

Global events cause concerns for ag

Most of the things affecting agriculture this month happened far away from Douglas County. War in Eastern Europe, inflation in this country, and runaway energy prices are in the national news. The ag press is concerned about drought in South America and the U.S. wheat belt. Other stories track the spread of bird flu around the nation and now in Illinois.

Farmers were already facing fertilizer prices double or triple what they were a year ago, depending on the product. Ukraine, Russia, and Russian ally Belarus are sources of fertilizer. Russia is the world's second-largest producer of nitrogen and potassium fertilizers and the fifth largest producer of phosphorus fertilizer. It seems likely the current conflict will affect that production, and certainly shipping it out to the end-user.

The U.S. doesn't buy much fertilizer from the area, but we have a world economy. Canada is the source of much of our potassium fertilizer, but they have been a large importer of Russian nitrogen and phosphorus. Canada will find that plant food somewhere and pay more to get it. I have discussed before that natural gas is the feedstock for nitrogen fertilizer. That price remains high.

The fertilizer suppliers I

hear from say we are ok for this spring. Most if not all outlets would have filled up immediately after applications last fall. It is this fall and beyond that become a concern. As long as Eastern Europe is at war and energy prices are high, fertilizer will be expensive. We can only skimp on applications for so long.

Ukraine and western Russia are also sources of corn and wheat for the world's market. 30% of global wheat exports come out of that area of the world, along with 21% of corn exports. I heard a market analyst say he thought Ukraine might plant half of its spring crops but there was no way to know how that happens in a war zone.

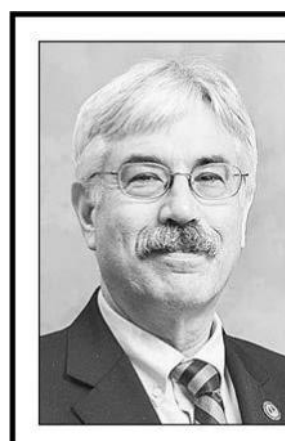
Wheat on our Board of Trade was limit up for a week and corn went up a dollar on the news of the war. Both commodities have traded up and down recently but remain historically high. Dry weather in this hemisphere comes into play as well. With the uncertainty of a crop in Eastern Europe, the U.S. needs at least average crops to make up for the shortfalls elsewhere. The markets are jittery with much of our wheat belt in a drought and the dry conditions creeping into the Corn Belt.

The warmer temperatures

gave us a sense of urgency and we have been going over our spring equipment. We swapped the combines and heads for the tillage equipment. At a minimum, we check tire pressures and grease bearings. One of the field cultivators needs all the sweeps that engage the soil changed. We tried to order an extra tire for one implement and were told that size has been back-ordered since September. The weight of the implements and road speed when we move means we need large heavy tires. We don't need it yet, but we wanted a spare on hand in case we had trouble finding one.

So far, we have not had too much trouble finding the repairs we need, although we have heard horror stories from others. Long delays in finding specialized parts like the tire we need is a big fear. I know that some of the electronics for planter controllers are hard to find. Anything we use in agriculture is going to be a low production item. There are a lot of tractors and planters in the country, but there are many more cars and televisions. You can go buy another TV if yours gives out. We might not find another planter monitor that easily.

I was fortunate to go to



Douglas County Agriculture

Larry W. Dallas
Illinois Farm Bureau
District 12 Director

Washington D.C. in early March with a group of 12 Illinois Farm Bureau members and staff. We were out there for just three days, but we packed a lot of legislator visits, Zoom meetings, and educational sessions into that time. All the Representatives we saw seemed receptive to the message we left them, and we had virtual sessions with both of our senators. American Farm Bureau staffers updated us before the visits.

One of our messages was that the nation needs to keep the Renewable Fuel Standard for blending ethanol into gasoline and that should be upped to 15% year around. That would instantly extend our present supply of gasoline by 5%. That seems like a no-brainer when the public is complaining about high fuel

prices. In Illinois, and nationally, there are calls to suspend or change gas tax amounts. That would be fine but raising the ethanol percentage used in gas would have instant economic benefits.

When grain prices jumped, there was an immediate call to suspend the RFS so food would not become more expensive. As I said last month, the farmer's share of the food dollar is around 14%. The increase in transportation costs from higher fuel prices is likely to raise food prices by more than \$7 a bushel of corn \$10 dollar wheat will. Google says a bushel of wheat makes 42 loaves of bread so that a loaf of bread has 25 cents of wheat in it, even at \$10 a bushel. At current prices, there is about 15 cents of corn in a box of cornflakes.

