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Soil Sampling Program Available For Hoosier Farmers

ISDA



INDIANAPOLIS (Sept. 2, 2025) - The Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) and partners throughout the state have worked with the Gulf Hypoxia Program (GHP) to develop a no-cost program with a focus on increasing the knowledge and use of soil sampling as a nutrient management practice to benefit farm operations. The program, titled Indiana's Mississippi River Basin Soil Sampling Program, is open now for applicants.

"This program is helpful and valuable for our Hoosier farmers," Lieutenant Governor Beckwith, Indiana's Secretary of Agriculture said. "By offering no-cost access to soil sampling, this initiative supports farmers with the tools and knowledge to make smarter nutrient management decisions. I encourage our farmers to apply!"

ISDA promotes the importance of nutrient management and the principles of the 4R Nutrient Stewardship framework. The 4R framework incorporates using the "Right Source, Right Rate, Right Time, and Right Place" to achieve cropping system goals. This program focuses on soil sampling and testing as it is a key component, and first step, of developing a plan for nutrient management. Soil sampling provides an assessment of the soil's fertility which can be used for making fertilizer application recommendations, assessing available nutrients over time, increase farmer profitability and enhance environmental protection by reducing the risk of nutrient loss. This project was developed to help further Indiana's State Nutrient Reduction Strategy efforts.

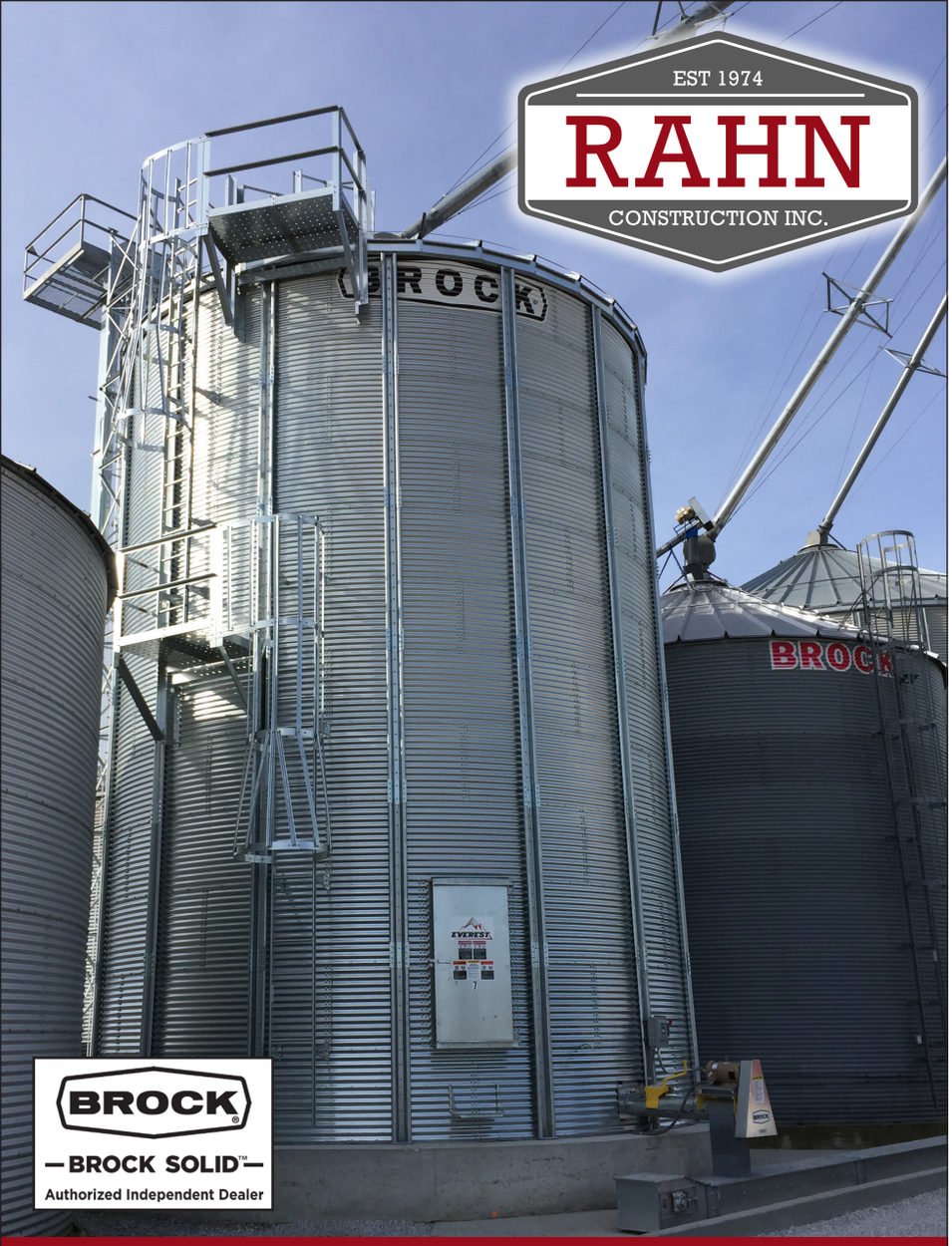
"A no-cost program for farmers to utilize for soil testing is a great tool in this farm economy," said Don Lamb, director of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture. "Healthy soils are vital for crop health, animal health and conservation. I am very proud of our department for managing this crucial on farm program and we encourage both row crop farmers and pasture owners to apply!"

