A Note from the Director

As we move toward a new year, changes are on the horizon here at the Illinois Department of Agriculture. I will be retiring at the end of December to spend more time with my family (and more time in the Florida sunshine).

It’s been an honor and a pleasure to serve as IDOA Director for the past three years. My goal has always been to continue the progress IDOA is making in simplifying our regulations so they’re easier to understand and easier to use. We made Emergency Harvest weight limits permanent so farmers can get their crops to market more quickly and efficiently. We revamped several processes so they make sense for the folks who need to get licenses through IDOA. We’ve focused on much-needed improvements to Illinois’ two State Fairgrounds, investing millions to ensure our fairgrounds are a destination for future generations. And we’ve worked to build partnerships, both around the country and around the world, to ensure that Illinois farmers are the most profitable in America.

No matter who leads the Illinois Department of Agriculture in the future, you can rest assured that farmers and farm families statewide will always be our number one priority.

Update: Industrial Hemp

IDA staff have been busy during the past few months drafting rules that will govern the production and processing of industrial hemp. In August, Governor Rauner signed the Industrial Hemp Act into law, allowing individuals licensed through IDOA to cultivate industrial hemp. But before growers can get hemp planted in their fields, rules had to be written to govern the growing of this new crop. Proposed rules are now complete and are scheduled to be published in the Illinois Register before the end of the year. Once the proposed rules are published, IDOA will begin accepting comments during a 45-day First Notice public comment period. The proposed rules will then be considered by lawmakers at a Joint Committee on Administrative Rules, or JCAR, committee hearing. As soon as the rules are approved by JCAR and go into effect, IDOA will begin accepting applications for industrial hemp licenses. Check the IDOA website for a link to the proposed industrial hemp rules once they are published and instructions to submit public comments.

Pest-Free Plants: Nursery Inspection Ensures Quality Products

The Nursery Inspection Program staff of IDOA’s Bureau of Environmental Programs inspects and certifies an estimated 24,000 acres of nursery stock from about 700 nurseries statewide each year. In 2017, those inspections included nearly 1,500 acres of Christmas trees and more than 5,300 acres of sod. The inspection of these plants and plant products benefits both consumers and growers by ensuring the plants you buy are free from pests that could be harmful to surrounding plants and vegetation. The Department also licenses more than 2,500 nursery dealers each year, allowing them to sell nursery stock commercially. To learn more about nursery inspections, check out the Nursery Inspection Program website.
Festive Foliage: December 12 Celebrates National Poinsettia Day

In July 2002, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution designating December 12 as “National Poinsettia Day”. The date marks the death of Joel Roberts Poinsett, an American botanist, physician, and Minister to Mexico who, in 1828, sent cuttings of a red, leafy plant he’d discovered in Southern Mexico to his home in South Carolina. That plant would become commonly known as the poinsettia.

Indigenous to Mexico, the poinsettia is a perennial shrub that grows 10-15 feet tall. There are more than 100 varieties of poinsettias available today, in colors like the traditional red, white, pink, burgundy, marbled, and speckled. Poinsettias contribute more than $250 million to the U.S. economy each year and are the best selling potted plant in the United States and Canada.

More Bicentennial Family Farms To Be Recognized in 2019

IDOA’s Centennial Farms program continues to honor generations of farmers who work to maintain family farms across the state of Illinois. To qualify for Centennial, Sesquicentennial, or Bicentennial Farm status, an agricultural property must have been owned by the same family for at least 100, 150, or 200 years.

Currently, four Illinois farms have been recognized as Bicentennial Farms, including the first recognized Bicentennial Farm, owned by Gerald and Betty Brown of Jonesboro in Union County. The Browns are pictured below receiving their plaque in April 2018. IDOA’s Bureau Marketing and Promotions expects to recognize another five Bicentennial Farms in 2019. IDOA has also recognized 1,009 Sesquicentennial Farms and 10,059 Centennial Farms, located in counties all across our state. To learn more about the Centennial, Sesquicentennial, and Bicentennial Farms program and what it takes for a farm to qualify, check out the Illinois Farm Programs website.

Midwest Speed Expo
January 12-13, Orr Building

Winter Go Kart Show
January 18-19, Orr Building

Giant Flea Market
January 20, Illinois Building

IceBreather Classic CrossFit Competition
January 26, Illinois Building

First Sunday Midwest Cupid’s Bazaar
February 3, Orr Building

More info here: Year Round Calendar of Events

Illinois Ag Facts

4,000 acres
Christmas trees

Avg. tree growing = 7 years

63 reindeer in 7 herds