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Illinois Society Members Managing Over 11% of State Farmland

Menomonee Falls, WI -- July 2, 2026 -- A survey of the member companies of the Illinois Society of Professioal Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers (ISPFMRA) has revealed that its members are currently managing over 2.7 million Illinois farm acres, which is over 11.3 percent of the state's 24 million acres of agricultural land.

"This is a 156 percent increase in ISPFMRA-managed acreage since this survey was last done in 2016," commented Laura Enger, Farm Credit-Illinois, based in Mahomet, and current president of the organization. The number of properties under management by ISPFMRA members was reported to be 9,418. This was a 218 percent increase from the previous survey. Average acres under management was over 10,500 per manager. The total valuation of those properties was listed at $27.94 billion. "This is astonishing grown in professional farm management by the members," Enger continued.

"From my perspective, the growth in farm management reflects a simple reality: owning farmland and operating farmland are increasingly different jobs." said Michael Lauher, an accredited farm manager with First Mid Ag Services, Mattoon, IL and immediate past-president of the Society. "Many owners are farther removed from the farm, while farming itself has become more technical, more expensive, and more complex. Professional managers help bridge that gap by protecting the owner's income, maintaining a strong working relationship with the tenant, and making sure the farm remains productive for the next generation."

Respondents forecast a 24.6 percent increase in the total acres managed in the next 10 years, with an average incease of 39.2 landowner/clients over the same timeframe. Typical ISPFMRA managers currently work with 26.4 tenants.

The survey was conducted at the end of 2025 with only one copy being sent to each of the 86 member companies of the Society. That eliminated the possibility of multiple responses from those companies with multiple employees. Member companies reported an average of 4.3 managers. Summary analysis was completed at the Society management offices with no outside participation. Preliminary results were shared with select members of the ISPFMRA leadership team and an ISPFMRA commercial sponsor representative, Enger explained. "They concurred that the results adequately represent the profile of the industry." The preliminary results were announced at the 2026 Illinois Land Values Conference on April 2.

Crops Under Management

Corn acres reported as under management for 2026 was 1.35 million, up from 565,804 in 2016. Acreages of soybean acres reported was 1.27 million, compared to 469,213 ten years earlier.

In terms of lease types, Crop Share was reported as the most prevalent at 43.5 percent, followed by Variable Cash Rent at 27.9 percent and Fixed Cash Rent at 22.4 percent.

Appraisal Services, Too!

Ten companies reported as being focused totally or primarily on appraisal services with a total of 1,717 appraisals conducted in 2025, an average 60.8 per appraiser. Total valuations of the properties appraised ws $6.43 billion.

Farmland was the primary category of property appraised at 92.5 percent reported. This was followed by commercial properties reported by 29.9 percent of the respondents. Other categories included commercial livestock, rural residential, and recreational.

Typical appraisal clients included estates (44.9 percent of the time); lenders (40.5 percent); with individuals, commercial and "other" rounding out the group.

A copy of the complete 12-page report is available as a free download at www.ispfmra.org.

With nearly 300 members statewide, the ISPFMRA is the largest and oldest state chapter of the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers. It will celebrate it's 100th anniversary in 2028.

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