski formerly worked for several labor groups before advising Governor J.B. Pritzker and President Joe Biden. Regan Deering is a small business owner and a former teacher. She is also the granddaughter of former ADM CEO Dwayne Andreas. Budzinski won 135,970 votes to Deering's 107,296.



Nikki Budzinski & Regan Deering.

17th District

Former TV meteorologist and Rockford native Eric Sorensen declared victory over East Moline attorney Esther Joy King in Illinois' 17th Congressional District race. Sorensen won 119,450 to 111,378 votes.

Sorensen campaigned with the slogan of "Forecasting a Bright Future for Illinois," promising to fight for lower prescription drug costs, protecting abortion rights and to improve the economy by positioning Illinois to be a major supplier for electric vehicle production.

HERBICIDES REPORT

IDOA Give IFCA Update on Dicamba Before the 2023 Growing Season

This fall, KJ Johnson had a productive meeting with IDOA's Director Costello regarding dicamba for the 2023 growing season. Director Costello did reconfirm that there will be no changes to the Illinois dicamba label coming for the 2023 season. The department is still waiting for EPA to make a final decision on the dicamba label for the 2023 season. IDOA interacts with EPA on a regular basis and EPA has yet to give any hints if they will make any changes to the label. IFCA has also reached out to EPA on a decision, and they are also giving us no more clear direction. As soon as IFCA gets any information on what the 2023 dicamba label looks like, IFCA will pass this on to our membership. The restrictions for dicamba use on soybeans by IDOA are the same restrictions required in 2021 and 2022.

Temperature Restriction

- A pesticide containing dicamba shall not be applied on soybeans if the air temperature at the field at the

time of application is over 85 degrees Fahrenheit or if the National Weather Service's forecasted high temperature for the nearest available location for the day of application exceeds 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Local National Weather Service forecasts are available at <https://www.weather.gov>.

Cut-Off Date Restriction

- Application on soybeans of a pesticide containing dicamba shall not be made after June 20 of each year.

Checking Sensitive Crop Registry

- Before applying a pesticide containing dicamba on soybeans, the applicator shall consult the FieldWatch sensitive crop registry: <https://www.fieldwatch.com> and comply with all associated recordkeeping and label requirements.

Application on soybeans of a pesticide containing dicamba shall not be made if the wind is blowing toward: any Illinois Nature Preserves Commission site that is adjacent to the field of application; or adjacent residential area.

PESTICIDES UPDATE

Pesticide Training and Testing

Do you or someone within your company need to attend pesticide training or take their pesticide test? If so, look no further. All the information you need can be found in this article below.

Online pesticide training and testing are currently available through the UI Pesticide Safety Education Program. Online training for both General Standards and Private Applicator is \$45, while online testing is \$12 for both categories. Both online training and testing will remain open through August 31, 2023, and if you choose to use the online training option, it will be available for 30 days upon purchase. Links to the online training and testing as well as training manuals and workbooks are provided.

[Online Training](#) [Online Testing](#)

[Training Manuals and Workbooks](#)

If you are looking for in-person training or testing, you're in luck! Currently there are nine in-person general standards trainings scheduled, with four of the nine locations also hosting field crop training. If you know of anyone in your company that much prefers in-person training over online, make sure that they look at the schedule and sign up soon. In addition to being able to take either exam at any of these nine locations, there is also an additional fifty locations throughout the state that offer in-person pesticide testing as well. IFCA will also be hosting U of I pesticide training the morning of Jan 18th at the IFCA Convention. Testing is also offered in all categories that afternoon. Links to the in-person trainings and testing sites are directly below.

[In-Person Training](#)

[In-Person Testing](#)

