

NEWSLETTER

Driftless Ag Update

Ag news for La Crosse, Vernon, and Crawford Counties from UW-Madison Extension



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Educator Updates 02

Pics from the Field 03

Upcoming Events 04

Harvest Fuel Relief Program 06

Fall 2026 Cattle Feeder Enterprise Projections 08

DATCP Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Grant Program Application 10

2026 Soybean Variety Trial Results 11

Please contact your local extension office for the print version of any article included in this newsletter.



Here's your November Driftless Ag Update!

Hello and congratulations on receiving our November Driftless Ag Update!

This newsletter is co-written by your local UW-Madison Extension Ag Educator Sam Bibby (crops).



Notes from your Regional Crops Educator- Sam Bibby

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-ARC and PLC decisions are due by December 11th to the FSA office. Dr. Paul Mitchell (UW Professor of Agriculture and Applied Economics) has released his recommendations. You can find that here: https://aae.wisc.edu/pdmitchell/2026/10/12/2026-recommendations-for-arc-and-plc/.

-Corn has been drying down very well in our area this year. In some cases, too well. We were roughly 200 GDD ahead of schedule by the beginning of September this year. This put us about a month ahead of schedule compared to the 30-year average. Coupled with a relatively dry and very warm fall we had excellent weather for harvesting dry corn. You can see more of this data on the State Climatology page.

-I was combining in one field with a higher rate of lodging than we are used to (probably made worse by heavy deer traffic). I was wondering how many bushels I was saving by going slow and picking up those down plants/cobs. In 200-bushel corn if I picked up 160 cobs, I was saving a bushel of corn. When I pulled in a slug of down plants and plugged the feeder, I was thinking how happy I would have been to leave a bushel on the ground....

Pictures from the Field



Organic corn growers or anyone struggling with jimson weed. Watch out for seed coming through the combine. It is heavy and does not blow out the back. The seed is very toxic and can easily kill one or many animals.

Jimson weed seed at the rate of .06 to .09 percent of body weight/day in the diet of cattle can kill that is just 1lb/day in a 1000lb animal. Hogs are even more sensitive. Lower doses reduce production and risk animal health.





The camelina we planted into corn silage ground at the Arlington Ag Research Station looks great. We are planning to measure corn yield after different termination timings.

Upcoming Events



Dec. 2–4 Badger Crops and Soils Update Meetings: Registration and Early Bird Discount Open (discount ends Nov 16)

Registration is now open for the 2026 Badger Crops and Soils Update Meetings, Dec. 2–4 in Eau Claire, Appleton, Madison, and online. More information is available on the event webpage: go.wisc.edu/BCU2026.

The Badger Crops and Soils Update Meetings are four full-day regional meetings hosted by local UW–Madison Extension crops educators. Each meeting features nine expert-led UW–Madison soil and water, agronomy, and pest management research recaps of the 2026 growing season and outlooks for 2027 research projects.

Meetings take place 8 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. in Eau Claire (Dec. 2), Appleton and online (Dec. 3), and Madison (Dec. 4). All four meetings will feature the same researchers and presentations. You do not need to register for all four meetings.



WWASH Conference December 15-16 2026

A merging of the Cover Crops Conference and Discovery Farms Conference in 2023, the Wisconsin Water and Soil Health Conference brings farmers, consultants, and Extension and agency staff to the same table to learn about and talk through what's new in soil health and water quality.





Harvest Fuel Relief Program

(Washington, D.C., October 19, 2026) – Today, President Donald J. Trump, alongside U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins, announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will make $8 billion available for one-time payments to American farmers this harvest season to provide relief during temporary market disruptions and increased input costs.

"President Trump is the most pro-farmer president of my lifetime and he is continuing to put Farmers First every day," said Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins. "Today, I am proud to announce alongside President Trump more targeted relief is coming to our farmers through the Harvest Fuel Relief program. This $8 billion dollar investment will help bring certainty to our farmers during this harvest so they can continue to feed our nation."

