Illinois CCA Adviser

1402 Ann St., Pontiac, IL 61764 (815) 674-6644

www.illinoiscca.org lisa@illinoiscca.org

Investing in the Next Generation of Certified Crop Advisers

by Karen Corrigan, Illinois CCA Chair, ICCA Incoming Chair

The Illinois Certified Crop Adviser (ICCA) Board continues to focus on strengthening the CCA program, supporting future crop advisers, and making certification more accessible to those entering the agricultural industry. This year, we have made exciting progress toward removing some of the barriers that prevent qualified individuals, particularly college students, from pursuing their CCA designation.

One of our most exciting initiatives is a grant received from the Illinois Soybean Association to help college students pursue CCA certification. The grant will provide funding to cover the costs of taking both the Tri-State and International CCA exams, purchase study materials for students preparing for those exams, and develop marketing signs to be displayed in college classrooms. These signs will introduce students to the CCA program, explain the value of professional certification, and encourage them to make earning their CCA designation a career goal. For more information on the requirements for these scholarships, scan the QR code on the other side.

Why is this important? When we looked at the cost of taking the CCA exams, we determined that an Illinois college student would need to work approximately 20 hours just to earn enough money to pay the examination fees. For many students who are carrying a full course load, 20 hours is the maximum number of hours they can reasonably work each week. When you consider the cost of tuition, housing, food, transportation, and other living expenses, the additional expense of certification exams and study materials can be prohibitive.

We want students to view the CCA designation as an attainable professional goal, not something they must postpone simply because they cannot afford the initial investment. By reducing these financial barriers and increasing awareness of the program, we hope to encourage more students to begin the certification process while they are still in college. This is an investment not only in the students themselves but also in the future of Illinois agriculture and the crop advising profession.

Making CCA certification and study materials more accessible and affordable is also one of my personal priorities as a member of the International Certified Crop Adviser Board. I believe we need to continually evaluate how we can make the certification process more approachable without compromising the high professional standards that make the CCA designation valuable. We need to encourage the next generation of crop advisers to pursue certification and make sure unnecessary financial or administrative obstacles do not stand in their way.

Progress is being made at the international level as well. A new CCA study guide is scheduled to debut in 2027, providing an updated resource for individuals preparing for the certification exams. Work is also underway to streamline the application process for individuals who have passed their exams and are ready to complete the remaining requirements to become certified. Making this process more straightforward and easier to navigate will benefit both new applicants and the CCA program.

Finally, I would like to recognize someone who has been instrumental in the success of the Illinois CCA program for more than 30 years. **Please join me in congratulating our Illinois CCA Coordinator, Lisa Martin, on being named the International CCA Administrator of the Year!**

Those of us who have worked with Lisa know how deserving she is of this recognition. Her dedication, professionalism, institutional knowledge, and tireless advocacy have helped make the Illinois CCA program what it is today. Whether she is helping an individual CCA navigate certification requirements, organizing educational opportunities, or working with industry partners to strengthen the program, Lisa consistently goes above and beyond.

We are incredibly fortunate to have Lisa working on behalf of Illinois CCAs, and we are grateful for her continued commitment to the success of this program. Congratulations, Lisa, on this well-deserved international recognition!

As we look ahead to 2027, I am excited about the opportunities to grow the CCA program, support our current members, and encourage more young professionals to pursue certification. The future of the CCA program depends on our ability to demonstrate its value, maintain its professional standards, and make the designation accessible to the next generation of agricultural professionals.

Congratulations Stephanie Porter

2026 Illinois CCA of the Year

Stephanie Porter has served farmers in the state of Illinois as a Crop Extension Agent, industry work as a Soybean Product Manager, and as an Outreach Agronomist for the Illinois Soybean Association. She has been a key source of information on the spread of red crown rot in soybeans in Illinois. She is the go-to for help with identification for other CCAs as well as farmers on crop disease. Stephanie is the Secretary/Treasurer of the IL CCA Board and serves on many other state and national agriculture committees. Stephanie will be recognized at the Illinois Farm Bureau Conference and the Illinois CCA Conference.

CEUs by the Numbers

Tina Sullivan at the American Society of Agronomy did a deep dive into CEUs offered and came up with some interesting numbers. In Illinois in 2025, There were 2,031 CEUs offered at 831 total events. Crop Management was the most popular CEU category with 512.5 CEUs offered, followed by 459.5 in IPM, 385.5 in Nutrient Management and 331.5 in Soil and Water. The most events were held in January, February and December, with summer field days in July and August not too far behind.

Ethics Requirement

Starting in 2026, CCAs must complete 1 hour of ethics as part of their CEUs. For those whose cycle began in 2026, the Ethics CEU will need to be completed by Dec. 31, 2027. If your new cycle begins on Jan. 1, 2027, your ethics CEU will need to be completed by Dec. 31, 2028.

Any suggestions on how we can improve the CCA Program? Your board and staff are always looking for suggestions on the certification process, CEUs and ways to add value to your certification. No idea is a bad idea and we want to hear from you. Please reach out to us.

CropFlix is University of Illinois Extension's online agronomy education program for row crop producers, advisers, and agronomists. A new CropFlix format will launch in February 2027, featuring a single registration and year-round access to all available content. **Go to** Learn @ Illinois Extension for more information.

Do you work with your local Junior College or FFA Chapter? Starting relationships early has helped many agronomy companies find great future employees! Illinois Extension hosts some amazing students for the Crop Scouting Competition every year and the Olney FFA Chapter recently was named the #1 Agronomy CDE Chapter in the Nation! We have distributed posters about the CCA Program to Richland, ICC, Heartland, Kaskaskia, Black Hawk East, ISU, Western, Parkland, U of I and Wabash Valley but would love to reach a few more. Please email Lisa if you serve on any advisory committees or would be willing to speak to an Agronomy Club about what you do!

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

SIU Fertilizer/Pesticide Conference
Mt. Vernon Doubletree Nov. 24, 2026 IPM, NM, SW

Peoria Farm Show https://greaterpeoriafarmshow.com
Peoria Civic Center Dec. 1-3, 2026 NM, IPM, CM

From Farm to Faucet (815) 373-4187
PTI Pontiac Dec. 10, 2026 2.5 SW, 0.5 Precision

IL CCA Conference www.illinoiscca.org
McLean County Fairgrounds Dec. 11, 2026 (815) 674-6644

IN CCA Convention www.indianacca.org
Indianapolis Dec. 15-16, 2026 in person/online CEUs

Field Advisor Forum fieldadvisor.org
Bone Student Center, ISU January 14, 2027

IFCA Conference www.ifca.com
Peoria Civic Center Jan. 19-20, 2027

IL Soybean Summit ilsoy.org
iHotel, Champaign January 26-27, 2027

NREC Investment Insights www.illinoisnrec.org
iHotel, Champaign Feb. 9, 2027

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. Self-reporting is fast and easy. Some great examples of webinars you can self-report are at:

https://fieldadvisor.org/webinars -View past webinars 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.

Do you know a student who would be a good CCA? Have them scan this QR Code to apply for the exam scholarship!