

2019 STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES ESTABLISHED

Farm Bureau has established the following state legislative priorities for the 2018 General Assembly session:

- Strengthen the support of the Illinois General Assembly and Illinois constitutional officers for maintaining key agricultural tax policies in Illinois.
- Maintain a balanced process for siting livestock farms through the Livestock Management Facilities Act (LMFA) that protects both the environment and farmers' ability to raise livestock.
- Seek legislation to allow for vehicles displaying an Illinois specialty license plate the ability to receive the Covered Farm Vehicle (CFV) registration designation.
- Seek legislation to reduce the current traffic and criminal conviction surcharge paid on truck overweight fines.
- Seek legislation to protect landowners' property rights from installations on privately owned road rights-of-way without just compensation.
- Implement statewide standards for commercial solar energy conversion systems that protect public health and safety, protect private property rights, and allow for reasonable development of projects.
- Support legislation establishing a statewide standard for assessing commercial solar energy conversion systems for property tax purposes.
- Oppose an increase to Illinois' minimum wage that is believed to be inflationary and would negatively impact Illinois' business climate.



Congratulations go to the Oak Lawn Fire Department for their win in our annual Cook County Farm Bureau® Food Checkout Day 'Supermarket Sweep' competition hosted by Jewel-Osco. Both teams collected over 1,000 pounds of packaged goods and household products to benefit families with hospitalized children at Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Chicago and Northwest Indiana.

Food Checkout Day recognizes farmers for the healthy and nutritious food that they grow and raise.



USDA TO RELEASE A NEW FOOD LABELING

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Sonny Perdue recently announced the National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard. The Standard is the result of the National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Law, which was approved in 2016. The law directed the USDA to establish nationwide, mandatory labeling standards for foods that include bioengineered ingredients.

The standard defines bioengineered foods as those that contain detectable genetic material that has been modified through certain laboratory techniques and not created through conventional breeding or found in nature.

The label will go into effect on January 1, 2020. Smaller food manufacturers have until January 1, 2021 to implement the label. Mandatory compliance is required by January 1, 2022.

The goal of the label is to increase transparency in the nation's food system.

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CORNER OF CLARK AND RANDOLPH IN AND AROUND COOK COUNTY AGRICULTURE



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COOK COUNTY
FARM BUREAU®
6438 Joliet Road
Countryside, IL
60525

PHONE:
(708) 354-3276
FAX:
(708) 579-6056

www.cookcfb.org

bona@cookcfb.org

AG SCIENCE & CAREERS EXPLORATION- JOIN US ON APRIL 24

Join us for an exploration of the vast array of agricultural careers in northern Illinois!

Based on requests from high school teachers, counselors, and administrators whose schools offer (or plan to offer) horticulture, environmental science, food science and agricultural curriculums we are offering a one-day program exploring agricultural career opportunities.

Agenda

8:00 a.m.	Rolling Meadows High School
9:15 a.m.	John B. Sanfilippo & Son, Inc.
11:45 a.m.	Hampshire Farms
3:30 p.m.	Return

Please note that you're welcome to sign-up for the entire program or a single tour. If you opt to attend a single tour, we will forward you the location, entrance, and parking details. You will be responsible for transportation to and from the tour.

If you have any questions or concerns or would like to attend, please contact Bona Heinsohn at (708) 354-3276 or via email at bona@cookcfb.org.



Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton, pictured right, met with Cook County Farm Bureau® President Janet McCabe during the Statewide Legislative Reception in Springfield. Stratton, a Chicago resident expressed a strong interest in Cook County agriculture and its role in the local economy.

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FARM BUREAU COMMENTS ON THE USE OF DAIRY LABELS FOR PLANT-BASED FOOD PRODUCTS

Cook County Farm Bureau® submitted the following comments to the Food and Drug Administration regarding the use of dairy labels for plant-based food products:

The purpose of this communication is to provide comments on Docket No. FDA- 2018-N- 3522 the use of names of dairy foods in the labeling of plant-based products or beverages.

Farm Bureau policy #238 National Dairy Program (page 74, point 1.15) supports banning the use of dairy labels for artificial or imitation dairy products. Plant-based products should be labeled as artificial or imitation rather than as “milk,” “cultured milk,” “yogurt,” or “cheese.”