This program includes row crop fields, pastures, hay and specialty crops located within Indiana's portion of the Mississippi River Basin. Eligible landowners will be prioritized by acreage enrolled (i.e., 100 acres or less), fields that have never been soil sampled and fields that haven't been sampled regularly (i.e., within the last four years). Further prioritization may be implemented based on ISDA's workload capacity. This program excludes hobby gardens and private lawns.

Interested landowners can sign-up online at ISDA's website or by reaching out to Nutrient Stewardship Program Manager, Ophelia Norman at soilsampling@isda.in.gov.

Sign-ups begin Tuesday, September 2, 2025, and ISDA is accepting registrations until Friday, October 17, 2025, or until funds are exhausted.

This program was made possible thanks to ISDA, Indiana Soybean Alliance, Indiana Corn Marketing Council, Indiana Agriculture Nutrient Alliance (IANA), Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP) members, farmers, and crop advisors.

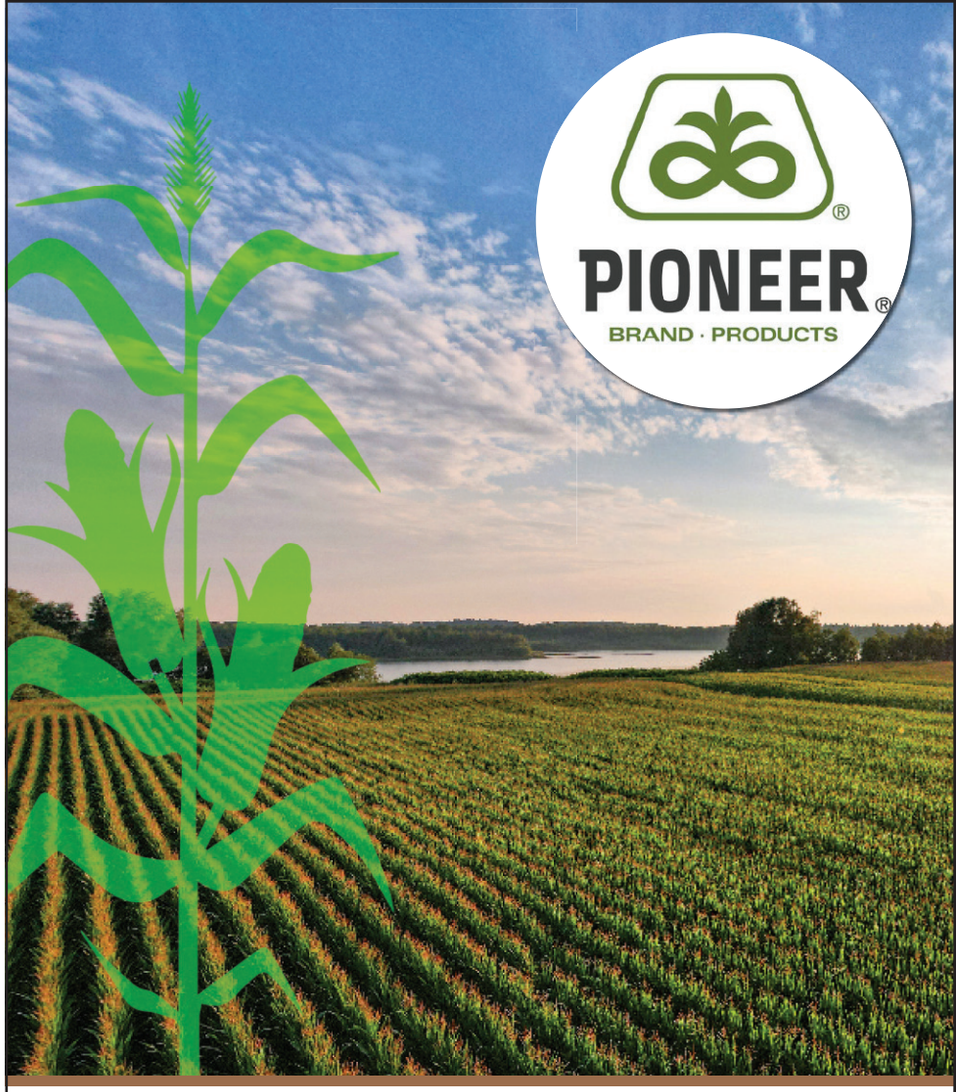


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BOB CAMPBELL

Farmer Sentiment Weakens as Producer Confidence in Future Wanes

Purdue News Service



WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Farmer sentiment dipped for the third straight month in August, with the Purdue University-CME Group Ag Economy Barometer Index falling 10 points to 125. Producers expressed markedly less optimism about the future, as reflected in the Index of Future Expectations, which fell 16 points to 123. This marks the lowest reading for the future index since last September. Producers' perspective on current conditions changed little this month, as the Current Conditions Index rose 2 points from July to 129. Sentiment differed widely among producers according to whether their operations focused mainly on crops or livestock. Crop producers responded with much less optimism than their livestock counterparts, reflecting the profitability disparity between the two enterprises.

Beef cattle operations in particular are experiencing record profitability as the smallest cattle inventory since 1951 has pushed cattle prices to record levels. This stands in sharp contrast to returns for crop production, which have weakened in 2025. The August barometer survey took place from Aug. 11-15, 2025.

