



Illinois CCA Adviser

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Why did YOU become a CCA?

Have you ever looked back and thought about it? For money, fame and fortune? (You might have the wrong reasons if you did - Ha). Because everyone else did? Also wrong, because over the years it has been evident that CCAs are definitely an elite group. Whether it was easy or hard for you, know that everyone cannot pass those exams and if you have, it is absolutely something to be proud of accomplishing. Hopefully professionalism and possible career advancement, were reasons. They are popular ones with CCAs internationally.

According to the survey sent to CCAs last summer (in which Illinois, California and Canada had the most participants), 75 percent of respondents are proud to be a CCA. For those of us who attend meetings on your behalf, sometimes even in treacherous conditions (like when hurricane Helene was headed straight for our International Board meeting location last September), it is nice to know you value your certification and the time we spend working to promote it.

Some other numbers we found interesting from the survey, included the fact that most CCAs do value their Code of Ethics, 71% are willing to pay more for employees who have their CCA and 54% cannot find enough CCAs to hire. These are great numbers to consider when recruiting new CCAs into the agronomic profession.

A new recruiting tool is our partnership with FFA, where students are exposed to the CCA program and have opportunities to start studying for the exams early. Volunteering to work with your local FFA Chapter to help their Agronomy CDE teams provides you with a great opportunity to share your knowledge and recruit more employees into the agribusiness industry. Finding good employees was the biggest challenge noted by CCAs who filled out the survey, followed by balancing economics and sustainability (that is a topic at the IL CCA Conference this year), and government regulations (also on the agenda).

A surprising 70 percent of CCAs agreed they would like to see CCA as some kind of a license. That may be happening whether we like it or not and your CCA board and staff work hard to develop relationships that put CCA in position to be recognized if any government organization decides that is necessary. Having CCA certification is required to write Nutrient Management Plans in California and Illinois has a track record of mirroring California when it comes to regulations.

It is likely a fact that we are never going to be less regulated than we are now, and we need to be prepared as an organization to fulfill that expertise when it is needed. To do that we need your help to continue to encourage others to become certified and support them in their quest to become more knowledgeable and professional. Our agriculture future depends on all of us. *Lisa*



CCA Study Sessions are helping agronomists pass the exam and show their professionalism

Illinois was one of the leaders in the nation in individuals taking and passing the CCA exam in 2024. We are happy to continue offering and promoting different study session options for individuals interested in becoming certified. We will be offering an in person CCA Exam Study Session this winter. The link to register will be on the illinoiscca.org website. Online classes are also available and can be accessed on the ICCA test registration site.

Four testing windows will again be available in 2025 which give examinees the option to take the International Exam and Tri-State Exam on different days at a time they are most comfortable with testing.

CCA Candidates can take the exam in one sitting or for those who struggle with specific performance areas, a new option is available to take each performance objective area separately.

Congratulations Matt Montgomery

2024 Illinois CCA of the Year

Matt Montgomery of Chatham, Illinois has been chosen as the 2024 Illinois CCA of the Year. Matt was nominated for recognizing customers' needs and going above and beyond to help them. His work on helping his grower customers identify loss and solutions for challenges with Red Crown Rot in his area was specifically noted. Matt started his work on Red Crown Rot as a Pioneer Agronomist and recently accepted the position of Agronomy Education Lead for Beck's Hybrids. He has been an Agronomist for 30 years and CCA for over 25. Matt is a past Illinois CCA Board Member. He is known for promoting the Gold and Silver Rules of Agriculture - treat others as you want to be treated and hand it off better than you received it. Matt received a trip to the Illinois Farm Bureau Convention, where he will be recognized, and a gift card from the Illinois CCA Board. CCA of the Year nominations are usually open in August and are a great way to recognize CCAs for the great job they do for Illinois Agriculture every day!

Things are changing for CCAs to become NRCS Technical Service Providers

A streamlined process for CCAs has been worked out with USDA and we hope a new Memorandum of Understanding will be signed very soon. The American Society of Agronomy and Soil Science Society will become certifying bodies with USDA and CCAs will complete an orientation webinar along with completing a form that outlines what they are willing to do. CCAs are specifically listed in all of the current farm bill drafts. More information should be available soon on how to be a part of this exciting new process!

Illinois Sustainable Ag Partnership Develops Financial Incentive Database

The Financial Incentives Database (FIND) tool was developed by ISAP to share financial payment opportunities that are available for adopting conservation practices such as cover crops, saturated buffers, and constructed wetlands. The new online tool includes information for over 60 financial incentive programs available to Illinois farmers who want to implement conservation practices. Users can filter the list based on location, production type, and conservation practice they are interested in adopting. Detailed information for each program includes farm eligibility, payment estimations, contracting details, and technical requirements. If you have grower customers interested in pursuing new conservation efforts, this new tool may be a great place to start. For more information, go to: www.ilsustainableag.org/findtool.

Do you have CCA on your business card?
Is it on your email signature? Be proud of your certification and take every opportunity to let those you work with know you go above and beyond to provide valuable advice!

CEUs are available anytime, anywhere. They are not just in person or just in Illinois anymore!

IL CCA Conference www.illinoiscca.org
 iHotel Champaign Dec. 13, 2024 (815) 674-6644

2023 Farm Assets Conference farmdoc.illinois.edu
 iHotel Champaign Dec. 13, 2024

IN CCA Convention www.indianacca.org
 Indianapolis Dec. 17-18, 2024 up to 16.0 CEUs

IFCA Conference www.ifca.com
 Peoria Civic Center Jan. 21-23, 2025

NREC Investment Insights www.illinoisnrec.org
 iHotel, Champaign Feb. 13, 2025

Field Advisor Forum www.fieldadvisor.org
 Memorial Stadium, Champaign January 16, 2025

Bi-State Crops Conference
 Dec 10, Covington, IN For more information on this and other upcoming extension events go to:
<https://extension.illinois.edu/global/events>

2025 Crop Management Conferences

Feb. 1, Collinsville

Feb. 7, Champaign

Feb. 15, Sycamore

Or register for the online conference with presentations to watch available from Feb. 16 - April 30. Visit the conference page at go.illinois.edu/CMC.

Webinars are a great way to earn approved CEUs from the convenience of your home or office. When you watch these LIVE, and an application for pre-approved CEUs has been granted, you will receive approved CEUs. There are many pre-recorded FREE webinars online for those who cannot attend LIVE to watch later. You can do this and then go online and report the webinar as a self-reported CEU. Some great examples of webinars you can self-report are at:

fieldadvisor.org/webinars/ – ilsoyadvisor is now fieldadvisor view past webinar for self-reporting and register for more

<https://farmdoc.illinois.edu/> – webinars held regularly

ILFB.org/FieldDays -multiple field day events, hosted by Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB), are available for viewing online.

Crop Protection Network - Crop Protection Network.org

Iowa State Crops TV - Previous episodes are available on

YouTube <https://www.aep.iastate.edu/cropstv/>

University of IL Extension hosts many webinars on their Crop Flix site (<https://extension.illinois.edu/global/crop-management-demand>).

Lisa is always available by phone at (815) 674-6644 or email lisa@illinoiscca.org if you have any certification questions.

The CEU Application Process is also simple if you host a meeting. If you have an agenda and speaker info it will take less than 10 minutes to get an application submitted.