Plant-based products are packaged, merchandized and sold in the same way as real dairy foods, yet provide fewer nutrients and therefore cannot be considered suitable substitutes. Dairy products like milk, yogurt, and butter, are defined by its inherent characteristics including how and where it is sourced. The production and collection of milk is highly regulated and adheres to specific standards. Quite simply, adding plant protein, calcium and a few other ingredients to water does not make a product “milk”.

As the largest county farm bureau, Cook County Farm Bureau® is dedicated to bridging the gap between farmers and urban consumers. Through education programs targeting youth and their parents, and programs designed to connect farmers with potential consumers, Farm Bureau members are actively engaging in conversations about food and the shared values between farmers and consumers.

If you have any questions or we can provide any assistance, please feel free to contact our Director of Governmental Affairs, Bona Heinsohn at 708-354-3276 or via email at bona@cookcfb.org.



State Representative Fran Hurley (pictured centered) met with Cook and Stephenson County Farm Bureaus prior to the Statewide Legislative Reception in Springfield. Pictured left to right is: Tim Stuenkel, Ruth Zeldenrust, Janet McCabe, Representative Fran Hurley, Victoria Hansen (Stephenson County Farm Bureau®), Christina Nourie (Illinois Farm Bureau®), and Bona Heinsohn.

LOCAL FOOD PANTRIES ARE ENCOURAGED TO JOIN FARM BUREAU'S "FOOD PANTRY CHALLENGE"

Cook County Farm Bureau® will be donating \$1,750 to Cook County food pantries. We'd like to help food pantries provide healthy food for the families in their community.

This summer Cook County Farm Bureau will be hosting a “Food Pantry Challenge” on Facebook. Throughout the summer, families will vote on Facebook for their favorite food pantry. The Facebook polls (five in all) will be boosted to families in the pantries’ service areas. After 10 days, the pantry that receives the most votes will receive a donation for \$350. The second-place pantry will receive a donation for \$150.

Interested food pantries are encouraged to contact Bona Heinsohn at 708-354-3276 or via email at bona@cookcfb.org for additional information.

FARM BUREAU SEEKING TO CLARIFY QUESTIONS SURROUNDING ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

Cook County Farm Bureau® sent the following letter to local farmers’ markets: Farmers’ markets have sprung up throughout Cook County, and many people are enjoying the opportunity to purchase and consume fresh, local produce. However, it’s come to our attention that there is confusion about organic certification and labeling.

Organic Products

Products can only be labeled “organic” if they meet the following requirements:

- Produced without excluded methods (i.e. genetic engineering, ionizing radiation, or sewage sludge).
- Produced using allowed substances as listed on the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances.
- Certified by a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Organic Program-authorized certifying agent, following all USDA organic regulations.

Overall, if a grower wants to claim that its produce is organic, the grower needs to be certified by an authorized agent. If a grower is not certified, they cannot make any organic claim or use the USDA organic seal or a reasonable facsimile of the USDA organic seal. Falsely representing products as certified organic violates the law and federal regulations. Using fraudulent documents to market, label, or sell non-organic produce as organic is punishable by fines up to \$11,000 for each violation. Producers who sell \$5,000 or less are exempt from certification requirements. “Private” organic certification is not available. A searchable list of USDA National Organic Program Authorized Certifying Agencies is available at: organic.ams.usda.gov/integrity/Certifiers/CertifiersLocationsSearchPage.aspx

Organic Standards

USDA National Organic Program Authorized Certifying Agencies are responsible for making sure that USDA organic products meet all organic standards. There are five steps to organic certification:

1. The farm adopts organic practices, after a transition period of 36 months, selects a USDA-authorized certifying agent, and submits an application and fees to the certifying agent.
2. The certifying agent reviews the application to verify that practices comply with USDA organic regulations.
3. An inspector conducts an on-site inspection of the applicant’s operation.
4. The certifying agent reviews the application and the inspector’s report to determine if the applicant complies with the USDA organic regulations.
5. The certifying agent issues organic certificate.

During the 36-month transition period, a farm cannot represent itself as “organic” or display the USDA organic seal. To maintain organic certification, the certified organic farm will go through an annual review and inspection process. The organic certification process is rigorous, time consuming, and expensive. Annual certification costs vary widely depending on the certifying agent, size, type, and complexity of the farm. Certification costs may range from a few hundred to several thousand dollars. Typically, there is an application fee, annual renewal fee, assessment on annual production or sales, and inspection fees.

Organic Certificates

We encourage you to verify that the farmers who sell organic produce at your market are certified organic by requesting a copy of their organic certificate or by visiting <https://organic.ams.usda.gov/Integrity/>.