

MCFB President Parr on Ukraine

BY GAVIN MALISKA

Like all other farmers in Mason County, Farm Bureau President Bret Parr, a grain and cattle farmer in Mason City, is noting the uncertainty the invasion of Ukraine has brought to his business as he approaches planting season.

It's another example of how farmers are impacted by crises in parts of the world they may never have visited, and which may, like Ukraine, be thousands of miles away.

But farmers in Mason County and others who bring their grain to the elevators along the Illinois River are tied to worldwide markets for what they put into the soil as well as

what they take out of it.

Rising oil prices will have the greatest immediate impact, Parr said, with diesel fuel going for more than \$5 a gallon.

"Fuel prices will effect planting costs tremendously," he said, estimating the costs at more than double last year.

Well-schooled and well-seasoned farmers will have already locked in that cost by purchasing fuel that is stored in tanks on their farms, Parr said, shielding themselves in the short-term against the impact.

"Hopefully, most of us have already bought fuel," Parr said.

Unless the crisis is soon resolved, the situation in the fall will be different and potentially worse, he said.

The cost of harvesting crops could put a squeeze on Mason County farmers.

Parr said increased costs could be offset by crop prices in the market, which are already climbing.

"Ukraine is a large competitor with the United States in grain production, wheat and corn in particular," Parr said.

"The growing season in Ukraine mirrors that in Central Illinois and that could help our bottom line as far as prices."

If the invasion of Ukraine is prolonged and keeps Ukrainian farmers from their fields, the lack of crops from "Europe's breadbasket" will force prices up in markets around the world.

Another impact on Mason County farmers

will be in fertilizer, Parr said. Most of the potash used by farmers to fertilize their fields comes from Ukraine, he said. And while farmers in the eastern part of the county may have applied it in the fall, those in the sandy soil areas in western Mason County can wait until spring. And those costs have risen.

The ranging impacts of the crisis on farmers has brought uncertainty to the markets and to their decision-making, especially for farmers who still have grain stored from last season.

"A lot of people are just standing pat," Parr said. "If you've got any grain in storage, you're just holding onto it to see which way the market goes."



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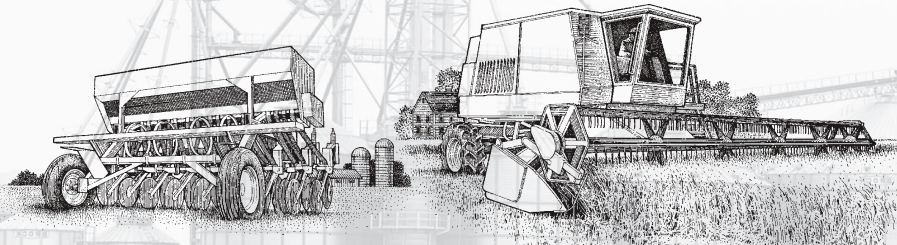
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