

## Farm Bureau Members Participate in Policy Discussion

In March, farmer members discussed pertinent policy issues during a Telli-Town Hall policy discussion. Discussion topics included an Arizona program aimed at limiting fraud and illegal trafficking in Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) electronic benefit (EBT) cards. Under Arizona's program, the state can contact SNAP recipients who request a replacement EBT card more than twice in a 12-month period. Current rules stipulate that contact can only be made after four requests for a replacement card in a 12-month period.

A second topic discussed by farmer members was the need for standard and consistent meanings for terms like "sell by," "use by," and "best before."

Taking the conversation a step further, members also discussed the need for clarification and standardization of ingredient labels on processed foods. To ensure that consumers are getting what they pay for, Farm Bureau is communicating U.S. Department of Agriculture organic certification rules to farmers markets. Last summer, individuals complained to farmers markets and the Farm Bureau that farmers were selling produce incorrectly labeled as organic. The communication clarified the standards that certified organic produce must meet as well as the certification process and the use of the USDA organic seal. The letter also reiterated that "private" organic certification doesn't exist.



Senators Michael Hastings (pictured close right) and Bill Cunningham (pictured far right) met with Cook County Farm Bureau® Board members during this year's Governmental Affairs Leadership Conference. Members discussed Senate Bill 3005 which would enable any party rather than just those directly impacted to suit a state agency. Farm Bureau is opposed to Senate Bill 3005.



Earlier this year, the American Farm Bureau Federation® announced a lighthearted social media campaign, entitled, "#FloatUs," to support the withdrawal of the Waters of the U.S. rule. (Photo reprinted with the permission of Megan Dwyer.)

### Upcoming Events

#### June

- 7 Breakout Box, Glenwood-Lynwood Library
- 13 Breakout Box, Wagner Farms
- 14 Breakout Box, Morton Grove Library
- 20 Staff Exchange Program
- 20 Evergreen Park Library

#### July

- 19 Breakout Box LaGrange Library
- 21 Farm to Market Tour

#### Breakout Box Library Program

Bring a team and beat the clock to unlock clues and enable the farmer to get local produce from the farm to the market. All program materials are provided by the Cook County Farm Bureau Ag in the Classroom.

#### Farm to Market Tour

Let's talk about the food on your table ... join us for a traveling exploration of today's farms and candid conversation about the food on your table.

#### Staff Exchange

Details for the 2018 Staff Exchange Program can be found on page 1 of this publication.

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# Corner of Clark and Randolph

In and Around Cook County Agriculture



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## Farm Bureau Schedules Education Program for Legislators and Staff

Join Cook County Farm Bureau® for the 2018 Staff Exchange Program. The program is designed to provide attendees with an enhanced understanding of agriculture in Cook County.

**Wednesday, June 20**  
**Bus Departs at 8:30 a.m.**

Although details are still being finalized, participants will tour the Stickney Water Treatment Site and explore the steps that municipalities and water treatment sites are taking to reduce nutrient output before traveling to Smits Farms. At Smits Farms participants will explore the greenhouses and vegetable fields while discussing farmers' efforts to reduce nutrient runoff from crop protectants.

Nutrient pollution occurs when there are excess nutrients. The main culprits of nutrient pollution are phosphorous and nitrogen. The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) has developed a process that recovers the phosphorous and nitrogen in wastewater and converts it into a high-grade, slow-release fertilizer. The fertilizer can be used for agricultural applications.

Smits Farms is a family owned and operated business. Over the last 25-years Smits Farms has grown from a single greenhouse and a family of two to thirteen greenhouse and a family of eight.

Additional tour sites will be confirmed soon.

This program is limited to Cook County legislators and staff. For additional information, contact the Farm Bureau at (708) 354-3276.

Registration is available at: [www.eventbrite.com](http://www.eventbrite.com), search for Cook County Staff Exchange Program.