4R Program Update

2022 4R Field Day

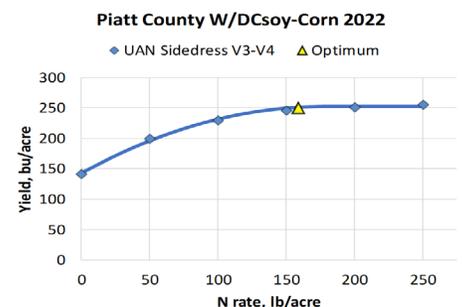
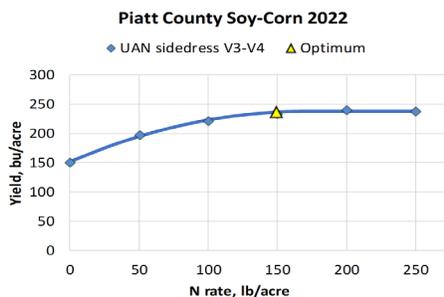
Retailers, growers, NLRs stakeholders and university researchers and students were in attendance September 15th for a 4R Field Day IFCA hosted in partnership with the 4R Field Day Alliance: The Mosaic Company, The Fertilizer Institute, Environmental Tillage Systems and Corteva. We could not have asked for a better day or better turnout to showcase best management practices researched at Eric Miller's farm.

National 4R perspectives were provided by TFI and Corteva, with Dr. Emerson Nafziger providing an update on the 2022 season. Lowell Gentry, agricultural research scientist and project PI, provided an overview and history of the research site while Dan Schaefer and Eric Miller presented the Precision planter and Yetter NH₃ applicator used for the project work at the site. In-field demonstrations were made by Environmental Tillage System's Soil Warrior strip till bar and ROGO's robotic soil sampler.

Two nitrogen rate trials are hosted at this site every year. Below are the response curve results from the 2022 trails.

The first graph (below left) shows results from a typical soy/corn rotation while the second (below right) shows a three-crop rotation trial with wheat, corn, and soybean. Both trials used a UAN sidedress application at V3-V4. Both trials had optimum nitrogen rates close to 150lbs of N, with yields of 240 bu/acre and 250 bu/acre respectively.

Be on the lookout next year for information for a 2023 4R field day, where research data and information from another crop year will be explained as well as free CEU's and free lunch.



IFCA MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Curt Eddington

General Manager

Augusta Farmers COOP

Augusta, IL

Started in the Business: 1984

Counties Served: Adams, Brown, Hancock, McDonough & Schuyler

Curt Eddington grew up in Plymouth, IL the only child of Bruce & Wanda Eddington. Most of Curt's youth was spent in the cab of his dad's truck. Even at an early age, Curt had a relationship with Augusta Farmers COOP as his grandfather, uncle and dad operated Ussery Trucking who did contract hauling of grain, feed & fertilizer, as well as custom spraying & fertilizer application for Augusta Farmers COOP. After high school Curt's first job was working for Farm King in Macomb, IL. From Farm King, Curt spent 9 years working in the feed business, with the last 4 years working in sales for Supersweet Feeds. Curt was hired by Augusta Farmers COOP in 1993 and within one year was elevated to assistant manager. In 2012, Curt was appointed general manager as the previous general manager had abruptly left. Curt remembers the appointment very well as it was during the busy spring season and that fall dealing with aflatoxin in corn. Today, Curt oversees the grain, feed and agronomy department at Augusta Farmers COOP, a centennial COOP that was incorporated in 1919.



Susan & Curt Eddington

Family/Hobbies

Curt and his wife Susan, who is VP of Marine Bank & Trust have been married for 32 years. Curt and Susan have two sons, Colton & Brodie. Colton works at Western Illinois University in the IT department and Brodie works for Pheasants Forever as a Farm Bill Biologist. Curt & Susan also have a 3-year-old grandson, Greyson. In their spare time, Curt & Susan enjoys spending time along with their family at their hunting cabin near Plymouth, IL. Curt enjoys serving Jesus Christ along with hunting & fishing with his two sons & grandchild.

What do you enjoy about the business?

Curt really enjoys working with a talented group of employees at Augusta Farmers COOP, it is more of a family atmosphere being in a small community. Curt also enjoys that first spring day when the applicators start rolling prior to planting. It is not uncommon to still see Curt in the cab of the sprayer or out custom applying ammonia.

Concerns?

Supply chain has been more challenging in the past several years. Also, the increased regulatory burden has made it difficult to navigate, Augusta employees wear several different hats as we do not have an individual dedicated to focusing on just the regulations.

Why did you join IFCA?

I really enjoy networking at the IFCA convention along with all the educational sessions. IFCA was the liaison between Augusta Farmers COOP & Asmark to assist us on our regulatory compliance needs. Lastly, I always look forward to attending MAGIE every August in Bloomington.

