



Cook County Farm Bureau

Supports the Community

Throughout 2022, Cook County Farm Bureau® has remained engaged with and committed to partnering with and supporting local farmers, students, and local non-profits.





Support for farmers

Cook County Farm Bureau continues to support farmers through marketing enhancement programs like *Live Local*, *Shop Local*, *Discover Local* guides, and *Local Farm Products* website search function all resources designed to connect consumers to farmers and local produce. These resources are available at cookcfb.org.

In addition to marketing tools, Farm Bureau supports local farmers through advocacy at the local, state, and national levels. Farm Bureau leaders continue to advise the Assessor's office and the Department of Building and Zoning regarding agriculture and farms in the county.

Farm property

For many decades, the Cook County Farm Bureau has assisted farm owners in filing property tax appeals and protests. The Illinois Farmland Assessment Act of 1977 specified that farmland is assessed based on soil productivity as opposed to fair market value in 101 Illinois counties. However, the Act excludes Cook County and does not specify how farmland in the county would be assessed. Farm Bureau leaders identified this oversight and immediately met with the Cook County President and Assessor to develop the Farmland Affidavit and valuation process. The Farmland Affidavit can be credited as one of the reasons that Cook County agriculture continues to flourish and grow today.

Policy revisions

In 2022, Cook County Farm Bureau submitted two resolutions to Illinois Farm Bureau delegates. One resolution addresses changes to Farm Bureau's Organic Agriculture policy including updates to the language concerning certification and enforcement in an effort to modernize policy language. The second resolution addresses specialty crops and efforts to support and enhance the industry. In addition, the resolution addresses the need for specialty crop research, Extension services, pathologists, and entomologists to assist with the growth of the industry.

Urban gardens

To support Cook County urban gardens and farms, Cook County Farm Bureau developed the Urban Garden Grant program. In 2021, leaders opted to increase the value of grants and awarded six local grants at \$350 each for a total of \$2,100 to support the purchase of plantings, seeds, and garden materials.



Food pantry support

Together with partners, Cook County Farm Bureau® donated much needed food staples and essential non-food items to six Cook County food pantries. Donations were raised in celebration of Food Checkout Day, which celebrates the healthy and nutritious food local farmers grow and raise by providing food or cash donations to people in need.

In light of the tremendous pressure created by COVID-19, in addition to launching Farm Bureau's largest community effort to date, Cook County Farm Bureau matched members' monetary donations. Over \$11,000 was donated to local Cook County pantries in celebration of Food Checkout Day this year and the healthy and nutritious food grown and raised by local farmers.

In addition, Farm Bureau donated meat purchased from the Lake County Fair 4H Auction to partner food pantries. Animals were purchased from Cook County 4H members.

Donations directly benefited the one in seven individuals in Cook County who are hungry. Partner food pantries included:

- Church of the Holy Spirit Food Pantry, Schaumburg
- Elk Grove Townships Food Pantry, Elk Grove Village
- Elsie's Food Pantry, Palos Hills
- Hattie B. Williams Food Pantry, Oak Forest
- Nourishing Hope, Chicago
- Share Food Share Love, Brookfield

Partner food pantries were selected by local representatives from COUNTRY Financial® agencies including Chicago North, Chicago South, Chicago Northwest, Chicago Northeast, Orland Park, and South Holland.

For 19 years, Cook County Farm Bureau has partnered with Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Chicagoland and Northwest Indiana. Through the generosity of partners for nearly two decades, Farm Bureau donated over \$145,000 and nearly 100,000 pounds of food.

In 2012 and again in 2021, Farm Bureau's food access efforts were named a Summit Award winner by the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE). The Summit Award recognizes the positive impact that non-profit associations have on their community.

In the spring of 2022, Cook County Farm Bureau submitted a grant application to the Midwest Dairy Association for a commercial grade refrigerator for Hattie B. Williams Food Pantry in Oak Forest. This was the second commercial refrigerator Cook County Farm Bureau has been able to acquire for Cook County food pantries through the Midwest Dairy Association's grant program.



