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Illinois Increases Investments in Climate Smart Agriculture Practices

US EPA grant provides incentives for strip till, no-till and cover crops

SPRINGFIELD, IL – The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) in partnership with Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) announced an \$111 million **investment** in the ag sector through a U.S. EPA (USEPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grant. Building on existing federal and state initiatives, this unprecedented opportunity provides farmers with the sustainability and security needed to make long-term on-farm decisions. [U.S. EPA announced](#) the full grant totaling more than [\\$430 million over five years](#) last month.

Through this program, IDOA will receive \$73 million for climate smart ag practices and IEPA \$38 million for electrification of small engines. These dollars will be distributed over a five-year period. Funded projects are intended to improve soil health, reduce erosion and improve air quality.

“When I signed the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act, I did it knowing that we could not move into a clean energy future without ensuring that no one was left behind—and with this grant award, the Biden-Harris administration has made it clear that their priorities are the same,” **said Governor JB Pritzker**. “This grant will fund clean buildings, agriculture, and transport, and further position Illinois as the hub for smart, clean development that we have strived to become.”

“These investments in soil health management ensure Illinois’ fertile ground is productive for our future generations of farmers,” **said Jerry Costello II, Director of the Illinois Department of Agriculture**. “This five-year infusion of resources provides certainty for growers looking to make sustainable changes to their operations.”

These dollars build upon local, regional and statewide programs and established networks led by the Illinois Department of Agriculture including:

- Under the Pritzker administration, the Fall Covers for Spring Savings Cover Crop Program has provided over \$1.4 million in crop insurance rebates to 2,150 farmers using cover crops. This program’s demand has historically outpaced dollars available.

- Partnering with USDA NRCS, IDOA is investing \$12.6 million for 40 frontline Conservation Planners throughout the state.
- Through USDA NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program grants, the state has leveraged \$5.2 million in state dollars for \$17.5 million for climate smart conservation practices state-wide.
- The Soil Health Initiative enacted by the legislature and signed by Governor Pritzker created a framework for improving soil health in Illinois by increasing cover crops, strip till, no till and erosion and sediment control practices all while advancing the goals of the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy.
- IDOA's partnership with Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources (STAR) offers several benefits to farmers and landowners regarding nutrient management, soil health, water quality, cost savings and sustainability.
- Illinois Nutrient Research Education Council has provided over \$32 million towards academic research projects focused on nutrient utilization, increased crop production and water quality.

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