

Corner of Clark and Randolph

In and Around Cook County Agriculture

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Farm Bureau Opposes Changes to Livestock Regulations

Cook County Farm Bureau sent the following letter to members of the Illinois Senate Environment Committee regarding Senate Bill 1272 and 1273. Farm Bureau is opposed to both bills and is actively working against them.

Since its implementation, the Livestock Management Facilities Act (LMFA) has provided a balanced approach in protecting the environment and allowing farmers the ability to raise livestock on their farms. Farm Bureau continues to support the LMFA because it protects both the environment and farmers' ability to raise livestock.

We are very disappointed with the legislation that has been introduced. The bills increase the level of regulation for all livestock farms in Illinois by simply adding requirements that are redundant and unnecessary.

The bills significantly increase the regulation of small and medium sized livestock farms. The cost of complying with these new regulations will mean fewer of these farms.

These are not common sense reforms of livestock regulations. They add additional regulatory burdens for all livestock farmers that will be difficult to comply with and provide no additional benefits for environmental protection.

One of the bills requires that all livestock farms with 300 or more animal units register with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). However, this requirement was already considered by the Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB). The IPCB determined that a registration requirement was unnecessary because IEPA has the information it needs to properly regulate livestock farms. To quote the order from the IPCB, "The Board does not, therefore, believe it is now necessary to implement a requirement that duplicates the IEPA's procedures."¹

A second bill requires all farms to file waste management plans along with their Notice of Intent to Construct. It also requires farms smaller than 5,000 animal units to have or file a waste management plan with the Illinois Dept. of Agriculture. The waste management plan requirement exceeds what is required under the Federal Clean Water Act.

Illinois farmers take the protection of the environment and proper management of livestock farms very seriously. That is why Farm Bureau, along with the Illinois Pork Producers Association, Illinois Beef Association, and Illinois Milk Producers Association, actively participated in the development of new environmental rules for the operation of CAFOs that were implemented in August 2014. That is also why we have been working very hard to educate farmers about complying with those regulations and using best management practices on their farms.

Illinois' livestock farms have a strong track record of environmental protection. According to the most recent information available from IEPA, fewer than one percent of livestock farms in Illinois have any environmental issues.

Cook County Farm Bureau®, the county's largest general farm organization is **OPPOSED** to both Senate Bill 1272 and 1273.

¹ In the matter of: Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs): Proposed Amendments to 35 ILL. ADM. Code Parts 501, 502, and 504. Opinion and Order of the Board.



The Country Financial/Farm Bureau Flower and Garden Show garden vignette featured a John Deere 6100 tractor as part of the display. In addition, the display featured materials and items donated by Freeman Fence, Ted's Greenhouse, and Walnut Grove Farms. The donating businesses are owned by Farm Bureau member families.

The garden was designed to showcase both rural and urban neighbors.



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**THE
POWER
OF(A)
AWARDS**

2017 Staff Exchange Dates Released

Explore Cook County's premier agri-businesses during this year's Staff Exchange Program.

Since the program launched in 2012, 102 Cook County staff and legislators have participated.

The 2017 program will feature a two-track approach. One program day will feature urban farming opportunities in Cook County. A separate program day will feature traditional farming and Cook County farmers.

Legislators are encouraged to send staff members or attend the program themselves. Cook County Farm Bureau® covers all expenses associated with the program. All expenses will be reported in accordance with state law and county statute.

Tentative Agenda July 25

North Lawndale Youth Farm & Incubator Program
Legends South Farm

A second date will be announced shortly!

The Staff Exchange Program is designed to connect legislators and staff to Cook County farmers and agri-businesses while expanding each group's knowledge and understanding of one another.

County, State and Federal staff members are encouraged to contact Bona Heinsohn at (708) 354-3276 or via email at bona@cookcfb.org for additional information.



For the first time in modern memory, there was corn growing at Navy Pier. This year's Country Financial/Farm Bureau garden vignette displayed the commonalities and differences between traditional farming and urban farming. In addition to the corn, the garden displayed vegetable plants and herbs.