Similar to the Farmer Bridge Assistance (FBA) program, the Harvest Fuel Relief (HFR) program will provide simple, proportional support to producers using a uniform formula to cover a portion of modeled losses during the 2026 crop year. This national loss average will be based on FSA reported planted acres, Economic Research Service cost of production estimates, and World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates yields and prices.

The $8 billion in payments provided through the Harvest Fuel Relief program are authorized under the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) Charter Act and will be administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Commodity-specific payment rates for Title I commodities will be released in November. Payment methodology for other eligible commodities will be announced at a later date.

Crop insurance linkage will not be required for participation in the Harvest Fuel Relief program; however, USDA strongly urges producers to take advantage of the enhanced risk management tools included in the Working Families Tax Cuts Act to best protect against price risk and volatility in the future.

Producers of non-Title I commodities, including specialty crop growers and fishermen, are encouraged to provide data related to increased fuel costs to HarvestFuel@usda.gov for USDA's consideration when determining payment rates.

Eligible producers are encouraged to create a Login.gov account in advance of the application period announcement. Pre-filled applications will be available online to producers with a Login.gov account linked to USDA.

The Harvest Fuel Relief program builds upon the Trump administration's unprecedented support for America's farmers. Earlier this year, the Farmer Bridge Assistance program delivered $12 billion in one-time bridge payments over 560,000 farmers across the country. Just two weeks ago, nearly $14 billion in gross payments were provided to producers through the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs through The Working Families Tax Cuts Act – an approximate $8 billion increase over what farmers would have received without the historic bill.



Introduction

High cattle prices and rising input costs coupled with volatility have forward-thinking cattle feeders and backgrounders doing some calculations to determine what they can pay for feeder calves, and/or what they should forward contract them for. To assist with this task UW-Madison Division of Extension has assembled a set of projections using price and cost estimates as of early October 2026.

These projections are intended to serve as an initial guide. They are based on regional averages; therefore, producers are strongly encouraged to use their own numbers rather than these estimates to evaluate their specific situation.

Fall 2026 Cattle Feeder Enterprise Projections

The projections include the following nine different feedlot related enterprises that are summarized on the first tab of the file.

Each enterprise projection has its own sheet within the file.

- Holstein bull calf birth to 400 lbs.
- Beef x dairy cross calf birth to 400 lbs.
- Beef x dairy cross steers 400 to 1550 lbs.
- Beef x dairy cross heifers 400 to 1450 lbs.
- Holstein steers 400 to 800 lbs.
- Holstein steers 400 to 1550 lbs.
- Holstein steers 800 to 1550 lbs.
- Beef feeder steer calves finish 550 to 1500 lbs.
- Beef heeder heifers 500 to 1400 lbs.
- Beef feeder calves- background 500 to 900 lbs.
- Beef steer yearlings to finish 800 to 1500 lbs.
- Add condition to thin cull beef cows 1200 to 1400 lbs.

Download the Projections Tool at: https://livestock.extension.wisc.edu/decision-tools-and-software/#Extension-Feedlot-Enterprise-Budget-Spreadsheet-Tool

Projected sale prices were estimated by

looking at futures contract prices and considering seasonal and cyclical trends in addition to current placements and animal breed influence on prices. Note that commodity prices change daily due to market volatility and could affect producer projections.

The projections suggest there is an opportunity for profit for some of the enterprises if cash prices follow what the futures market is predicting. However, market and input cost volatility can result in rapid changes in margins

We encourage producers to use the *UW-Madison Extension Feedlot Enterprise Budget Tool (xls)* to evaluate their own scenario. It includes sections for determining ration, yardage and labor and management costs that the projections file does not. Using the enterprise budget tool or similar tools with your own numbers is more valuable to help you with your decisions. The projections are intended to be an initial guide.

With high cattle prices, proactive cattle feeders and backgrounders are calculating the costs and potential returns for feeder calves. To aid in this, UW-Madison Division of Extension has provided example projection estimates. Producers should use their own numbers to best evaluate their situation.

DATCP Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Grant Program Application

Contact: Dan Richter, Public Information Officer, (608) 419-5352, dan.richter@wisconsin.gov

Open through Jan. 15, 2027

MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) invites Wisconsin farmers and cooperating entities to apply for commercial Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program (NOPP) research grants through January 15, 2027. These grants aim to enhance the understanding of and refine new methods that optimize commercial nitrogen applied to agricultural fields.