From the President's Desk

by Kevin "KJ" Johnson

After November's election, it reminds me that we live in a remarkably diverse state, one which is in the top of agricultural production but also home to one of the world's largest cities. We have millions of acres of crops, but we also have 12.67 million people with the largest portion living in the northeast corner of the state. With all the people in Illinois, it means we



have lots of opinions and a great deal of issues. That is no more evident than after the November election. If you look at a map, we look red but we are a blue state.

At the upcoming 2023 legislative session, I want you to know that IFCA will continue to work diligently to represent your interests and to make our issues known to legislators who are also interacting with a multitude of other associations who also want their interests and objectives known. Sometimes all these opinions, positions and priorities can become an almost unmanageable turmoil at the State Capitol. It has become more difficult each passing year to keep agriculture's needs a priority within our state government as our legislators are becoming further removed from the roots of production agriculture. I am sure I will be asking for your help in the coming months as we try to keep unwarranted regulations in check.

For all of you who contribute to Ag-SOLVE PAC, please accept my sincere appreciation. Ag-SOLVE PAC enables IFCA to attend legislative fundraisers and events

to keep IFCA's name and our image fresh in the minds of our legislators, which pays dividends during the legislative session when we ask legislators to vote with us on issues important to our industry. This year at the IFCA convention we will again hold our live and silent auction to bring in money for Ag-SOLVE PAC. Thank you in advance for those items you donate or simply bid on during the live and silent auctions.

I look forward to seeing you at the IFCA Convention in Peoria on January 17-19, 2023. Where else can you go to see all your industry colleagues and network in one location. To register for the upcoming IFCA Convention, just go to www.ifca.com and click on "Convention" to view the many exhibitors, educational topics, and session descriptions. There are also many opportunities for CEUs.

I appreciate the continued support to IFCA from our members, our Convention and MAGIE exhibitors, and our sponsors. Our industry changes rapidly and there are so many issues to address. One thing that will always be consistent, IFCA will always be the leading voice at the Illinois State Capitol for the ag input industry. Finally, your membership with IFCA allows us to address those concerns & challenges at the state and national level.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a joyful New Year!

kj@ifca.com

IFCA Holds Monthly Meeting with Director Costello and IDOA



Since becoming President of IFCA, KJ Johnson has strived to hold monthly in-person meeting with IDOA Director Jerry Costello and his staff. IFCA and IDOA have always had a strong working relationship, although IFCA realizes this relationship must be even stronger with all the political issues facing the ag input industry at the Illinois State Capitol. IFCA appreciates Director Costello and his team for always listening to our concerns and having an open dialogue with our industry.

REGULATORY ALERT

This summer and fall, IFCA has been working on many issues that face our membership going into the future. We have been engaged with regulators and legislators on these critical issues. Below are some of the items that IFCA has been working on our members behalf.

Atrazine

IFCA made comments pushing back EPA restrictions on atrazine. EPA's proposal was an overreach, and it could impact over 70% of US corn acres and 100% of Illinois corn acres. They have changed their methodology resulting in predicted impacts and required mitigation for the entire corn belt. EPA proposal uses worst case inputs and assumptions and overestimates real world or expected concentrations and expands the acres requiring mitigation by 3X-4X. EPA announced it wanted to change the level of concentration to 3.4 parts per billion. Estimates of banning atrazine would cost farmers between \$26 and \$58 per acre. [Here](#) are IFCA Comments.

Dicamba

IFCA filed comments with the U.S. EPA in support of the existing Illinois dicamba label which the agency has purview over approving when registration is up for renewal.

In the letter addressed to EPA Administrator Michael Regan, IFCA indicated that our members are planning for the 2023 growing season and beyond. We also indicated it is critical this crop protection tool be readily available for our members and their farmer customers with a commonsense approach on restrictions. [Here](#) are IFCA's Comments

Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA)

IFCA signed on to a coalition letter and met with members of Congress to reaffirm that EPA should be the primary federal authority for making pesticide findings and decisions under the FIFRA legislation. IFCA believes that states have the right to build upon the agency's findings should they choose, but that EPA has the final input. IFCA is asking Congress to act on this important matter and will ensure ag retailers have reliable access to these vital tools in the years to come.

Recently, federal legislation was filed to take away pesticide preemption and provide more power to local government to ban or restrict pesticides. IFCA does not believe that a patchwork of the pesticide regulations is best for our industry. Click [Here](#) to read the letter that IFCA signed.