Farm Bureau Advocates for Regulatory Reform

According to the 2017 Viewpoint Survey results, Farm Bureau members are concerned with regulatory burdens.

Existing policy contains recommendations to improve the federal regulatory system, including:

- Using sound science;
- Having the USDA coordinate with the EPA on regulations affecting agriculture;
- Estimating the costs and benefits of regulations;
- Ensuring transparency in the rulemaking process;
- Enhancing Congressional oversight;
- Extending the comment period to a minimum of 60-days on proposed rules;
- Limiting Federal agencies' ability to use social media and similar resources in relation to pending rules; and
- Litigation reform.

Federal regulations have a direct impact on farmers. Today, farmers are faced with a flurry of requirements through the Clean Water Act (such as the "waters of the U.S." rule, the "prior converted cropland" criteria, wetlands jurisdictional determinations or total maximum daily load (TMDL) limits); the Endangered Species Act (through designation of species, establishment of critical habitat, questionable use of science); the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act; the Food Safety Modernization Act; immigration and labor requirements; and interpretation of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, to name a few.

- Continued in Column 2 -

- Continued from Column 1 -

Farm Bureau strongly believes that all Americans, including farmers, need a regulatory system that is fair, transparent, adheres to the will of Congress, takes economic impacts into account and respects our freedoms.

Farm Bureau will continue to advocate for regulatory reform.



Cook County Farm Bureau® leaders met with Senator Bill Cunningham during this year's Statewide Legislative Reception. Senator Cunningham is pictured (left-to-right) with President James Gutzmer, Public Relations Chairperson Janet McCabe, Senator Cunningham, and Board member Pat Horcher. Senator Cunningham is the former Senate Agriculture Committee Chairperson.

In addition to participating in breakout sessions designed to enhance members' knowledge of pertinent issues, Farm Bureau members also dialogued with State legislators about priority issues including: the need for a balanced budget, protection of agricultural tax exemptions, and protection of the Livestock Facilities Management Act.

Upcoming Events

- May 28 State Fair Days, Arlington Racetrack
- June 10 Dairy Breakfast, Wagner Farms
- July 25 Staff Exchange

For additional information on any event, please contact the Farm Bureau at (708) 354-3276.

Let's Talk About the Ag on Your Plate

Is organic food and ingredients better for my family?

The simplest answer is that both organic and GMO foods are safe. Thousands of studies have concluded that GMOs are safe, including a recent analysis for the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. The U.S. Drug and Food Administration, American Medical Association, World Health Organization, and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics have also concluded that GMOs are safe.

The label "organic" is regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It doesn't mean that the food is safer or healthier, just that it was grown in a particular manner. GMO seeds cannot be labeled as "organic."

When consumers visit the grocery store or their local farmers' market they have the choice, based on their preferences and budget, of what foods and food ingredients they want to purchase for their families. Farmers are committed to growing and raising safe food for their families and consumers.

Got a question? Submit it to bona@cookcfb.org. We'll share questions with our farmers and publish their answers as space allows in upcoming issues of *The Co-Operator* or *The Corner of Clark and Randolph*.



Senator Napoleon Harris III hosted Farm Bureau members from Cook and Moultrie County Farm Bureaus. Senator Harris is the newly appointed Senate Agriculture Chairman. Harris's district includes Dolton, Riverdale, Midlothian, Harvey, Homewood and parts of South Holland, Chicago Heights, and Steger.

Members Respond to Annual Viewpoint Survey

Farm Bureau members voiced their thoughts and concerns in this year's Viewpoint Survey.

Members overwhelmingly supported issues related to local government consolidation, including: who should initiate a referendum to dissolve a local unit of government and whether or not units of local government that go dormant should be dissolved. In a contrast to last year's results, members support consolidation through front-door referendum rather than no referendum or a backdoor referendum.

Members also indicated a continuing concern about taxpayer funded pensions and the growing pension debt.

Farm Bureau members expressed a desire for Farm Bureau to continue its efforts in the area of "reform" including: tax code, health insurance, and government regulations.

The Public Policy Team is reviewing the results of this year's survey and is considering policy changes in light of the results.

Cook County Farm Bureau®
Farm. Family. Food

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