Collaboration benefits
Illinois soybean farmers and CCAs

To help Illinois soybean farmers increase their yields and profitability, the Illinois Soybean Association (ISA) and the Illinois CCA (ILCCA) Program joined forces in 2015 to share timely and relevant information to soybean producers in every corner of Illinois. The partnership is a natural extension of the efforts that both organizations have been focused on for years, which is to consult farmers and provide management tips based on specific challenges that they see on their acres.

"Today's farmers face many challenges, from lower prices to tougher weeds and much more," says John Longley, soybean farmer from Aledo, IL, and ISA Production Committee chair. "ISA's mission is to help our state's 43,000 soybean farmers stay competitive in these trying times, and industry partnerships like our partnership with CCAs is a natural way to help us deliver practical recommendations they can put to work on their farms."

In 2014, ISA launched a checkoff-funded online soybean management platform, www.ILSoyAdvisor.com, which provides management tips and recommendations throughout the growing season. The two groups soon realized that working together would create a win–win solution for both groups and especially for the state's soybean farmers.

"CCA expertise is an ideal complement to the information ISA was striving to provide, and the ILSoyAdvisor platform serves as an ideal extension for the messages the CCAs were already pushing out," Longley says.

CCA Soy Envoys

The groups initially worked together to recruit nine soybean experts—dubbed the CCA Soy Envoys—who provided regular content for the ILSoyAdvisor.com website. In additional to written blog posts, some Soy Envoys developed audio and video posts based on what they were seeing in their local areas, making specific recommendations that farmers could act on.

"Illinois is unique because it's a long state, and it has many different environments," says Linda Kull, Ph.D., ISA director of strategic research programs. "The information available on ILSoyAdvisor.com keeps growers up to date on industry trends and provides them with guidelines to better manage soybeans. The Soy CCA Envoys have become a great asset to Illinois farmers because they can find updates on disease pressure, weed recommendations, and other timely advice tailored to their area."

Added value

A key element of the ILSoyAdvisor platform's evolution was a direct result of the CCA Soy Envoy collaboration and efforts to provide more value to the state's farmers, but also the CCA group. As such, ISA also initiated a series of webinars on soybean management, each offering one CEU.

"The Illinois CCAs appreciate the support and collaboration the industry. Working more closely helps both our groups, and importantly the farmers we work for, be more successful."

One big advantage is the focus on local recommendations from a state-wide pool of experts who track local developments every day, all season long. "Illinois is unique because it's a long state, and it has many different environments," Kull says.

Certification

By The Illinois Soybean Association

Published October 7, 2016