

Illinois Soybean Growers 3rd Annual Farm Business Forum

The Decisions That Drive Soybean Profitability - Session Descriptions



8 a.m. - Risk First, Price Second: Engineer a Resilient Grain Marketing System

Matt Bennet - AgMarkets.net

This session is built for farmers who already have a marketing plan and want to understand how it performs under real-world stress. We'll focus on the structure behind those decisions: how risk is defined, measured and managed across the entire operation. You will leave being able to better evaluate whether your current system consistently protects margins and working capital across different market environments.



8:45 a.m. - Basis as a Profit Center: Advanced Strategies for Soybean Marketing

Aaron Curtis - MID-CO

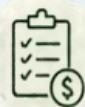
This session isolates one of the most under-optimized drivers of farm revenue—basis—and treats it as a standalone opportunity, not a secondary consideration to futures price. Designed for farmers already comfortable with forward contracting and seasonal trends, this conversation goes deeper into how basis can be actively managed, traded and leveraged to enhance returns. This session is about turning basis from a passive outcome into an active strategy—one that can consistently add cents per bushel without increasing exposure to futures market risk.



9:30 a.m. - Turning Harvest Efficiency into Higher Grain Values

Larry Voigt & Jeff Cruzan - Ag Growth Industries

Harvest efficiency is directly tied to marketing success. This session explores how faster harvest, proper drying and maintaining grain quality open doors to premiums and reduce discounts. Farmers will share strategies to minimize bottlenecks and protect quality in high-yield years. The discussion will focus on how harvest-time operational decisions affect the final selling price months later.



10:30 a.m. - Margin Management Over Price Guessing: Building a Profitable Marketing Plan

Eric Gibson - Rabobank

Rather than trying to "hit the high," this session reframes marketing around protecting margins. Farmers will work through scenarios using cost of production, break-even targets and incremental sales strategies. The discussion emphasizes disciplined selling, emotional control and using tools like forward contracts or hedging to lock in profitability when opportunities arise.



11:15 a.m. - From Fertility to Premiums: Growing Soybeans for Market Opportunity

Mike Rusch - SULAR-PLUS

Fertility management is more than a production decision—it can influence yield potential, crop quality, and the ability to capture premiums at the point of sale. This session explores how farmers can connect fertility investments to the quality and consistency that end users value, while considering how those decisions affect cost of production and overall profitability. Discussion will focus on practical strategies for managing fertility to support strong yields, protect grain quality and position soybeans to meet market demand. The goal is to help farmers see how decisions made before planting can create opportunities months later when it's time to market the crop.



12 p.m. - From Decisions to Dollars: Connecting the Pieces of Soybean Profitability

Panel Discussion with today's presenters

Soybean profitability rarely comes down to a single decision. It is the result of how farmers manage risk, capture basis opportunities, execute harvest and evaluate margins across the marketing year. This closing panel brings together the perspectives from across the forum to examine how those decisions intersect. Speakers will explore how a resilient grain marketing system can balance risk and price, how basis can be actively managed as a profit opportunity, how harvest efficiency can influence the value ultimately captured from the crop and how margin management can keep marketing decisions grounded in the economics of the operation.

Join us for practical insights and conversations driving better business decisions.