Food access

In addition to direct support, Farm Bureau members are active in the food access policy arena. Given that nearly 39.5 million people or 12.8% of the U.S. population are living in low-income and low food access areas often characterized as food deserts. Food deserts are frequently found in areas of high poverty, which are characterized by smaller populations, abandoned or vacant homes, lower incomes, and higher rates of unemployment.

In light of the correlation between poor food access and unhealthy food choices, Farm Bureau members drafted and submitted a food access policy for consideration by Farm Bureau delegates. The policy supports: incentives, including but not limited to, offering tax credits or breaks to grocery stores in underserved areas as well as the simplification of the permitting process for the siting and construction of grocery stores.

The policy submittal also addresses farmers connecting directly with food banks, food recovery organizations, and other food distributing nonprofits as well as the expansion of the existing tax deduction for food donations to nonprofits.

Related, Farm Bureau supported the creation of a class 7d property tax incentive for real estate used for the expansion or renovation, new construction or re-use of vacant commercial space for a grocery store located in “food deserts” in Cook County. The ordinance provides that the Assessor shall assess the real estate at a reduced rate for up to 22 years. Numerous organizations and municipalities in addition to Cook County Farm Bureau supported the ordinance.



Agricultural Scholarships

In 2022, the Cook County Farm Bureau® Foundation awarded \$15,500 to six students pursuing an agriculture-related degree. The scholarship program is designed to provide college students pursuing a degree in agriculture, agribusiness, or agriculture-related course of study. Scholarships are awarded on the basis of scholastic ability and financial need.



Agricultural leadership

In addition to student scholarships, Farm Bureau provided two leaders scholarships to attend the Illinois Farm Bureau® Agricultural Leaders of Tomorrow (ALOT), and agricultural leadership development program. To date, twenty-one Cook County Farm Bureau leaders have graduated from the ALOT program.

Agricultural Literacy

Cook County Farm Bureau remains committed to educating youth about agriculture. During the 2021-2022 school year, agricultural literacy presenters connected with 17,240 Cook County students in 811 classrooms in 334 schools.

Teachers can request a free in-person or virtual presentation by visiting <https://bit.ly/3ppna4E>. Additional programs including Ag Days, Farm Shadows, and a whole host of others are available through Cook County Farm Bureau. Learn more at www.cookcfb.org.

Conservation and the Environment

Farm Bureau understands the importance of pollinators to our food system and ecosystem. Farm Bureau leaders designed a multi-faceted pollinator project to communicate farmers' efforts to preserve and increase pollinator habitat as well as to illustrate the connection between pollinators and our food system to urban consumers. This project included the creation of a community pollinator garden at the Farm Bureau building; community presentations; pollinator garden community event; and large-scale community education event hosted in conjunction with the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago.

This project impacted over 5,500 individuals while engaging 13 Farm Bureau leaders, 34 community volunteers and 17 community partners. Community partners included the Illinois Farm Bureau®, Conserv FS, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, Lincoln Park Zoo, Freeman Fence, City of Countryside, Ted's Greenhouse, Zeldenrust Farm Market, and the University of Illinois Extension.

Cook County Farm Bureau's pollinator efforts received national recognition from the American Farm Bureau Federation and was one of 143 projects submitted nationally to be named a *County Activities of Excellence*.



Support of local non-profits

As a non-profit itself, Cook County Farm Bureau is acutely aware of the power of non-profit associations and the tremendous outcomes that can occur when non-profit entities work together for a common outcome. To that end, Farm Bureau financially supported Wagner Farm, Lake County 4H Fair Animal Auction, Greater Chicagoland Food Depository, and Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Chicagoland and Northwest Indiana.

Similarly, Farm Bureau has financially supported like-minded groups including the Animal Agriculture Alliance, Chicago Farmers, Cook DuPage Beekeepers Association, Illinois Agricultural Leadership Foundation, Illinois Farmers' Market Association, and Illinois Specialty Growers.





6438 Joliet Rd
Countryside, IL 60525
cookcfb.org
(708) 354-3276
ccfb@cookcfb.org