Eligible applicants must be an agricultural producer or be working with one or more agricultural producers, agree to collaborate with the Universities of Wisconsin (UW) on their project, and voluntarily conduct commercial nitrogen optimization field studies for a minimum of two years. The Intent to Apply, consisting of preapproval of the research design, must be obtained from UW by December 18, 2026 and is required for submitting the final grant application. The grant application, Request for Proposals, and other application materials will be available on *DATCP's website* beginning October 15, 2026.

“Across Wisconsin, farmers are leading the way in identifying the optimal nitrogen application methods for their crops and their land," said DATCP Secretary Randy Romanski. “Through the Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program, this important work will continue and will be beneficial to our state's land and water resources overall."

There is $1 million available for this round of grants. Multiple agricultural producers may work together, or with cooperating entities, to submit a single application. Each agricultural producer who is part of the application is eligible to receive a maximum award of $40,000 for the project. Outside of the individual grant awards, a grant will be made to UW for project monitoring, research, and outreach assistance.

NOPP staff from DATCP and UW will be available for applicants to ask questions, pitch research ideas, and clarify ideas for their applications.

The Intent to Apply, including the research design, must be submitted to UW by December 18, 2026. Final applications are due to DATCPNOPP@wisconsin.gov by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, January 15, 2027. Grant recipients will be announced in spring 2027.

2026 Wisconsin Soybean Performance Trials

Authored by: Shawn Conley

Introduction

The 2026 Wisconsin Soybean Performance Trials featured a diverse range of entries submitted by seed companies, private breeders, and university researchers. These included both commercially available and experimental varieties, with additional cultivars added for comparison. Trials were conducted using conventional, reduced tillage, or no-till practices, planted at a rate of 160,000 seeds per acre in 15-inch rows.

Wisconsin experienced notable climate fluctuations and several record-breaking weather events that deviated significantly from long-term historical average. Wisconsin recorded its wettest April on record since data collection began in 1895, averaging 6.53 inches of rainfall statewide (more than double the monthly average). Temperatures were 1°F to 6°F warmer than normal ranking among the top 10 warmest Aprils for southern Wisconsin and the state suffered an unprecedented spike in spring severe weather outbreaks. In May conditions abruptly shifted to dry. Precipitation dropped to less than half of normal levels across most of the state. June and July brought hot and humid spells alongside highly variable rainfall. High heat and dew points pushed heat indices over 100°F in July. While precipitation in southwest and central Wisconsin reached 150% to 200% of normal, areas in east-central and northwestern Wisconsin saw below-average rain, leading to pockets of moderate drought and abnormal dryness. August and September finished warm and exceptionally wet for western and southern parts of the state. September 2026 finished almost 2°F to 3°F warmer than normal overall primarily driven by abnormally mild nighttime low temperatures rather than daytime highs. Storms brought heavy rainfall where regional stations in western Wisconsin logged over 7 inches of rainfall (more than 3 inches above average), ranking as one of the wettest Septembers on record locally. Diverse climatic conditions led to seed quality concerns across the state of Wisconsin. More information on these conditions can be found on the the below linked resources.

- https://soybeanscienceforsuccess.org/2026/10/16/understanding-current-soybean-seed-quality-problems/
- https://badgercropnetwork.com/poor-soybean-seed-quality-emerging-across-wisconsin-in-2026/
- https://badgercropnetwork.com/feeding-the-world-we-cant-even-grade-our-beans/

Performance was evaluated based on yield, lodging, maturity, and seed composition. Yields were measured in bushels per acre at 13% moisture, while lodging scores reflected plant erectness at maturity. Maturity was determined by pod color or frost occurrence, and grain composition, specifically protein and oil content, was measured using SCiO NIR sensors mounted on combines. This new approach enhances transparency and helps growers make informed decisions by considering both yield and nutritional value.

I do not expect a state record yield number, but given the increased number of acres and above trend yield I do expect record production for the state.

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