Pesticide Registration Improvement Act (PRIA)

As an ag input industry, we need to make sure our voices are heard. IFCA has been to Washington DC for visits on capitol hill and back in the legislative district with follow up calls. One of the most critical issues affecting our members is adequate funding for EPA to ensure crop production products are registered in a timely manner. IFCA has partnered with CropLife America on maintaining funding for FY23 RRIA funding through Congress. IFCA has reached out to the Illinois congressional delegation this fall on this issue.

EPA's lack of funding for pesticide registrations is not a new issue. In fact, more than twenty years ago, this shortfall resulted in our industry stepping up to secure passage of the Pesticide Registration Improvement Act (PRIA). PRIA created a fee for service program that today provides EPA with more than \$50 million in user fees annually to support the staff needed for

the pesticide review process. The program is an example of a public-private partnership that works, but we need a larger federal investment to match increases in industry funding. The current fiscal year has only \$129 million, but the U.S. House appropriations bill included \$158 million—a 22% increase. The Senate recommendation only includes \$140 million. We are encouraged with increases in both chambers, we still need to advance this over the finish line and placed in the budget.

Although we may not agree with every decision that comes out of the EPA, we do all agree that the better funded the agency is, the more likely it is to provide consumers, farmers, and public health officials with the tools they need grow to our food and protect our communities.

Risk Management Program (RMP)

IFCA filed comments to the EPA opposing the proposed rule on Accidental Release Prevention Requirements: Risk Management Programs (RMP) under the Clean Water Act. The EPA announced on August 19, 2022, that it would propose revisions to the Risk Management Program (RMP) rule to protect further vulnerable communities from chemical accidents, especially those living near facilities with high accident rates. According to EPA, the "Safer Communities by Chemical Accident Prevention" (SCCAP) rule "would strengthen the existing program and includes new safeguards that have not been addressed in prior RMP rules, such as enhanced employee participation and transparency for communities on safety decisions."

IFCA Disagreed with EPA's proposed rule and filed [these comments](#).



Low Water Levels on the Mississippi River Brings Fertilizer Movement to a Crawl

Despite rainfall the past few weeks, the Mississippi River is getting close to all-time historic lows, and it is having an impact on the ag input industry in Illinois. Closures stopped a reported 2,000 barges and about on hundred towboats.

With water levels at record lows, barges have run aground, causing traffic jams as boats wait for the US Army Corps of Engineers to dredge a path through the shallows. The problem has been building for months. Summer brought meager rain to the Plains and Midwest. With harvest now done, farmers are bringing grains to market, and lay down fertilizer before the winter snows. The shriveled Mississippi has forced them to seek alternatives, all of them more expensive, as in moving fertilizer by rail from the Gulf Coast or shipping everything to distant West Coast ports. This will inevitably increase pressure on global food prices at a time when Russia's invasion of Ukraine has already sent them soaring.

The river gauge at Osceola, Arkansas is now at its lowest since the all-time low record was set in 1988. The river's level near Memphis is the third lowest ever recorded and is predicted to fall to its second lowest ever as drought conditions are predicted in the coming weeks by the National Weather Service.

All told, the economic hit from the river's historically low levels could reach \$20 billion.

As the shipping system grinds to a crawl, barge rates have soared. In the first week of November, shipping one ton of soybeans by barge from St. Louis cost \$80.12, 400% more than the year-earlier level. The rate jumped as high as \$105.85 in mid-October. Prices have come down a bit after some rain in the central US, but it was not anywhere near enough to end the crisis.





MAGIE 2022 a Success

The 2022 MAGIE show in August was attended by over 2,000 people from across the United States,

right here in Bloomington, Illinois. There's no other show designed just for the commercial industry, with a ride-n-drive venue and exhibitors with the best equipment

and technology that exists in our industry. MAGIE 2023 is August 23-24 at the Interstate Center in Bloomington, Illinois. Mark your calendar!

IFCA Scholarship Program:

December 16, 2022–January 18, 2023

We are accepting applications from junior college or 4-year university students who wish to pursue a career in the ag input industry. The IFCA Scholarships are \$1,000 and the application form is on our website at www.ifca.com. If you have sons, daughters, nieces, nephews, or grandchildren in college who want to work in our industry when they graduate, please have them fill out the application and return it to IFCA before December 16, 2022. We will announce the scholarship winners during our January 18, 2023, IFCA annual meeting in Peoria, Illinois.