Farmers again reported weak financial expectations for their farms in the coming year. As in July, the Farm Financial Performance Index remained below 100. The reading of 91 barely changed from July's index value. Crop prices that stand below the cost of production for many farms help explain why more farmers expect weaker incomes for the coming year. The U.S. Department of Agriculture released its August Crop Production and World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates reports during the week the August survey was conducted. The USDA forecasted a 2025-26 season average corn price of $3.90 per bushel and a soybean price of $10.10 per bushel. Both estimates fall well below estimated break-even levels for U.S. farmers. Despite the weak income outlook, the Farm Capital Investment Index improved 8 points from July to 61. Livestock producers had a notably more optimistic outlook in August than crop producers, which helped push the index higher.

The Short-Term Farmland Value Expectations Index reading of 112 dropped 3 points from July, continuing a three-month trend. Even so, the index remains above 100. This indicates that more farmers still expect rising values in the coming year than those who consider declining values as more likely. This perspective is similarly held by three-fourths of crop producers, who said in the August survey that they expect farmland cash rental rates in 2026 to remain unchanged from 2025. Only 12% of respondents said they expect lower rates next year.

Every January, the Ag Economy Barometer survey includes two questions about farmers' expectations about the size of their farm's operating loan for the coming year and the reasons for a change in operating loan size. Given the concerns about weak farm income in 2025, the two questions about operating loans were added to the August barometer survey. Twenty-two percent of August's respondents said they expect their 2026 operating loan to be larger than in 2025. This was up from January, when 18% of respondents said they expected their 2025 loan size to increase compared to 2024.

A follow-up question to farmers who said they expected their operating loan size to increase asked for the reason behind the larger loan. Twenty-three percent of those farmers in the August survey said it was because they expected to carry over the unpaid operating debt from 2025 to 2026. The responses to these questions suggest that farmers' financial stress increased from January to August. Financial stress appears to be noticeably higher than it was in January 2023, when only 5% of farmers with larger operating loans attributed that to the need to carry over unpaid operating debt. That number rose to 17% in January 2024 — still lower than this year.

"In sum, the August Ag Economy Barometer survey results show that U.S. farmers generally expect their financial performance for the coming year to drop from the previous year," said Michael Langemeier, the barometer's principal investigator and director of Purdue University's Center for Commercial Agriculture. "Despite a weakening Short-Term Farmland Value Expectations Index in August, more farmers still expect farmland values to rise rather than to weaken. Lastly, the percentage of farmers citing expectations for rising operating debt because of unpaid operating debt carrying over from the previous year could signal increasing farm financial stress in production agriculture."

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USDA's New Plan to Increase Number of Rural Veterinarians

Hoosier Ag Today



There has been a shortage of veterinarians across the U.S. for quite some time. That's why USDA is introducing a plan to help increase the number of veterinarians across the U.S.—especially livestock veterinarians.

"Food animal veterinarians currently make up about five percent, only 5 percent of the total veterinarian population, a stark decline from just 40 years ago," according to U.S. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins.

"Today, USDA is issuing the Rural Veterinary Shortage Action Plan. We are enhancing and streamlining the USDA's veterinary grant programs. We are making an additional $15 million available for the Veterinarian Medicine Loan Repayment Program and streamlining the application process," she said.

Rollins talked about the other steps USDA plans to take with the Rural Veterinary Shortage Action Plan.

"We are commissioning new economic research to analyze and project veterinary shortages in rural areas, especially for food animal veterinarians. USDA is pursuing strategies to make federal service more attractive for our vets, and to create a direct pipeline into public service. And lastly, we will work with veterinary schools, including the great one right here in Starkville, across the country, to increase recruitment from rural America."

Rollins made the announcement was last week during an appearance at Mississippi State University.

USDA provided full details of their Rural Veterinary Action Plan:

1. Enhance and Streamline Veterinary Grant Programs. Effective later this year, USDA will make changes to the Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP) and the Veterinary Services Grant Program (VSGP) to streamline applications to an online portal and will increase funding for these critical programs that have proven success rates.

2. Analyze Rural Veterinary Shortages to Better Understand the Need. To make informed policy decisions, Federal and State governments need better data about the scope of the rural veterinary shortage, which is why the USDA Economic Research Service will study this issue and produce a report in mid 2026 to be used by USDA leadership and other policymakers seeking to address this crisis.

3. Recruit and Retain USDA Veterinarians. USDA has a shortage of veterinarians for over a decade. Rural posts, port inspections, and export certification roles are particularly hard to staff, especially when the pay offered by private practices in urban and suburban areas is more competitive than government pay. To address this, USDA is pursuing strategies to make Federal service more attractive to create a direct pipeline into public service for veterinarians. These steps represent an investment to ensure APHIS and FSIS have a mission critical veterinary workforce needed to safeguard animal health, public health, and U.S. trade. Options under exploration include special pay rates for federal government veterinarians, increased tuition reimbursements to better align with private sector incentives, and potential implementation of a recruitment bonus for federal veterinarians. USDA seeks to partner with universities, state and local communities, farmers, and youth groups to recruit the best and brightest next generation of talent and bring more jobs to America's countryside.

4. Catalog Federal Resources Available to Veterinarians for Starting a Practice. Opening a veterinary clinic in a rural area often requires significant capital to purchase or build the necessary facilities or equipment. For many recent graduates of veterinary school, this significant investment is difficult after incurring debt to pursue the higher education needed to become a veterinarian. To better educate veterinary schools and recent veterinary school graduates about programs available to help finance clinics, USDA will catalog relevant USDA programs including Rural Development programs such as the Business & Industry Loan Guarantees and the Community Facilities Program.

