

AGRICULTURE

GROWERS WEIGH
RISK/REWARD



JOSHUA A. BICKEL, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cereal rye grows beneath corn on a farm near Allerton, Illinois, in this 2023 file photo. When planted as a cover crop, rye can continue to grow after the corn is harvested, helping to keep nutrients in the soil before being removed ahead of the next planting season.

Farmers plant cover crops, face risks to enrich fields

CRYSTAL REED
Illinois Farmer Today

Farmers planting cover crops — which can include cereal rye, winter wheat and other grasses and legumes — for better water filtration and weed suppression also face challenges such as time, cost, risk and labor. But many say they are willing to take the risk to help enrich and protect their fields between harvest and planting seasons.



Leeper
Tom Leeper, who farms in Macon County, has been growing cover crops on 15% of his acreage. He determines

which ground is seeded for cover crops based on what ground is most vulnerable and uses a winter-kill mix of oats, radishes and rapeseed, which is applied aerially when the previous crop is still standing.

Applying cover crops have provided better erosion control from wind and water, and they contribute to organic matter in the soil, he said.

Some of the land he works is close to woodlands, so cover crops are helping with wildlife habitat, too.

Farm profits play a role in his decisions as well.

“I’ve seen really good yield-ability after cover crops,” he said.

Tim Reinbott, director of field operations at University of Mis-



Reinbott

souri Extension, said incentives for farmers have made it possible for farmers to plant cover crops because it makes it more financially feasible.

“I am amazed that program incentives are working to get people to plant cover crops,” he said. “It’s a tough economy, but if they have incentives they will.”

Reinbott also said some farmers have been utilizing drones to help them plant cover crops, which he believes will increase their adoption.

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ILLINOIS

Transit
bill funds
new train
routes

Peoria, Quad Cities
may benefit from fund
backing passenger rail

BEN SZALINSKI
Capitol News Illinois

SPRINGFIELD — With money for new rail lines, regulations for residential development projects and a list of infrastructure priorities in the Chicago area, a public transportation bill recently approved in Springfield does more than just fill a transit funding gap.

While Senate Bill 2111 was widely covered for the \$1.5 billion it drives to transit throughout Illinois and its governance reforms in the Chicago region, the more than 1,000-page bill outlines a new approach to public transportation. And it includes new regulations designed to spark development near transit stops and bring passenger rail service to new cities.

Two regions — Peoria and the Quad Cities — could be the largest downstate communities to benefit from the bill. It allows the Illinois Department of Transportation to use up to \$476.7 million from a pair of downstate public transportation funds to build new passenger rail routes from Chicago.

Bill supporter Sen. Mike Halpin, D-Rock Island, said in an Oct. 31 news conference that would cover the remaining cost of a long-planned project to establish a train route from Chicago to the Quad Cities.

The project still has a long way to go and there is no timeframe for when people might be able to ride a train from the Moline to Chicago, Halpin said. The biggest hurdle remains reaching an agreement with the Iowa Interstate Railroad, which operates the tracks that a passenger train would have to use to make the route a reality.

Funding for the project has been elusive, and Halpin said stakeholders have

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VENEZUELA

US buffs up
military power
in Caribbean

BEN FINLEY
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The nation’s most advanced aircraft carrier arrived in the Caribbean Sea on Sunday in a display of U.S. military power, raising questions about what the new influx of troops and weaponry could signal for the Trump administration’s drug enforcement campaign in South America.

The arrival of the USS Gerald R. Ford, announced by the U.S. military in a news release, marks a major moment in what the Trump administration insists is a counterdrug operation but has been seen as an escalating pressure tactic against Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. Since early September, U.S. strikes have killed at least 80 people in 20 attacks on small boats accused of transporting drugs in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific Ocean.

The Ford rounds off the largest buildup of U.S. firepower in the region in generations, bringing the total number of troops to about 12,000 on nearly a dozen Navy ships in what Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth dubbed “Operation Southern Spear.”

The Ford’s carrier strike group, which includes squadrons of fighter jets and guided-missile destroyers, transited the Anegada Passage near the British Virgin Islands on Sunday morning, the Navy said in a statement.

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SUE OGROCKI, ASSOCIATED PRESS

A mixture of seed wheat and rye is directed into a grain drill to plant winter wheat for cattle grazing in Oklahoma in this September 2012 file photo.