

Riding high

Prices are soaring for corn and soybeans

By RAY COONEY
The Commercial Review

It's been seven years since soybean prices have hit the numbers that have come in this week.

For corn, it's been eight years. How long those marks will last, or if they will go even higher, is the unknown.

"We've seen prices continue to increase," said Ben Brown, who in January became a senior research associate in agricultural and applied economics at the University of Missouri's Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institution. He had previously worked at Ohio State University and has served as an agricultural economics source for The Commercial Review since Purdue University's Chris Hurt took an extended leave of absence and subsequently retired. (See related story.) "Soybean prices were up 30 cents (Tuesday). ...

"We saw that with corn a couple weeks ago and they've continued on that high peak, breaking \$6 earlier (this week)."

A look at market prices locally illustrates the point.

For corn, prices Tuesday ranged between \$6.08 and \$6.28 per bushel. That compares to a local average of \$3.60 on April 20, 2020.

It's a similar story for soybeans, for which local prices ranged between \$14.93 and \$15.24 per bushel Tuesday. A year ago the average was \$8.32.

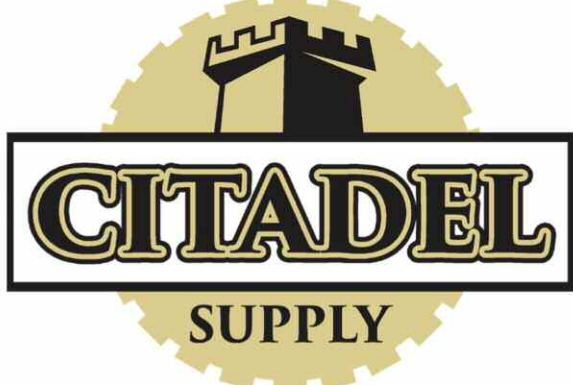
Brown noted that prices are not only seeing strong support in the "fundamental side" (supply and demand, etc.) but also that stimulus dollars are finding their way into the market.

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The Commercial Review/Ray Cooney

A farmer works in a field in June near the intersection of county roads 300 East and 100 north. Commodity prices have soared recently, with prices for both corn and soybeans higher than they have been in at least seven years. "We've seen prices continue to increase," said Ben Brown, a senior research associate in agricultural and applied economics at the University of Missouri's Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institution. "Soybean prices were up 30 cents (Tuesday). ... We saw that with corn a couple weeks ago and they've continued on that high peak, breaking \$6 earlier (this week)."



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High ...

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He added that there has been some inflationary pressure recently.

"While the federal reserve does have plans in place to handle that, many people don't believe they're adequate and are starting to worry about runaway or strongly increasing inflation," said Brown. "One of the ways you protect against that if you are nervous about it is buying hard assets or hard commodities, which include ag commodities. ..."

"For corn and soybeans the picture looks pretty solid at the moment. There's a lot of opportunities for upside price potential. ... There's opportunity for profit right now."

He addressed a variety of factors that could impact market prices for the 2021 growing season, including that purchases are currently above seasonal paces. China, for instance, as already purchased most, or possibly all, of the soybeans it plans to import from the U.S. this year.

Meanwhile, for corn, China is still a strong buyer and Mexico made a large purchase this week. The concern on the corn side is whether deliveries will be able to keep up, as the U.S. has been lagging 3 to 4 million bushels below export demand per week.

"The challenge with corn is can we logistically get enough ships turned throughout the region ... to get that corn exported," said Brown. "That's the big question."

Other concerns at this point include extremely dry weather currently in the western part of the corn belt (the Plains states, stretching from North Dakota to Nebraska) that could result in

farmers planting fewer acres. If the dryness stretches into Iowa and Minnesota as well, it could further limit planting and send market prices upward.

Fertilizer prices, which have increased, could also be a limiting factor for farmers.

However, Brown doesn't expect the current cold snap — Jay County received measurable snowfall Tuesday night and temperatures fell into the 20s Wednesday morning — to have much of an impact on planting.

