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GALESBURG
WEEKEND
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SUNDAY, JANUARY 4, 2026

‘It defies logic’



Brian Guth, a corn and soybean farmer near Eureka, stands in the machine shed where he stores his tractors and other equipment for the winter. PHOTOS BY MATT DAYHOFF/JOURNAL STAR

The economic forces crushing the Illinois farmer

Mike Kramer
Peoria Journal Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

The economic challenges facing farmers are largely the same as always. But recent tariffs on imports added a new layer of anxiety for the U.S. agricultural community, especially in states like Illinois where farming is a crucial part of the economy.

Illinois agricultural products generate over \$51 billion each year, and the state is the nation’s fifth-largest exporter of agricultural goods, shipping \$10.6 billion worth of products to other countries each year, according to the Illinois Department of Agriculture.

“When you look at tariffs and how they affect exports, that’s kind of making uncertainty as far as where things are going to go,” said Ron Pierson, a farmer in northern Bureau County.

In addition to traditionally taking financial risks in advance of uncertain returns, farmers are at the mercy of global markets and fluctuating farm-land rental rates.

In a letter to President Donald Trump this fall, U.S. Rep. Eric Sorensen said farmers are suffering the consequences of the current domestic and global economic climate. In particular, he warned that a trade war with China could cause “irreparable harm” to the Illinois and the U.S. farm economy.

As the president prepared to meet with Chinese president Xi Jinping, Sorensen urged him to secure beneficial agreements for American agriculture. “Illinois farmers need help now,” he wrote.

Trump said in late October that he had reached an agreement with Jinping under which China would immediately begin purchasing “tremendous



A farmer aboard a combine harvests corn on Sept. 30, 2020, off VFW Road near Pekin.

amounts” of soybeans and other agricultural products. But farmers are still waiting for the agreement to bear fruit, according to Pierson.

“Farmers wonder whether China will follow through on their commitments to buy what they’ve agreed to purchase,” he added. “So far, there’s been little follow-through.”

Illinois is the country’s leading producer of soybeans and the country’s second-leading corn producer behind Iowa. Illinois farmers devote most of their acreage to those crops.

The USDA’s September crop production forecast projected that 2025 corn and soybean yields will be the nation’s highest on record. The expected U.S. corn harvest is 16.8 billion bushels, and the projected soybean yield is 4.25 billion bushels.

Brazil also experienced a record-high soybean yield of nearly 178 million tons. However, high yields internationally are not necessarily good news for farmers trading their produce on the global market because they drive prices down, according to Pierson.

“Right now, there’s just a lot of grain in the world and that’s weighing in prices,” he said. “And the big thing is the cost of production is just getting higher all the time. With input prices being higher, it’s just going to make it a little more uncertain as to whether there’s profit out there to be made.”

Brian Guth, who grows corn and soybeans near Eureka, said that farmers are growing progressively

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SUPREME COURT National Guard deployment to Chicago not allowed

Brenden Moore & Hannah Meisel
Capitol News Illinois
USA TODAY NETWORK

SPRINGFIELD — The U.S. Supreme Court on Dec. 23 kept in place a lower court’s ruling temporarily barring President Donald Trump from deploying National Guard troops to Chicago as part of his administration’s crack-down on illegal immigration.

The 6-3 ruling, which comes more than two months after the Trump Administration made an emergency appeal to the high court, effectively prevents the federal government from using federalized troops in Chicago while the underlying court case challenging the deployment continues.

“At this preliminary stage, the Government has failed to identify a source of authority that would allow the military to execute the laws in Illinois,” the court wrote in the unsigned opinion denying the request for a stay.

Conservative justices Samuel Alito,

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Film on springfield philanthropist studio wins regional Emmy

Steven Spearie
Springfield State Journal-Register
USA TODAY NETWORK

SPRINGFIELD -- A film about Springfield native and philanthropist Julius Rosenwald has won a Mid-America Emmy Award.

“The Legacy of Julius Rosenwald” won for long form content film at a ceremony recently in St. Charles, Missouri.

The 16-and-a-half-minute film was directed by Kevin Christensen of the Springfield-based Storyteller Studios with the Lincoln Presidential Foundation and Looking for Lincoln as producing partners. It was supported by the National Park Foundation.

As one of its owners and later president and chairman of the board, Rosenwald made Sears, Roebuck and Company a retail powerhouse.

During the Jim Crow era, he partnered with Booker T. Washington and nearly 5,000 Black communities in the South to build schools across 15 states for children without educational opportunities.

A total of 5,357 “Rosenwald Schools” educated some 600,000 Black Americans in the South, including alumni Congressman John Lewis, Medgar

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