

Summertime grilling favorites

This finds us on a nice cool morning. It looks like we could have a nice day.

The corn and beans in our neighborhood are showing aftereffects of the hail-storm that passed through the area a week ago. There's also signs of too much moisture.

Some buildings have hail damage. It seems to have damaged siding on north sides mostly. We are still very fortunate.

The group from Decatur and surrounding area seemed to enjoy their dinner served here as they want to return in the fall.

Summer's going fast.

This weekend was the fireworks here in Arthur. Traffic is usually heavy with lots of people from out of town.

Try these recipes when you are grilling. Cook the whole meal outside and save your kitchen.

Sweet Potatoes
3 lb. sweet potatoes
salt and pepper to taste
1/2 c. butter, melted
1 Tbsp. brown sugar
Peel the potatoes and cut into 36" slices. Boil water in a saucepan and add potatoes: simmer until nearly tender. Mix butter and brown sugar. Grill slices over hot coals for 20 minutes, brushing oc-

From My Amish Kitchen

By Doris Yoder



asionally with butter and sugar mixture. Season to taste with salt and pepper and cook until tender.

Grilled Stuffed Peppers
2 c. whole kernel corn
1/3 c. salsa
6 green onions, chopped
1 med. sweet green pepper, halved and seeded

1 med. sweet red pepper, halved and seeded
¼ c. shredded mozzarella cheese
2 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled
In a bowl, combine corn, salsa and onion. Spoon into pepper halves. Place each pepper half on a piece of foil. Fold foil around peppers tightly. Grill over medium

hear for 25-30 minutes, or until peppers are crisp-tender. Carefully open packets. Sprinkle with cheese and bacon. Return to grill for 3-5 minutes. Serve with additional salsa

Campfire Veggie Packs
3 lg. potatoes, cut French fry style
1 lb. baby carrots
2 med. onions, chunked
1 stick butter, cubed
salt and pepper to taste
Mix all the ingredients together and put in foil, package and seal end rightly. Place on a grill rack over the campfire for approximately 50 minutes or until soft.

Turn over halfway through cooking. You may also add smoked sausage chunks or grilled chicken cubes to make a complete meal,

Grilled Corn
12 med. ears sweet corn
½ c. butter, softened
1 c. minced fresh parsley
salt and pepper to taste
Soak corn in cold water for 1 hour. Drain and pat dry. In a small bowl, beat butter spread over corn. Combine salt, parsley and pepper. Roll corn in mixture until lightly coated. Wrap each ear in heavy-duty foil. Grill over medium heat for 25-30 minutes, turning occasionally.

Crisis

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a record \$624.7 billion in 2026, with 330 bankruptcy cases filed.

"I'm scared about there being a real farm crisis," said Eliot Clay, executive director of the Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts. "This could come down to people being able to save their farms – just knowing that they could put it into some conservation easement or something. Like, they need anything that they can get."

For Illinois, the crisis is playing out as lawmakers just finished a budget session that delivered few meaningful results for an industry under siege. Gary Asay, who has farmed in Illinois since 1976 and sold crop insurance for more than 20 years, sees clear reasons to worry.

"The increase in the number of bankruptcies and the increased buying of higher-level crop insurance are both signs of the stress that's in the industry," Asay said. "Farmers are under stress. They may be having to borrow more money. Therefore, they want more protection."

Crop insurance, he pointed out, can't fully protect farmers from losses. The most common policy, Revenue Protection, covers only up to 85% of projected revenue.