5. Work with and Listen to Stakeholders, including Veterinary Schools, to Understand the Barriers to Entry and Increase Recruitment from Rural Areas. A low percentage of veterinary school students come from rural areas, or express interest in serving rural backgrounds, and an even lower percentage of recent veterinary school graduates enter into production animal practice. These are concerning trends and only exacerbate the rural veterinary shortage. To further understand problems and solutions, USDA will hold listening sessions between now and October 1, 2025, to hear from stakeholders to determine what additional actions can be taken to reverse these trends and recruit food animal veterinarians to USDA and rural areas.



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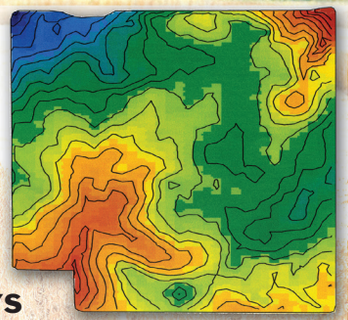
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Harvesting in Sync: Purdue and John Deere Develop Automated Unloading Technology

Purdue News Service



Harvest is one of the most demanding times in a farmer's year. The clock is always ticking, and every grain spilled or minute wasted equals profit lost.

One of the most intricate maneuvers on the field is unloading grain from a combine into a grain cart while both vehicles are moving. It's a task that requires near-perfect synchronization between the combine operator and the tractor driver pulling the grain cart.

That same kind of close collaboration recently played out in a project between Purdue University and John Deere. Combining industry experience with research expertise, the two organizations developed an initial demonstration of Auto Unload, a precision technology that improves productivity, reduces operator fatigue, and saves valuable time during harvest.

It's a partnership that mirrors the technology itself: two parts moving in sync toward a shared goal.

During harvest, efficiency is everything. Unloading grain on the go can improve combine productivity by as much as 23 percent, but it's a complicated procedure that demands tight focus and coordination between the combine and tractor operators again and again.

"It's like landing an aircraft," explained Corwin Puryk, staff engineer and John Deere's principal investigator for the project. "Farmers face intense pressure to align the machines with precision – sometimes up to ten times per hour over a twelve-hour workday."

John Deere's existing Machine Sync system already offered a partial solution to keep the vehicles aligned during unloading. But it still required constant attention and manual adjustments from the combine operator to distribute grain evenly across the cart.

Purdue University and John Deere had been discussing opportunities to collaborate, and the development of an automated unloading system was the perfect chance to combine forces. Purdue didn't just have technical expertise – the university also offered agricultural insight and the facilities to test emerging technologies in real-world conditions.

"We really see Purdue as one of the leading universities to look to in agriculture," said Jennifer Preston, vice president at John Deere Electric Powertrain and CEO of Kriesel Electric. Her own Boilermaker ties run deep – she holds a degree in electrical engineering from Purdue and serves as the Executive Focal from John Deere to Purdue.

Where John Deere's engineers brought practical insights from the field and a track record of building dependable machinery, Purdue contributed deep agricultural roots, broad technical knowledge, and access to a perfect test site at the Agronomy Center for Research and Education (ACRE).

"Purdue and John Deere have a long history and this is a great example of what we can do together," explained Eric Woods, Executive Director of Industry Partnerships at Purdue University. "They came to us with a complex problem, and we had the research capabilities to find a solution."

Greg Shaver, professor of mechanical engineering and the director of Herrick Labs, served as the university's principal investigator. He assembled a team of faculty and students across disciplines: Aerospace Engineering, Agricultural and Biological Engineering (ABE), Agronomy, and Mechanical Engineering.

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Harvesting in Sync: Purdue and John Deere Develop Automated Unloading Technology - Continued

Shaver's expertise in vehicle automation was complemented by John Evans, assistant professor of agricultural and biological engineering, who contributed firsthand farming experience as well as a background in agriculture robotics. Mechanical engineering PhD candidates Ziping Liu, Chufan Jiang and Shveta Dhamankar also played a significant role in creating the automation system models and algorithms.

"I knew going in that Purdue could help," Shaver said. "This was a challenging, unique opportunity to work with John Deere on a multi-year effort – and, ultimately, it was successful."

