

From Across the Prairie

# Profit from these ideas

By HOLLY SPANGLER

**W**HAT'S your outlook for 2006? Will it be further belt-tightening or simply keeping on with what you're already doing? One thing is clear: Financial forecasters across the state are preparing grim outlooks for this year, particularly for those farmers paying above-average cash rent.

Farm-management experts and farmers alike are still optimistic. Here, both share their top strategies for reining in costs and boosting profits in the new year.

### Manage fertilizer

"First, for the corn crop: I pre-paid nitrogen, locking in lower prices, and applied only maintenance levels of plow-down fertilizer based on recent soil tests.



MILLER

"I'll probably plant more GMO seed corn, which seemed to be the most resilient with all of the stressful weather last summer.

"For soybeans, I plan to utilize as many seed contracts as possible to bolster bean prices with seed premiums, and added trucking revenue. Some of those contracts have an added benefit of offering 'act of God' clauses, which enhance marketing opportunities without fear of penalty in case of drought."

*Doug Miller, Indianola farmer*

### The finer points

"In the 2006 growing year, I am going to take the things that we have been doing on our farm and critique them even harder.

"I believe the most important strategy I will use is to sell my crop when the price gets to a place where I can lock in a profit growing an average crop. In past years, that has only happened a couple of times

and this next year I think that will be extremely important when and if the price rises.

"The other thing that will be very important is to manage input costs. We used to not worry so much about an extra couple of dollars per acre, but now if I can trim a few dollars off of all my inputs, then that can really add up."

*Doug Martin, Mt. Pulaski farmer*



MARTIN

### Sell smart

"First, develop a marketing plan; and second, follow through with it for the entire year. Third, have crop insurance in place and tied in with your marketing plan. A second drought year could be worst than the first!"

*Gary Goodwin, FBEM professional*



GOODWIN

## Who's new on ICGA board

**R**ECENTLY elected officers of the Illinois Corn Grower's Association are: John Kuhfuss, Mackinaw, as president; Steve Ruh of Sugar Grove as vice president; Pat Dumoulin, Hampshire, treasurer; and Craig Buhrow, West Brooklyn, as secretary.

The following committee leaders were also elected: Art Bunting, Dwight, as export committee chairman, and Jim Reed, Monticello, as vice chairman. Rob Elliott, Cameron, was elected chairman of the industrial committee, and Tim Lenz, Strasburg, as vice chairman.

Newly elected at-large directors include: Andrew Goleman of Divernon, Ross Pauli of Edwards and Steve Ruh of Sugar Grove.

Re-elected to serve on the state board are: Mark Lower, Lanark; Art Bunting, Dwight; John Kuhfuss, Mackinaw; Tim Lenz, Strasburg; and Steve Koeller, Godfrey.

## Deere buffs gather in March

**T**HE 4th "Gathering of the Green" conference will be held March 8-11 at the Holiday Inn Moline Airport at Moline, the home of Deere & Co. The conference will focus on John Deere antique two-cylinder and new-generation tractors. It will include 30 workshops, 50 vendors from across the nation, three evening speakers, an auction, tours of John Deere factories in the Quad Cities, Dubuque and Waterloo, tours and luncheons for spouses, an opening night reception, and a final evening banquet with a keynote speaker.

Registration deadline is Feb. 15.

■ Go to the "Gathering of the Green" Web site at [www.gatheringofthegreen.com](http://www.gatheringofthegreen.com) for complete details, or call (815) 246-4243.

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