Cook County Farm Bureau® welcomed spring with a "30 Days of Agriculture" celebration on social media.



## Farm Bureau Establishes National and State Legislative Priorities

The lists below are not ranked in order of importance but rather are intended to be all inclusive of Farm Bureau's "to do list" for the national and state legislative arenas.

### National Legislative Priorities

- Defend and remain in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Korean Free Trade Agreement, work to expand trade opportunities for farmers and increase demand for Illinois agricultural products.
- Enact a farm bill that protects crop insurance and addresses as many other IFB farm bill priorities as possible.
- Address the excessive, unwarranted expansion of Clean Water Act jurisdiction over Illinois farms, reform the Endangered Species Act and enact regulatory reform legislation that increases transparency and science-based rulemaking.
- Work for greater federal investment in rural infrastructure to improve broadband access; upgrade roads, bridges, and freight rail service; expand ag research; reinforce levees; and to finally begin modernizing our inland waterways.
- Prepare Illinois Farm Bureau to enter the healthcare reform debate and work to address escalating health insurance premiums that burden farm families.

### National "Watch List" Issues

- Pursue policies that make energy more available and affordable for farmers and that encourage more ag-based renewable fuel and energy production.
- Enact immigration measures that address Illinois agriculture's need for a legal, stable workforce.

### State Legislative Priorities

- 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 of the second division 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.

Cook County Farm Bureau® exists "To serve all members of the Cook County Farm Bureau® with meaningful and beneficial programs that reflect our agricultural heritage."

## Let's Talk About the Ag on Your Plate

I'm a mom and I care about what I'm feeding my kids. How do I learn more about today's farmer and the food they grow? *Answered by Amy Hansmann, urban mom and Cook County Farm Bureau® volunteer.*

Years ago, as a mom of a young son with another on the way, I began to wonder about the food I fed my family. We lived on the 40<sup>th</sup> floor of a downtown high-rise and walked everywhere. It was easy to shop at any number of stores, grab milk from the Starbucks and a lot of fun to go to the weekend farmer's markets. Because of the topics in the media, the playground conversation and even the labels on food I began to worry about the choices I made- not so much about nutrition, but about food safety, environmental impact and animal welfare. In my urban landscape, far removed from where my food was produced, it seemed best to follow the trends and assume that what the media and my acquaintances were telling me was true: organic was better, conventional food is dripping with chemicals and all meat producers were suspect.

I always felt my educational achievements and current reading list kept me informed, but I began to realize that my information was coming from limited sources. Soon after moving to a new community a few miles away, I learned of the Illinois Farm Families® program and was excited because I value challenging my perspectives and learning new things. When I toured farms my first day (beef, corn, soy and then a dairy) WOW was I challenged!

As I went on more tours of Illinois farms and associated businesses, the program opened my eyes to the complexities and realities on our farms and the incredible personal investment and passion of farmers. Ideas that seemed scary in the media made more sense in context and with detail. Organic, while a perfectly fine choice, is not synonymous with clean, better or healthy. Insights from farmers on plant and animal breeding were like a fresh course in practical biology. Even a topic I still find scary, chemical fertilizer, is less so when you realize the applicators are educated, licensed and using it with precision.

Now that I know more about the realities of food production, I have been eager to share my insight and dispel misconceptions. I think it is important to counter the mainly negative media messages about farming and provide information that is factual and useful for an everyday setting. There are many areas that are not controversial, but many consumers truly don't know where their food comes from, don't have access to gardens (even fresh food) or understand that marketing labels are intended to sell food and are not an indicator of quality.



Farm Bureau members met with Senator Tom Rooney (pictured center) in Springfield. Sen. Rooney was appointed to fill a vacant seat in the northwest suburbs. During the Statewide Legislative Reception Sen. Rooney had the opportunity to meet with several of his constituents who were also Cook County Farm Bureau® Board members.

**Cook County Farm Bureau®**  
Farm. Family. Food.

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