Though the extreme cold for mid-April is more dangerous for soybeans than corn, he said he expects any crops that were already in the ground and damaged by the weather will simply be replanted. "The market certainly is paying attention," he said. "Some of them are trying to figure out, 'Is this going to push planting back to an un-optimal time?' But we're certainly not at that point yet where I think that's something we need to worry about."

Currently, the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institution is

"Across the board, I think livestock and grains, the nice picture here is we've got a pretty strong foundation under us and several things working in tandem together that are providing support for prices. The question on everybody's mind is, 'Just how high will this go?' And that's the part we're not totally sure of."

—Ben Brown, Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institution

projecting a market year average of \$4.15 to \$4.20 for corn and \$12 for soybeans. That would be the highest since 2014 for both commodities.

Yield projections are 51 bushels per acre for soybeans and 179.5 bushels per acre for corn. Soybeans came in at 50.2 bushels per acre in 2020 while corn was at 172 bushels per acre last year. "Those would be definitely on the stronger end, but not the strongest we've seen for either one," said Brown.

As for the livestock sector, Brown had good news for pork producers and bad news for the dairy industry, with cattle falling somewhere in between.

For pork, African Swine Fever and PEDV has begun emerging in Asia. Although they're not as bad as they were two years ago, some producers in China are taking their hogs to market early because of worries the diseases could impact their herds. That's pushing prices down now, but could result in increased prices in the future.

"That will have an impact in terms of what

we can export as a pork market," said Brown. "So I encourage people not to get too worried if we start to see lower pork export prices in the near term ... It does raise the possibility of increased pork exports at a later time."

Beef prices have been up and down, but no major market shifts are expected. Brown added that beef consumption has remained strong domestically and internationally.

The dairy industry seems to be headed for another tough year, he added, as milk prices have remained low and feed prices are high.

But the overall outlook for the U.S. agriculture industry is good.

"Across the board, I think livestock and grains, the nice picture here is we've got a pretty strong foundation under us and several things working in tandem together that are providing support for prices," said Brown. "The question on everybody's mind is, 'Just how high will this go?' And that's the part we're not totally sure of."

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Not there yet

State's hemp industry has growing pains

By JOHN KLINE
Goshen News

While admittedly still in its infancy, Ben Hartman sees Indiana as well positioned to become a national leader in the burgeoning hemp production industry.

Owner of Clay Bottom Farm, an urban micro-farm located on the city's north side, Hartman counts himself among the first Hoosier farmers to jump on the hemp bandwagon following passage of the 2018 Farm Bill. That bill legalized industrial hemp production in the U.S.

"We first got our hemp license in 2019, and we grew hemp here at the farm in 2019. This would be what's considered high-CBD hemp. So, it's not fiber hemp. It's the hemp that's grown for CBD extraction," Hartman said. "And to make a long story short, it was a huge learning curve, a lot of fun, and overall a success in that we produced several quarts of CBD crude oil out of which we've been able to make, and brand, and market CBD tinctures. And we sell those CBD tinctures under the Clay Bottom Farm name through the Maple City Market in Goshen. We're actually the only local source of that product."

And according to Bruce Kettler, director of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, Hartman was by no means alone in entering the hemp market. The latest available data indicates that more than 8,700 acres of hemp were grown outdoors in Indiana in 2019, while another 1.74 million square feet were grown indoors that same year. He noted that 2020's numbers will not be released until this spring.

Not marijuana

Hemp, marijuana's non-psychedelic cousin, includes numerous crop varieties that in turn can be used for the production of multiple products, including CBD oil, food

grade oil, grain and hemp fiber. Under current legislation, hemp cannot contain more than 0.3% of tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, the plant compound most commonly associated with getting a person high.

According to The Brookings Institution, federal law for decades did not differentiate hemp from other cannabis plants, all of which were effectively made illegal in 1937 under the Marijuana Tax Act and formally made illegal in 1970 under the Controlled Substances Act.

That began to change with passage of the 2014 Farm Bill, which reintroduced hemp production to the U.S. farming industry, though that legislation limited the distribution of hemp licenses to a small number of farmers, and growth was restricted to small-scale pilot programs aimed at studying market interest in hemp-derived products.