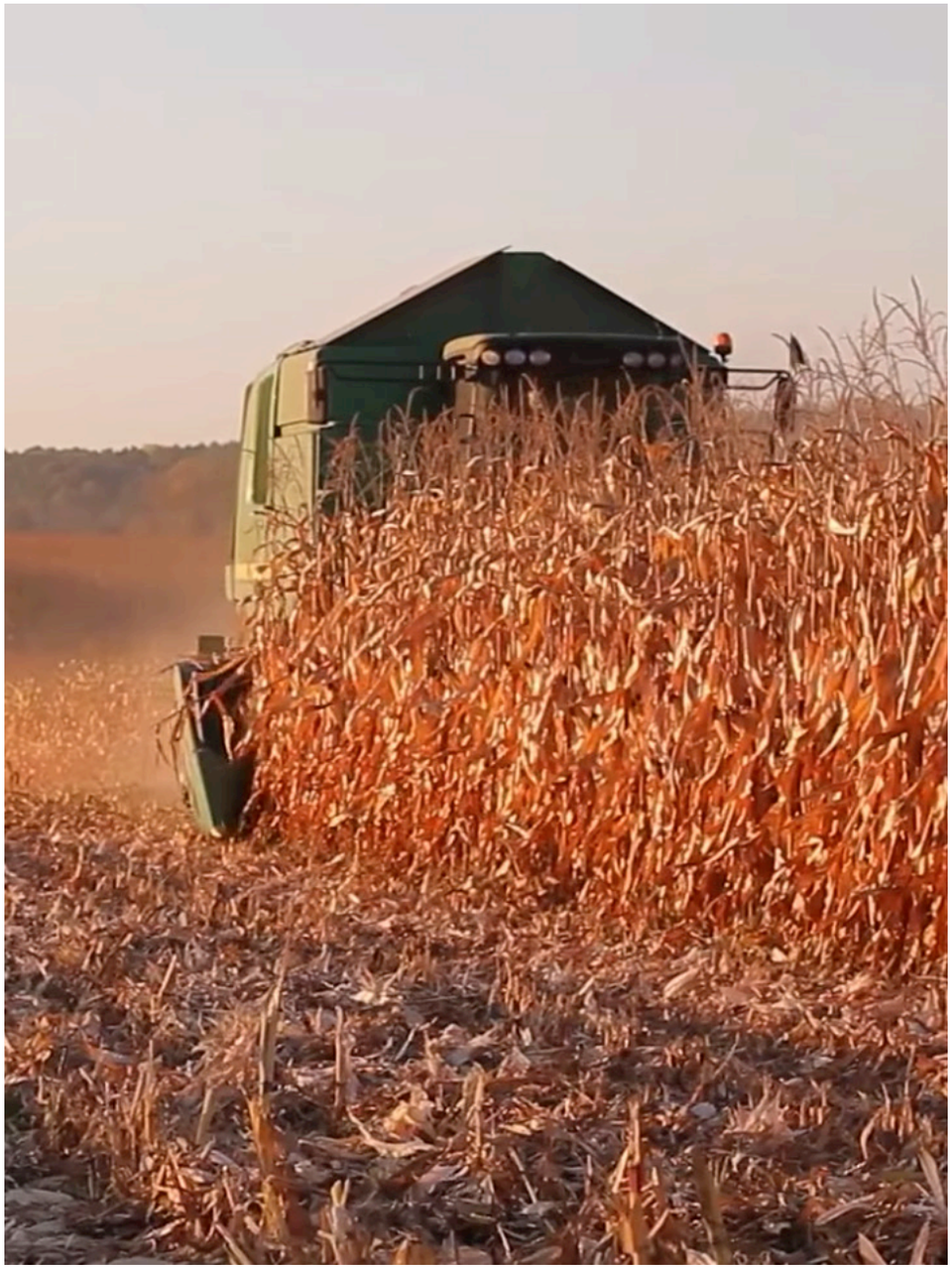
Much like the machines themselves, the people behind the project had to work in tandem. Shaver and Evans, together with Purdue colleagues Daniel DeLaurentis and Tony Vyn, guided graduate and PhD students in developing and testing the technology.

At John Deere, the efforts were equally cross-departmental. Puryk, an engineer in Crop Harvesting Advanced Engineering, worked closely with Ryan White, Brandon McDonald and other colleagues in the Intelligent Solutions Group to ensure Purdue's upgrades were compatible with existing hardware.

"I was impressed by the caliber of work and breath of fresh air Purdue brought to the project," noted Puryk. "The students were always eager, full of questions, and willing to learn."

Working together, they tackled challenges one by one: overcoming visibility issues caused by dust, light and weather; maintaining alignment over uneven terrain; detecting fill levels in the grain cart to maximize each load.

The auto unload system was built on John Deere's Machine Sync and Machine Vision technology, using sophisticated algorithms to automatically measure the amount of grain and autonomously move the cart to evenly distribute the load. Extensive testing in the ACRE fields proved its viability.



After two years of development, Purdue delivered a working prototype at the end of 2020. A variant of the vehicle automated unloading system was officially granted a U.S. patent in 2023 and a fully integrated solution with the latest hardware architecture will be available to customers as a John Deere Precision Upgrade beginning in late 2025 and as a factory option in 2026.

But the bigger achievement was the partnership itself – one that benefited John Deere, Purdue and, most importantly, the farmers who stand to gain from the technology.

"Seeing this have an impact on farmers is one of my proudest achievements," said Evans. "They have enough on their plate already. This takes one more thing off their hands."

For John Deere, the project reaffirmed the value of working closely with a university partner who brought fresh ideas and cutting-edge research capabilities. For Purdue, it gave students hands-on experience solving real problems facing modern farmers, from theory to implementation.

"We're delighted to have made a positive impact on John Deere and its customers," Shaver added. "Having the work we do with our students and industry partners implemented in the real world is the ultimate satisfaction."

A productive harvest is built on timing, trust, and teamwork – and so is a successful relationship between industry and university partners.

"With our strategic alliance, John Deere and Purdue are able to accomplish more than either organization could alone," said Woods. "This project was another step towards our shared goal: to help the feed the planet and change people's lives."

As labor, scale, and budget demands on agriculture continue to rise, developing new technologies to ease the pressure on farmers will be increasingly important. It's a challenge the engineers and researchers at Purdue and John Deere are eager to take on.

Collaboration between the two organizations opened the doors for an automated solution that makes one of the most complicated harvest tasks more efficient, reliable, and less stressful for the people behind the wheel.

"There's more grain harvested. There's less grain on the ground. And when the farmer goes home at the end of the day, they're going to be happier and less exhausted," Shaver explained.