Another message we have

our legislators in Washington was about the importance of crop insurance to agriculture. March 15 was the deadline to choose the coverage level a farmer wanted from this crop year. One thing I hope I have conveyed in these columns is the tremendous risk we face each year when we plant a crop. Federally subsidized crop insurance helps us with that risk.

The University of Illinois estimated last fall that it would cost nearly \$700 an acre to plant corn. Beans were less at about \$400, in large part because soybeans don't need nitrogen fertilizer. Those expenses have not gone down in the months since then. That estimate did not include land costs. We are going to bet a lot of money on the weather in the coming year and hope for a profit at harvest. Crop insurance lets us share some of the weather and price risk inherent in farming.

I hope that we will be starting fieldwork before I write again. Please watch for us on the roads as we move from field to field. Every year there are senseless accidents between farm machinery and passenger vehicles. Please slow down. Thank you for reading about agriculture this month.

Tuscola farmer earns top state honors in national corn yield competition

ST. LOUIS (March 23, 2022) – A commitment to continuous improvement in environmental and economic sustainability. A contribution to the body of agronomic research that pushes the needle forward on efficiency. An innate call to be one's personal best.

These are the hallmarks of the American farmer. It is this steadfast spirit that the National Corn Growers Association tips its hat to every year as we salute farmers from across the country for their efforts and exceptional results in the National Corn Yield Contest. Through their efforts, NCGA members contributed valuable data that will help all growers overcome incredible obstacles

as they continue to drive efficient and sustainable agricultural production.

Ryan Albin of Tuscola placed second in the state B: Conventional Non-Irrigated Class with a yield of 322.3768 bushels per acre. The hybrid used in the winning field was DEKALB DKC66-18RIB.

Albin was one of 530 state winners nationwide. The 2021 contest participation included 7,213 entries from 47 states. Of the state winners, 27 growers – three from each of nine classes – were named national winners, representing 14 states.

The average yield among national winners was more than 376.7593 bushels per

acre – more than double the projected 2021 U.S. average of 177 bushels per acre. While there is no overall contest winner, yields from first, second and third place farmers' overall production categories topped out at 269.4164 bushels per acre.

"The National Corn Yield Contest provides a special two-fold opportunity — contribute to the knowledge that will help corn farmers thrive in the future while enjoying good-natured competition and camaraderie with their peers today," said Lowell Neitzel, chair of NCGA's Member and Consumer Engagement Action Team. "At its core, NCGA shapes dynamic, change-driven farm-

ers, from the grassroots activists speaking up on policy issues to the dedicated farmer leaders who lead our organization.

"As farmers, we always strive to do more with less. We innovate using data, technology, and hard-won expertise. We work tirelessly to leave our farms better for the next generation, with gratitude to those who cared for it before us. Challenge yourself to be a part of building our tomorrow! I invite new and old faces alike to enter the contest in 2022. I urge you to learn how to start making that positive change today by going to ncga.com."

Farmers are encouraged through the contest to utilize

new, efficient production techniques.

Agronomic data gleaned from the contest revealed the following:

- Average planting population for the national winners was 38,111 seeds per acre, compared to 34,751 for all entrants.
- National winners applied an average of 276.1851 pounds of nitrogen, 82.5925 pounds of phosphorus and 134.0740 pounds of potassium per acre.
- Average commercial nitrogen use per bushel of yield was 0.88 pounds for the national winners and 0.89 pounds for all entrants.
- 40 percent of the national winners applied trace miner-

als, compared to 41 percent of all entrants.

• 45 percent of national winners applied manure, compared to 18.35 percent of all entrants.

The National Corn Yield Contest began in 1965 with 20 entries from 3 states. At that time, the highest overall yield was 218.9 bushels per acre, while the national yield average was in the mid-60 bushel-per-acre range.

All 2021 contest winners were invited to attend the 2022 Commodity Classic held March 10-12, 2022, in New Orleans, La. For a complete list of winners and for more information about NCYC, visit the NCGA website at www.ncga.com.

MISC

DOUGLAS COUNTY: HOW HAS THE PANDEMIC AFFECTED YOU?

Looking for written, oral, video submissions on how your life, business, workplace, school, family, health has been affected by COVID-19 for historical documentation project.

Douglas County Health Department is taking your submissions now. For more information, contact Colleen Lehmann at colleen.lehmann@douglascountyil.com or call 217-253-4137 X 1229.



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