With passage of the more expansive 2018 Farm Bill four years later, the Office of the Indiana State Chemist, the regulatory body that oversees the state's hemp program, was cleared to begin large-scale distribution of licenses to Hoosier farmers, though they still needed a research proposal and to be associated with a university researcher in order to apply for a license.

"We had quite a bit of growth the last two years, so 2019 and 2020, when we were still in the research phase," said Don Robison, feed administrator and hemp regulator with the OISC. "What we showed both of those years, though, was a lot of interest, a lot of licensing, a lot of registered acres, but a whole lot less actually planted than what was registered, and I attribute that to a lack of great (seed) sources."

"There are some good sources for plant material and seed, but — and I hate to say it this way — it's still a little bit of the wild, wild west out

there right now," Robison added. "It's a new industry, and even good folks that are trying to do the right thing, if they accept too many orders, or they can't get their plant material to the quality it needs to get to, stuff like that can come back to bite them."

Speaking to challenges within the industry, Marguerite Bolt, hemp extension specialist with the Purdue University Department of Agronomy, noted that one of the biggest challenges currently facing Indiana's hemp industry is simply the fact that it is so young.

"This industry in particular just seems to be somewhat volatile, you know, because it's developing. That's probably one of the biggest factors, is it's just very new, and we're trying to understand where the market is going to go, what consumer demand is, etc. It just gets pretty complicated," Bolt said. "And then, of course, regulatory changes make it an even more challenging plant to work with, because it seems like things are constantly changing when we look at rules and regulations."

"And for these growers, they have a lot on their plates already, and they're trying to navigate this industry, and figure out who is buying, who is selling, what the potential looks like for them, etc.," she added of the issue. "With these constant changes, I think, if I were a grower, it's a huge deterrent."

Overproduction

Robison pointed to oversupply and profitability — particularly in the area of CBD production — as another major challenge facing the state's hemp industry.

"As far as acres of hemp production, CBD is by far the majority, accounting for probably about 85% of the total number of acres being planted," Robison said.

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Funds available

By BAILEY CLINE
The Commercial Review

It started in 2014 with an algae scare.

Now, nearly \$900,000 in grant funding and almost seven years later, Jay County Soil and Water Conservation District continues to offer its cost-share program for improving soil health and water quality in surrounding areas.

This year, the grant application is open to all landowners in Jay and Blackford counties and is focused primarily on cover crops. Conservation district coordinator Bettie Jacobs described the program as beneficial to both the district and local farmers.

"It's not only good for our soil, but it's good for their pocketbook," Jacobs said.

Several years ago, a high concentration of toxic blue-green algae — it can cause illness or death in pets and can cause irritation or nausea in humans — was discovered in the Salamonie Reservoir.

Tim Kroeker, watershed coordinator at Jay County Soil and Water Conservation District, conducted a watershed management

Jay landowners can get \$\$ for cover crops and other conservation best practices

plan in 2015 examining the climate, geology, soil and land use and water quality in portions of the Upper Salamonie River Watershed in Jay and Blackford counties.

One issue he discovered was an excess of nutrients in the river. With more than 80% of the watershed area in Jay County used for agricultural purposes, Kroeker looked to local landowners.

The Upper Salamonie River project was implemented by Jay County Commissioners in 2016, and it was funded with Section 319 grants by Indiana Department of Environmental Management. Through these grants, a cost-share program was developed and promoted for the implementation of conservation practices by farmers and landowners in the affected areas.

"Most of our focus has

been keeping things out of the water," Kroeker said. In this way, he continued, the plan benefits farmers.

"We cut down on sediment, top soil loss, loss of their nutrients ... they want their phosphorus and nitrogen to stay on the field," he added. "A lot of their goals are similar to ours."

In recent years, Jay County Soil and Water Conservation District has received four Clean Water Indiana grants from Indiana State Department of Agriculture. These grants have also been used for the cost-share program as well as technical assistance and educating the community.

"We're very lucky," Jacobs said. "We've been one of the few counties that have been awarded these grants so many years in a row."

See Funds page 4B

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- Carry a fire extinguisher on each piece of powered equipment.
- Designate a safe play area for kids that is a safe distance from machinery.
- Plan an escape route when working around animals in tight areas.
- Wear protective equipment like masks and goggles to safeguard your lungs and eyes.
- Review and enforce basic safety rules for employees and family members, and set the example by following them yourself.