It's an example of how Purdue University excels at working with industry partners to develop novel solutions to practical problems – while helping ensure the people feeding the world have the tools they need to succeed.

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Jinyuan Shao - Graduate Ag Research Spotlight

Purdue News Service



"Traditionally, if you wanted to accurately measure the volume of a tree, you had to cut it down. With LiDAR, we can manipulate and analyze data without destroying the forest structure."

- Jinyuan Shao, PhD candidate in Forestry and Natural Resources

The Student

From a young age, Jinyuan Shao was drawn to computers and fascinated by how things worked. In high school, that curiosity turned into hands-on passion, he dove into DIY tech projects, even customizing his own cellphone just for the challenge. So when college rolled around, choosing engineering felt like a natural step. But Jinyuan wanted more than just circuits and code as he was craving impact beyond the digital world.

"I came to feel like my capabilities should be applied in terms of science or nature," he says.

Shao went on to earn a master's degree in ecology, then began to look for a way to combine all his interests.

"I found out that Purdue had a very interesting program integrating remote sensing and natural resources with AI," he says.

He reached out to Songlin Fei, professor of Forestry and Natural Resources and director of the Institute for Digital Forestry, who encouraged him to apply. Shao arrived in West Lafayette in 2021.

"In my hometown, you can see mountains all around," he says. "Everything here is flat – that was a very impressive thing to me!"

The Research

Working in Fei's lab, Shao studies how LiDAR data and AI can be used in forestry.

"Traditionally, if you wanted to accurately measure the volume of a tree, you had to cut it down," he says. "With LiDAR, we can manipulate and analyze data without destroying the forest structure."

Using LiDAR combined with AI-powered algorithms, it's possible to measure and count trees, identify species, and assess value. This information is useful for property owners, managers, policy makers, and researchers alike. Shao gives the example of Indiana Department of Natural Resources statewide Continuous Forest Inventory program, which has been done annually through a manual process. LiDAR data and AI analysis could make the job much more efficient.

Though much of Shao's work happens in the lab, he does get time in nature as well. "Every season we go into the forest with backpack LiDAR and drone LiDAR and collect data," he says. "Then we get the data back and put it into the server to train the algorithm."

Opportunities

"Dr. Fei has given me lots of opportunities, including going to academic conferences and doing competitions," Shao says. Shao and his classmates recently won first place in the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing's annual GeoChallenge, for which Shao served as team leader.

Shao has been awarded for various scholarships, including a Charles H. Michler Scholarship, an IndianaView Student Scholarship, and a Purdue Ross Fellowship, a highly prestigious four-year fellowship for "outstanding PhD-track students."

"Dr. Fei has taught me to be a good researcher, how to be a critical thinker, how to co-work with other people, and how to communicate well and have leadership skills," Shao says.

Shao has also had the opportunity to work as a teaching assistant for several semesters, assisting on an undergraduate course on natural resource information management.

"It feels good that I can convey my knowledge to younger generations," he says.

Future plans

Shao expects to graduate this December. He's currently looking for opportunities in both industry and academia. "I would like to see which one is more challenging, and which one would help me improve myself better," he says.

When he's not working, Shao likes to walk around the lake near his home.

"I just like to walk in nature and think," he says.

BE SAFE AROUND ELECTRICITY WHEN MOVING FARM EQUIPMENT

As harvest season ramps up in Indiana, farmers and their crews are busy moving equipment to and from the fields. This increased activity, however, raises the risk of accidents, especially involving electricity.

TO PREVENT SUCH DANGEROUS INCIDENTS, YOUR ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE OFFERS THE FOLLOWING SAFETY GUIDELINES:

- **OBSERVE YOUR SURROUNDINGS.** Always check above and around before moving or raising equipment. Remember, power lines can sag, especially in hot weather. Maintain a minimum clearance of 10 feet from all power lines and poles.
- **NEVER TRY TO RAISE POWER LINES TO ALLOW PASSAGE OF TALL EQUIPMENT.** Even non-metallic objects like wood poles or branches can conduct electricity.
- **BE CAUTIOUS AROUND POWER POLES.** Striking a pole can cause it to break and drop live wires onto your equipment.
- **LOWER EQUIPMENT PROPERLY.** Ensure that equipment like grain augers and other portable equipment are fully lowered before transporting.
- **USE A SPOTTER.** When navigating near power lines, having a spotter can enhance safety by providing an extra set of eyes.
- **PLAN YOUR ROUTE.** If there's any doubt that equipment will clear a power line, opt for an alternative route.
- **STAY PUT IN EMERGENCIES.** If you're in equipment that touches power lines, stay in the cab and call for help. Tell others to stay away. In the rare case of a fire and an emergency exit is necessary, jump clear without touching the ground and the equipment simultaneously, then shuffle with both feet together for at least 30 feet to avoid electrical shock.



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USDA Secures New Long-Term Fire-Retardant Contract, Saving Taxpayers Hundreds of Millions

USDA

(Washington, D.C., September 3, 2025) – U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins today signed a new five-year contract for American made fire retardant with Perimeter Solutions, supporting the U.S. Forest Service and Department of the Interior's aerial wildland fire suppression programs. The agreement secures significant savings, putting the American taxpayer first, while strengthening our manufacturing base by keeping fire-retardant production made in America.