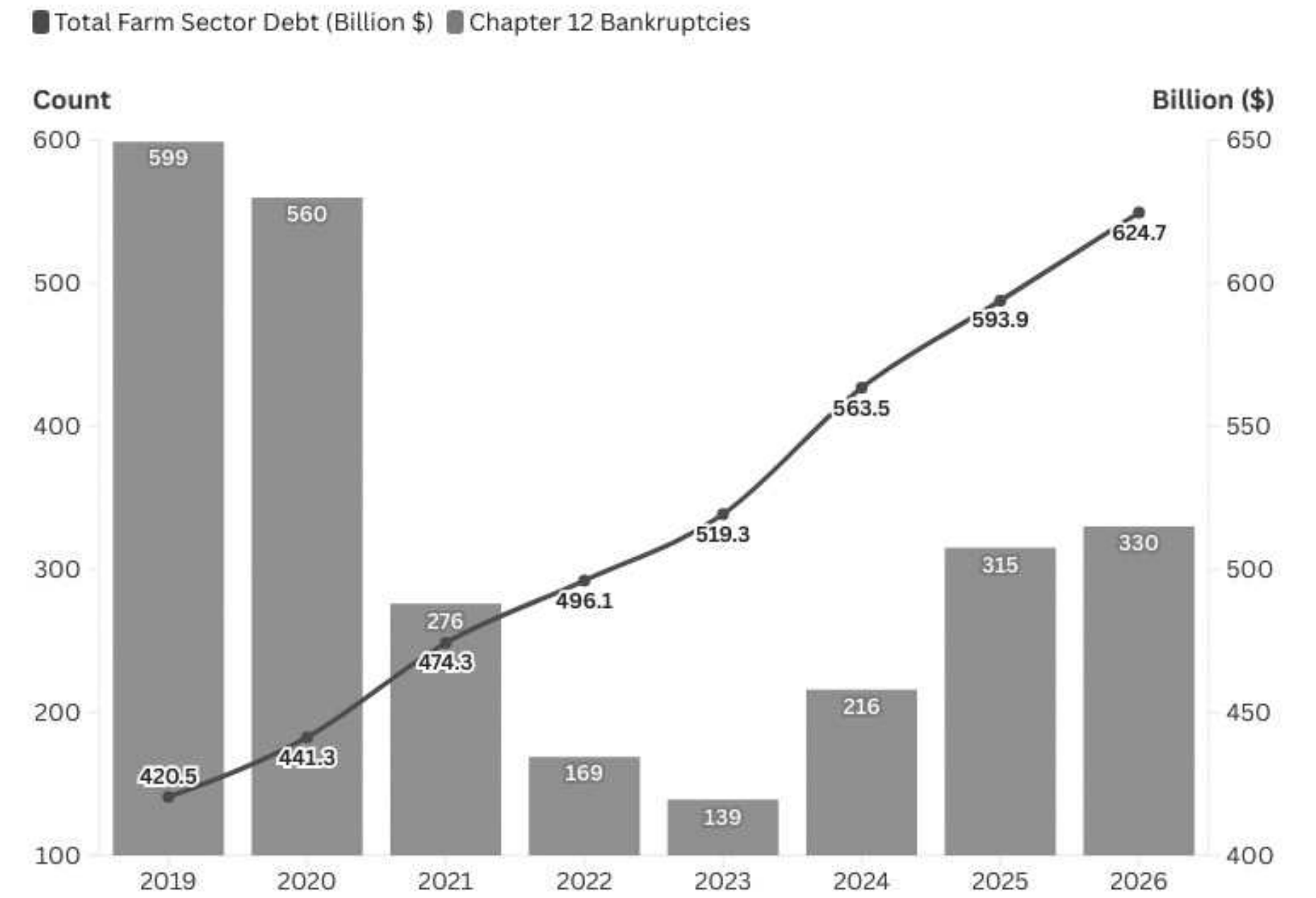
"Even with the best crop insurance coverage you can buy, if that coverage is below your cost of production, you can still lose money without even collecting," Asay said.

In 2025, U.S. soybean production totaled 4.26 billion bushels, with the average yield per acre estimated at a record high 53.0 bushels per acre. Illinois alone harvested more than 639 million bushels in 2025.

Then, in February 2025, the U.S. imposed a 10% tariff on Chinese products. And China – once the world's largest buyer of U.S. soybeans – stopped purchasing U.S. crops. Last September marked the first month since 2018 that imports from the U.S. fell to zero, according to China's General Administration of Customs.