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Not ...

Continued from page 3B
“That’s going to eventually have to change for profitability to really come into the market, because that’s where all of the oversupply is.”

“The first people into the industry were making obscene amounts of money, and so that’s what got everybody involved in it, what got everybody interested,” Robison added. “That in turn resulted in a lot of non-farmers getting involved, people who didn’t have any farming experience, and now they’re having their own issues kind of learning how plants work with soil and fertilizer, that type of thing.”

Kettler agreed. “I think we saw a lot of people who jumped into this really big, and the seed is expensive. It’s a new crop. So, we’ve got to learn how to grow it, we’ve got to understand the pests that can affect it, etc. So, it’s one of those things that I would encourage people not to jump into too hard, just because of the fact that they could lose a lot of money,” Kettler said. “All that is to say, what we are encouraging people to do is, make sure you have a contract for the outlet of your production before you plant. If you’re producing for CBD, for example, get a contract with somebody that’s going to process it for CBD. And the same is true if it’s being grown for fiber, etc. Make sure you have a contract in place that allows you to know you’ve got a way to take that production and do something



Photo provided

Ben Hartman, owner of Clay Bottom Farm, an urban micro-farm in Goshen, poses with hemp plants from his 2019 growing season.

with it, and market it, so that you’re protected a little bit.”

Still growing

Looking forward to the 2021 growing season and beyond, Robison is predicting continued growth within the state’s hemp industry, though likely at a less fervent and ultimately more manageable pace than had been seen in the crop’s 2019 and 2020 seasons.

A big reason for that prediction, he said, is the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s recent decision to approve the Indiana State Hemp Plan for commercially growing and processing hemp.

According to Robison, the new plan, approved by the USDA in October, takes

OISC’s pilot hemp program and transitions it to a commercial hemp production program, granting the OISC greater regulatory authority and the ability to clearly define the rules and regulations around hemp production and processing in Indiana.

Under the plan, Indiana farmers are no longer required to have a research component to be licensed. In addition, farmers are now eligible to include hemp in crop insurance, which gives them a bit more stability when it comes to the potential risks of growing the new crop.

However, in a change from free licenses in past years, those seeking licenses for the 2021 growing season will be charged a \$750 application fee for

either handlers or growers, or \$1,500 for both.

While the primary goal of the new fee is to help the OISC cover its expenses connected to administering the state’s hemp program, which it is required to do under state statute, Robison said he also anticipates the fee could help curb some of the oversupply issues the state saw during the 2019 and 2020 growing seasons.

“And it looks like those that are licensing for 2021, so far those acres of production are way down for 2021. So, what that tells me is, the growers are realizing that there’s oversupply. They’re trying to grow one acre instead of five, or, if they’re growing fiber or for seed oil or for grain, they’re growing 10 acres instead of 20 or 30,” he added. “So, we’re seeing those kinds of positive growth signs amidst the negative of low prices, oversupply and some questionable suppliers. We’re starting to see the market shake out a little bit, which is a really good sign.”

The future

As for what Indiana’s hemp industry might look like in another five to 10 years, Robison said he anticipates what will likely be a gradual shift away from the current dominance of CBD production to an industry more focused on hemp grain and fiber production.

“I anticipate, and I hope, that Indiana’s market moves away from so many acres of CBD, just because

of the oversupply problem, and moves instead toward grain and fiber,” Robison said. “Indiana’s growers already have the necessary equipment, and they’ve already got ways to process fiber and grain. So, I think that’s the place we’re going to settle in. There will still be CBD suppliers, but I think there will be many less CBD suppliers in five to 10 years than there are now.”

Bolt also noted that she anticipates hemp will always remain a niche crop in Indiana, rather than completely replacing the more traditional crops, such as corn and soybeans.