"At USDA we are negotiating contracts that respect the American taxpayer and align with President Trump's common sense business mindset that ensures we are not being taken advantage of anymore. This contract is a tremendous win for America's taxpayers, our rural communities, and the brave men and women who fight wildfires every day," said Secretary Brooke Rollins. "By locking in historic cost savings and bringing every step of the fire-retardant supply chain back to American soil, we are protecting lives, saving communities from



destruction, and keeping America safe, strong, and resilient. This agreement proves that when we put America first, we get the best results for our people and our land."

Through this contract, USDA secured total savings of $153 million over the next five years, including a negotiated direct price reduction and additional cost savings transitioning to full-service bases and powder retardant by 2030.

The agreement also ensures that 100% of Perimeter's fire-retardant manufacturing will take place in the United States, advancing USDA's commitment to America First and American Manufacturing. USDA additionally secures the lowest price available in the global market, ensuring U.S. taxpayers receive the best possible value.

Background

Federal, State, and Tribal wildfire organizations utilize aerially delivered long-term fire retardants, primarily derived from ammonium phosphate, to slow wildfire spread and reduce intensity.

Fire retardant is a critical tool to ensure ground crews can safely establish containment lines and protect lives and property.

In 2024, federal agencies dropped 48.6 million gallons of fire retardant to fight wildfires.

All fire retardants used by the agencies fall into the Environmental Protection Agency's "practically non-toxic" category for mammals, including humans, and aquatic species.

More Power to the Ground for Larger Implements

Hoosier Ag Today

Farmers across the country are buzzing about the latest powerhouse in the field — the all-new Case IH Steiger 785 Quadtrac. Unveiled last week at the Farm Progress Show, the 785 is now the most powerful tractor Case IH has ever built, boasting over 800 peak horsepower.

Mark Burns with Case IH says, "Roughly 10% increase in both rated and Peak horsepower. The specs are 785 rated 853 Peak and really all of that is driven around productivity, power, and performance making sure we get the ultimate power to the ground for those large implements covering more acres per day."

The Steiger 785 was built with large-scale farmers in mind — especially those managing thousands of acres who need maximum pulling power for today's massive implements.

'When you start looking at the available implements we have today, whether it's a piece of primary tillage – it could be a high-speed disc – it could be for our Northern friend's air seeders, things are getting larger and larger," says Burns.

He contiues, "Whether it's capacity or hydraulic performance that all takes horsepower and as producers are looking to see 'how I can get done what I need to do with my available window,' what that takes is productivity. This isn't going to be a solution for everybody but for those looking for that next step up, how do I maybe enhance what I currently have, bigger implements, going faster – this is our great solution."

With pre-orders already rolling in, the Steiger 785 Quadtrac is setting a new benchmark for big iron on the farm. The future of farming? It might just have four tracks and nearly 800 horsepower.



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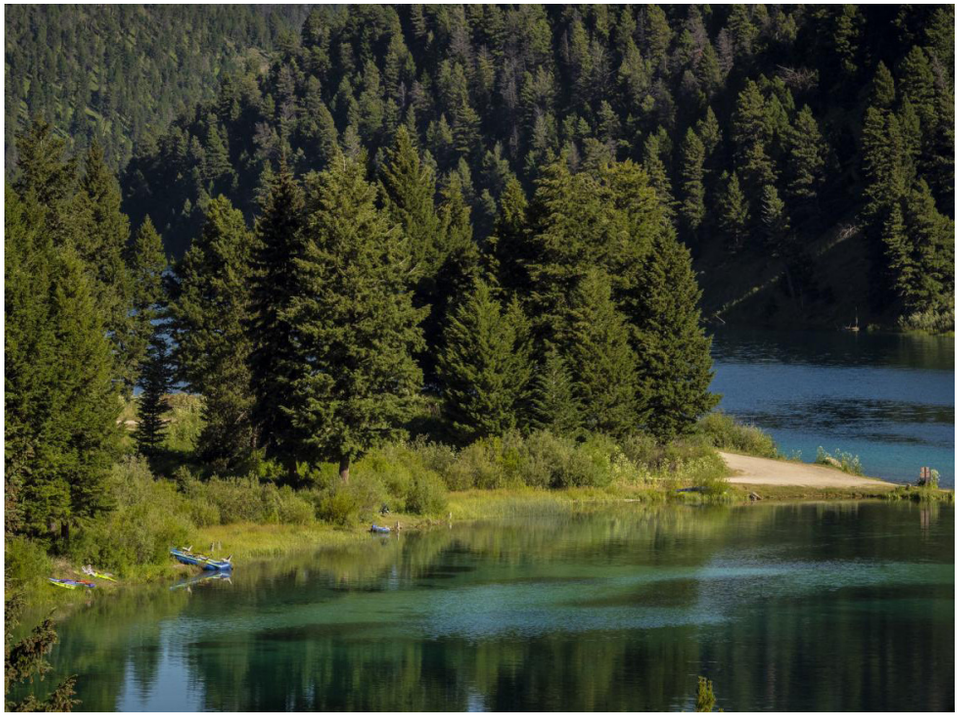
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USDA Announces Forest Health Resilience Projects to Improve Timber Production

USDA

(Washington, D.C., September 3, 2025) – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing more than $8 million for five new projects to reduce wildfire risk, protect water quality, and improve forest health across the nation. This expands President Trump's mission to improve the lives of American families, support rural communities, and expand domestic timber production.

Today's announcement builds on Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins' commitment to wildfire preparedness and President Donald J. Trump's vision to safeguard American families. USDA and its agencies are working together to take action to protect people, communities, and the natural resources on which this country depends.



The Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership Program is a collaborative effort between USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Forest Service to work across public-private boundaries and at a landscape scale. The $8 million investment in new projects is in addition to $32 million for 24 existing three-year-long Joint Chiefs' projects.

The five new projects are:

Alabama – National Forest in Alabama "Alabama Chattahoochee Fall Line Restoring Longleaf"

Colorado and Wyoming – Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest "Headwaters of the Colorado"

Montana – Lolo National Forest "Blackfoot River Valley Landscape Mosaic"

North Carolina – National Forests in North Carolina "Uwharries to Sandhills, Phase 2"

Oregon – Mt. Hood National Forest "Hood River Wildfire and Watershed Resilience"

"Wildfires have no boundaries, and neither should our prevention work," said Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz. "We need everyone at the table to deliver the kind of active management that will return our forests to health and productivity. Joint Chiefs' puts local leaders in the driver's seat, enabling cross-boundary work based on shared priorities with states, partners, industry, and forest landowners. It's a win-win."

"With the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership, NRCS is implementing our Farmer-First mission with our nation's foresters," said NRCS Chief Aubrey J.D. Bettencourt. "Providing technical and financial assistance to private forest landowners is key to supporting locally led conservation, especially in the wildland-urban interface. This allows us to address multiple challenges in one project, such as reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire, protecting clean water, and improving wildlife habitat."

New Labor Decision Removes Some Burden on Farmers

Hoosier Ag Today

A district court has overturned a burdensome aspect of a 2023 labor rule, which is good news for farmers and ranchers. The federal court recently decided that elements of the 2023 Adverse Effect Wage Rate Rule should be eliminated.

"Well, a district court out of Louisiana has recently vacated the 2023 H-2A disaggregation rule, which segregated wage rates based on job functions within the H-2A seasonal agriculture program," explains John Walt Boatright, Director of Government Affairs at the American Farm Bureau Federation. "This means that we are awaiting guidance from Department of Labor."

Boatright says the DOL rule would have been very costly to farmers and ranchers, who utilize the H-2A program to fill gaps in the workforce.

"It was estimated that the cost of this rule on family farms was going to increase substantially, and our economist estimated that the small family farm was going to see two to three times the increases that a larger farm would feel. So, this is a big win for agriculture and definitely for the small family farm."

He adds there are still significant holes to fix when it comes to accessing farm labor.

"This is a positive step forward, but it is not all that needs to be done. We still are seeking fundamental reforms to the adverse effect wage rate, which will still be in effect. We're still advocating for access for our year-round sectors who do not currently have access to this seasonal program. And we're still looking for existing workforce reforms."

The adverse effect wage rate requires Indiana to pay H2-A workers at least $19.57 per hour, while in Kentucky the rate is only $15.87 per hour.

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From the Research Frontier to the Field: Purdue's Soybean Community Reimagined

Purdue News Service



Not even a morning rainstorm could keep a crowd out of Purdue's soybean fields on Thursday, July 17 at the 2025 Soybean Showcase. Among the young pods and pink blossoms, farmers, College of Agriculture students, alumni and faculty, local reporters, industry professionals and other curious agriculturists gathered at the Beck Agricultural Center to learn about the most recent, cutting-edge science protecting one of Indiana's and America's most important crops.

Soybeans, which contain all the essential amino acids humans need, are used in everything from miso and cooking oil to animal feed and biofuel. Indiana growers harvested 5.78 million acres of soybeans in 2024, adding $3.55 billion to the economy.

Ron Turco, associate dean of Purdue's College of Agriculture and the director of Agriculture Research Graduate Education, called this event the "Renewal of the Purdue Soybean Community."

"Soybeans are playing more than a role in food and feed. Their potential in biofuels could have major impacts in Indiana, America and world economics. Purdue is uniquely situated to research this."

- Ron Turco, associate dean of Purdue's College of Agriculture and the director of Agriculture Research Graduate Education

Katy Rainey, a professor of agronomy and director of the Purdue Soybean Center, which organized the field day, said that while the increase in soybean yield has been steady, the seeds for producers have become more expensive.

For academia to help fill that gap and increase the productivity, nutritional content and resistance to adverse conditions and disease, Rainey said, "We need private partnerships now more than ever."

The Purdue Soybean Showcase kickstarted those discussions and brought together all the sectors of agriculture to build partnerships and community. Posters and graduate students lined the hallways to explain their latest research findings to industry scientists and producers alike. More than 200 attendees visited the Agronomy Center for Research and Education fields in the morning, where they learned from Purdue faculty members who are leading soybean innovations. The day ended with presentations from faculty about the future of soybeans, economic predictions, translational genetics and remote sensing.

The presentations represent research projects funded by USDA-Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), Purdue Extension, research via the Smith-Lever and Hatch Act support, private company support, and Indiana's Farmer-generated checkoff dollars, via multiple projects supported by the Indiana Soybean Alliance.

Faculty enjoyed the enthusiastic crowd and the questions they brought with them. Jianxin Ma, the Indiana Soybean Alliance endowed chair in soybean improvement and professor of agronomy, said, "The end user of our research is farmers. This is a great opportunity for us at Purdue to show what we are doing for productivity and environmental resilience."

Pam Robertson and her brother Dave Gephart of Gephart Farms came together for different reasons. While both eager to learn and network with other agriculturists, Gephart was also getting credits for his private applicators license. Robertson, however, said she was returning to her roots by joining the Purdue soybean community.



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