Farmers had entered the 2025 season with a smaller safety net after the projected price for the crop insurance guarantees fell by 8.7% that year. The drop meant less protection heading into the spring planting. But because yields were high, most farms still generated revenue above their guaranteed floor. Although farmers grew plenty, they

U.S. farm bankruptcies and debt are on the rise



Source: [USDA ERS \(Farm Income and Wealth Statistics, historical debt 2019-2025, forecast for 2026\)](#), [Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts \(final Chapter 12 data 2019-2025, partial-year cumulative data for 2026 January-March\)](#) • Medill Illinois News Bureau graphic by Tara Sun

sold every bushel for less than it cost to produce.

"A lot of farmers cannot sell their corn or soybeans at a profit right now, just because the price is so low," Asay said.

Bankruptcies in agriculture rarely follow a single bad year. For U.S. farmers, the financial squeeze began well before 2025.

Real estate debt – tied to the land farmers rent or own – is expected to reach \$404.3 billion in 2026, a reflection of the high cost of farmland that has squeezed so many operators.

"Overhead costs represent the largest cost component on the U.S. farm, accounting for nearly one-half of total costs during the 2020-24 period," said Joana Colussi, a research assistant professor of agricultural economics at Purdue University, citing Purdue data. "Eighty percent of the farmers in the Midwest, they rent the land."

Colussi has tracked the financial squeeze on farmers across the Midwest. When land prices rise, so does the rent – a fixed cost that farmers pay regardless of crop prices or yields. That leaves farmers searching for ways to keep

operations going. "The way to continue being competitive is to try to reduce the costs," she said.

Diversification into niche markets — non-GMO (genetically modified organism), organic or specialty crops — offers one path forward, though Colussi mentioned it's not a quick fix.

Farm crisis reminiscent of the 1980s.

Rep. Charlie Meier, R-Okawville, who is a farmer himself, described the current moment as reminiscent of the 1980s farm crisis. "There were massive bankruptcies in the '80s," Meier said. "A lot, a lot of farms went under."

The trigger now and then is the unstable export market. But the financial strain was already visible. In 2025, the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago reported that 5.6% of farm loans were classified as having "major" or "severe" repayment problems — the highest since 2020. That means borrowers were falling behind on payments or reworking their loans. It's an indicator that many farmers were struggling to repay old debt while borrowing more to plant the

next crop.

Ahead of the 2026 legislative session, farm groups pushed for estate tax relief, one of the Illinois Farm Bureau's top priorities, along with payouts for farmers to protect their land and programs that help them find new buyers for their crops. But in a tight budget year, those priorities stalled.

The Illinois Farm Bureau did not secure passage of the Family Farm Preservation Act, which would have raised the state's estate tax exemption from \$4 million to \$6 million, reducing the tax burden on inherited farms and making it easier for young farmers to keep the land and operations intact.

State Rep. Sharon Chung, D-Bloomington, who serves on the House Agriculture Committee, was also unable to get a relatively small boost for farmers through this session.

She pushed for a \$10 million increase in funding for Soil and Water Conservation Districts through House Bill 4755. But the final Fiscal Year 2027 budget held funding at \$4.5 million for the third straight year, far short of what advocates say districts need.

These districts are trusted by local farmers because they work alongside them, offering advice on how to farm more efficiently at a lower cost.

Clay, the district's executive director, said the biggest need is giving districts "the financial certainty that they can hire and keep people hired."

Without that, districts see constant turnover. That means farmers lose access to experienced local advisors who understand their land and can help them navigate conservation practices that might save money and keep them afloat.

"Agriculture is the No. 1 producer for our economy in Illinois," Chung said. "Anything we can do to help prop that up is so important."

Despite those unpassed bills, farmers did secure a few victories. The final budget included changes to the Farmland Assessment Law — extending a tax break for conservation practices through 2031 — and avoided cuts to key programs, including the Illinois Department of Agriculture, agricultural education and cover-crop

incentives that enrich the soil.

While farmers had hoped Springfield could do more, they also recognized that forces shaping the industry go far beyond the influence of legislators: falling crop prices, an unstable export market and rising costs.

As farmers face mounting distress, the history of the 1980s hangs over the heartland.

"There's just not enough room for error right now. Something that happened in the past can take down a farmer today," Asay said.

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