“At the university, and I think in the industry as a whole, a lot of us are trying to promote hemp as a diversification tool. So, not looking at it as, ‘I’m going to switch my farm to a hemp-only farm.’ We’d rather see, ‘how can I fit hemp into my current operation so I have more diversification,’ which economically is a good thing,” Bolt said. “It also provides some security, where if you have a crop failure one year, you’re not only relying on that specific crop. You have multiple rotations, fields planted in other crops, etc. So, that has kind of been my perspective as well. Basically, figure out how it fits into your system, and don’t do a complete overhaul just to grow hemp. Make it work for you.”

While only time will tell what the state’s dominant hemp crop will eventually end up looking like, Hartman said he’s confident

that hemp production will continue in Indiana.

“It will definitely always be a niche crop, but it’s definitely here to stay, too. I don’t see the laws becoming more regressive. I see them opening up, especially as people become more familiar with the plant, and learn new ways to grow it that are safe and legal,” Hartman said, noting that while Clay Bottom Farm’s existing CBD oil supply should last him through the remainder of this year, he does plan on planting another hemp crop in 2022. “Indiana is actually ideally situated in terms of climate. Our climate is just ideal, and our soils are ideal for hemp production, too. So, I can see Indiana as being a real leader in hemp production.”

Aaron Rink, a fellow Goshen farmer and former partner with a large hemp farm operation in the Millersburg/New Paris area, is also optimistic about the future of hemp.

“I would say Indiana definitely has a future with hemp,” said Rink, who, while having exited the hemp production industry back in early 2020 due to personal reasons, is still a big supporter of the crop. “I know that the CBD oil market has peaked ... but I still think there is a future and a market for hemp, particularly on the fiber side. What all can be raised fiber-wise, and what can be done with it, I still think there are things that haven’t even been invented yet that are going to require hemp. So, I think that’s pretty cool.”

Funds ...

Continued from page 3B
In January, Jay County Soil and Water Conservation District received a \$130,000 Clean Water Indiana grant for improving local water quality. The district is hoping to attract new farmers or

landowners to its grant application this year.

Landowners can apply for 50% to 75% per acre, up to \$20 per acre. There is a maximum of 300 acres per landowner allowed. These dollars are used to cover

the cost for conservation practices such as cover crops, filter strips or equipment modifications.

“Whenever you make a change on your farm, it’s going to cost money,” Kroeker said. “(This

grant) has really helped a lot of people get started.”

In the past, applications have been rated based on proximity to a water source, property erosion potential, if the area has higher slopes, and other factors.

Those interested in applying can call Kroeker at (260) 766-1104 or email timkroeker7@gmail.com, or call Jacobs at (260) 726-4888 or email at bettie.jacobs@in.nacd-net.net.

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Tom Campbell/Purdue University

Purdue University agricultural economics professor Chris Hurt speaks April 3, 2018, while taping a televised segment along with fellow Purdue faculty Michael Langemeier (left) and Jim Mintert. At right is U.S. Farm Report host Tyne Morgan. Hurt, now retired, spent 40 years as a Purdue professor and was regarded as an expert in agriculture both in Indiana and across the nation.

‘A trusted voice for agriculture’

Hurt has retired after 40 years at Purdue

By **MAUREEN MANIER**
Purdue University Agricultural
Communication Service

As retiring professor of agricultural economics Chris Hurt reflects on his 40-year career at Purdue, he talked about the people for whom he has worked through Extension and as a professor.

“Growing up on the farm, my neighbors and our community, they were wonderful people,” said Hurt. “I think of the people I have worked for in my job

to be just like those neighbors — strong family people, hard-working and appreciative people. To think that I could bring the information to them to make better decisions, that’s been my contribution to society.”

Being a “tireless public servant” is how Jayson Lusk, agricultural economics’ department head, described this commitment. “Chris spent thousands of afternoons, nights and weekends sharing his insights

about agricultural markets. He helped generations of Indiana farmers make better planting and crop marketing decisions. Chris was the main attraction at gatherings all around the state; if you wanted the audience to stay till the end, you put Chris last on the program.”

Hurt arrived in Purdue’s agricultural economics department in 1981. From the time he was a boy running a small egg business, Hurt was attracted to the entrepreneurial spirit of

agriculture, something he said was common among farming families.