2023 Board Elections – Vote Online



The 2023 board elections are underway! Ballots will not be sent in the mail this year as we have moved to an online voting system. Please look out for an email that will have our name in the “from” line but the email address will be noreply@electionrunner.com. Each IFCA member receives one vote for their respective ballot. Voting only takes a few minutes! Look for the voting email by December 12th - contact Leslie Forrest at **309.827.2774** if you do not receive it.

Mandatory Sexual Harassment Training

Illinois made anti-sexual harassment training mandatory for all Illinois employers in January 2020. Employers are required to provide annual anti-harassment training to each employee every year. If you do not have your own training you may request access to the IDHR prevention training content by clicking [here](#).

IFCA Chairman's Report

by Greg Taylor, The Equity



2022 has proven to have been a very successful year for most Ag Retailers in Illinois. This did not come without many challenges throughout the year, and new obstacles are staring us in the face again. As we sit here today, we are looking at a potential rail strike, which has a tremendous impact on the total U.S. Low water levels are creating major river transportation issues for all commodities. Risk is a huge undertaking by Ag Retail during these unsettled times. Last but far from least, the labor deficiency in Ag Retail continues to make each and every one of us take a look at our organizations and how we operate.

Today, the rail strike is a very concerning situation not only for those of us involved in agriculture but to our nation. It takes the railways, the rivers, and the roadways in some fashion to keep anything and everything in this great

country moving. A rail strike will bring a disastrous situation for everyone. For those of us in agriculture, the ability to move and receive product will almost halt with the exception of some truck and river movement. River movement is already slow with low water levels, and we need some significant rain to get it back to normal. Barge delays affected almost everyone in some fashion, whether on a large or small scale this fall. Trucks can only move so much, and terminals have to have product in place to haul it from. This fall we were able to work through the river transportation issues, but if rail and river both grind to a halt, grain nor fertilizer will move very fast, if at all. The government definitely needs to step in on December 5th if the rail unions do not have their contracts resolved.

Risk is a huge concern for all of us and especially at these price levels. In order to have possession, you must have ownership. The high product prices, coupled with rising interest costs, is having an effect on each of us. As an industry, we continue to alleviate some of this through prepay, but we often struggle to get growers and manufacturers to honor the contracts that are in place. Equipment costs, fuel expense, labor and interest expense are definitely on an upwards trajectory, and we struggle as an industry to recoup these additional costs.

Labor continues to be a challenge for almost all of us. I know looking back at our own organization 30 years ago, approximately 75% of our employees came from farm backgrounds. The remaining 25% typically came from smaller rural towns and communities. Today, if 25% of our employees are from the farm, it would be a stretch at many of our locations. I don't feel this is a negative change, but it's obvious we have an increasing interest in agriculture from young people that did not grow up on the farm. In Illinois, we saw college student enrollments decline from 2008 to 2018, with a portion of those being Ag Students. Today, we are starting to see some slow enrollment increases year over year beginning in 2021. That's a very short time, but those increasing numbers give us some positive hope. I personally feel we are currently starting to see some improvement in potential hires, but we are still experiencing a shortfall of people as customer demands increase. Quality of life and work/life balance seems to be of much higher demand by applicants and followed closely by higher compensation levels with minimal experience.

Agriculture is one of the fastest changing industries today. The industry is full of new ideas and technologies that will eventually enhance our abilities to be able to do it better and more efficiently with less people than in the past. Speed and efficiency also create additional obstacles. Manufacturing and distribution must step up their game as well. This not only includes the supply and distribution of products we sell but the equipment we need to apply it safely and in an environmentally sound fashion. Everything we do revolves around timing or a window of application that can often be condensed. We all need to be looking ahead, being highly planned and prepared at all times.

In closing, I thank each and every one of you for allowing me to be your board chairman and representing our industry this past year. I can assure you that our state has the best representation in Springfield and throughout our industry by the fantastic group of employees on the IFCA Staff. It has been an absolute pleasure working with them the past seven years and as this past year's board chairman. I wish you all a Healthy and Blessed Holiday Season.



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2022 IFCA Board of Directors

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Paul Whitworth, *Nutrien*

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Our Mission

To assist and represent the Illinois crop production supply and service industry while promoting the sound stewardship and utilization of agricultural inputs.

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