“Parents encouraged children to be entrepreneurial so that they would develop that internal motivation and drive,” said Hurt. “They were right because you take a lot more interest in things that are yours and that you have a connection to — you do it for the family, but you also do it for yourself. The life lessons you learn are the foundation for

your future. A job isn’t done until it’s done.”

He explains that his parents, who were meticulous business people who benefited from Extension information, definitely influenced his interest.

“They kept track of every expenditure, down to the bag of washers they bought for a nickel,” he said.

Hurt arrived at the University of Illinois planning to major in animal science.

See **Trusted** page 7B

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South Bend Tribune/Robert Franklin

Freshly cut and packaged greens are moved into boxes for shipment inside Pure Green Farms in South Bend. "From planting to packaging, it's never touched by human hands until it's opened by the consumer," said Joe McGuire, CEO of Pure Green Farms.

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Leafy ...

Continued from page 8B
Plant protection and eliminating chances for contamination are of paramount importance at the South Bend facility, which currently has 20 workers.

Employees crossing into the greenhouse walk through a tray of shoe sanitizer and wear gloves, coats and hair nets.

After seeds are inserted into a blend of sanitized peat and wood fiber by machine, the planting trays move into the greenhouse, where they are given a nutrient drink while germinating under less intense light and then growing up under full light.

Depending on the variety, it will take about 25 days for the romaine, arugula and leaf lettuces to reach the stage where they are harvested by lightning-fast cutters, blended together, packaged and boxed for shipment.

"From planting to packaging, it's never touched by human hands until it's opened by the consumer," McGuire said.

Nothing is wasted. The nutrient mix that isn't consumed by the plants is collected, cleaned, tested and reused; the peat material in the growing trays will be composted and used for other agricultural purposes.

"We use 90% less water than field-grown lettuces," said Gura, who previously served as director of operations at Ceres-owned Hop Head Farms in Baroda before joining the team at Pure Green. "I believe it's the future of growing."

Though current laws don't allow the lettuce to be labeled as organic, Zick and McGuire indicated there could be court challenges as controlled-environment growing facilities continue to spring up around the country.

"It's not classifiable as organic because we don't put it into the ground," McGuire said.

Timing is everything

Though indoor facilities have been used to produce tomatoes and other crops, producing leaf lettuces at a significant volume is a more recent phenomenon, brought about by shipping distances, food safety and the push for locally produced food.

Beyond the freshness factor, lettuces produced at Pure Green Farms could eliminate 500,000 truck miles annually and up to 300,000 pounds of food waste each year, according to figures provided by Ceres.

Ariana Torres, an assistant professor of agricultural economics at Purdue University, said the timing is right for ventures such as Pure Green because people are consuming more salad and insisting on higher quality produce.

"Consumers want something that is local and fresher," Torres said. "People also are more aware of food safety, and the pandemic showed that there can be disruptions in the supply chain."

Though there are competitors in the market — such as Gotham Greens in New York and Chicago, and Little Leaf Farms in Massachusetts — Pure Green is still at the front edge of a what could be an enormous trend in the future, Zick said.

"The market is huge and only a tiny fraction is grown indoors," said Zick, the Ceres executive. "Though we won't be the first to do it, we're still getting into it early and gaining important experience."

Looking ahead, the business needs to dial in its efficiencies by fine-tuning

its highly-automated growing, harvesting and packaging processes, Gura said.

Future growth

About \$25 million already has been spent on the project, but up to three additional phases are planned. Eventually, Green Farms could have about 16 acres of enclosed greenhouse and about four acres under roof for planting, processing and packaging.

With 64 acres owned by Green Farms and an additional 280 adjoining acres owned by its parent organization — Ceres — there's plenty of room for growth, including the possibility of bringing in other operators that are experienced in growing tomatoes, strawberries and other produce.

"We've been interested in developing an ag tech campus there," said Zick, adding that partnerships could be developed with Purdue, Notre Dame and other universities to work on problems associated with controlled-environment agriculture.

South Bend Mayor James Mueller was impressed by what he saw during a tour of Pure Green Farms on Friday.

"A lot of people would be surprised by what's going on there and the level of technology," Mueller said. "It's part laboratory, part agriculture and part advanced manufacturing."

And he said he's looking forward to seeing the South Bend-produced lettuces on store shelves.

"Their farm will serve as a model for sustainable and advanced farming techniques," he said.

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This story was provided to The Commercial Review through the Hoosier State Press Association Information Network.

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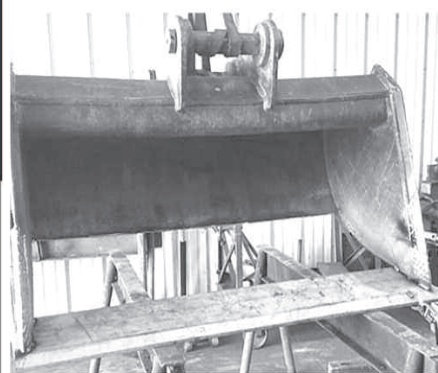
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Trusted ...

Continued from page 5B

"I didn't realize until college that the business side of the enterprise resided in agricultural economics," Hurt said. "The light bulb went on at that moment. I liked animals, but what I really enjoyed was business."

He went from being a B to an A student and was soon offered an opportunity to pursue his master's degree at Cornell University.

Cargill, a major international agriculture and food corporation, recruited him from Cornell to work in Minnesota and Georgia. He says that from day one the company was training him for a higher management position. What he realized over the next few years, however, was that he wanted to start his own business. When his parents discussed selling their farm, Hurt saw this as his opportunity and he and his wife Becky returned to Illinois to start a hog business there.

Hurt doesn't have any regrets about that decision. Although they ultimately closed the hog business, the Hurts eventually purchased all the Hurt farmland to keep the farm in the family.

During the time he and his wife ran their business full time, they were also completing advanced degrees at University of Illinois, 64 miles from their barn in Casey.

Becky Hurt remembered: "We kept that road hot as Chris worked on his Ph.D. and I did a master's. There was a week when Chris's dad (on his way with Chris's mom to see their son in Urbana), Chris, and I all got speeding tickets in the same small town that had become a speed trap."

Hurt also taught agricultural economics at Lakeland Community College while working on his Ph.D. After earning his doctorate, he accepted a position at Purdue, where he felt he would have the opportunity to have a bigger impact.

During the next four decades, as he and his wife raised their four sons and welcomed grandchildren, Hurt had that impact as he actively analyzed massive changes in the agricultural economy that he shared with farmers in small and large gatherings throughout the country including testifying at congressional hearings in the United States Capitol. He also studied massive changes in the pork industry in the United States and was invited to China, Japan, South Korea and Malaysia to address the implications for the global industry.

"Agricultural history is rich," said Hurt. "Cycles have always been important in agriculture. The nature of farm income has always been short periods of booming farm

'Chris has a keen understanding about the importance of audience. It's a combination of 'you can't teach effectively if you don't know who you are teaching' and 'the best people to teach are the ones who are open to being taught at the time.'

—Ken Foster, Former Purdue University professor

income and escalations of land values followed by periods of decline where there are long periods at lower but much more stable income."

Hurt describes how globalization became a primary trend in post-WWII agriculture as Russia, Japan and China entered agriculture markets. More recently, of course, there has been a turn away from globalization to being more nationalistic.

Hurt observes, "We didn't question globalization for 60 years. Now we need to see what happens."

Throughout his career Hurt published numerous articles including a highly successful one with his longtime colleagues Phil Abbott and the late Wally Tyner of which he is particularly proud. Titled "What's driving food prices," the study focused on understanding the economic drivers of the global food crisis at that time.

Hurt also served on the editorial board and as editor of the Purdue Ag Economics Report (PAER) for many years. His faculty colleague and former department head Ken Foster described Hurt first reaching out to encourage him to write for PAER when Foster was a new assistant professor.

"Chris threw me a life preserver, and, like any lost and drowning soul, I clutched to it for all it was worth," said Foster. "Chris has a keen understanding about the impor-

tance of audience. It's a combination of 'you can't teach effectively if you don't know who you are teaching' and 'the best people to teach are the ones who are open to being taught at the time.'"

Hurt is widely known because of his extensive and diverse outreach through the Extension network.

As he explains it, "The most important part of Extension is the unbiased scientific information that we provide to people. We don't have anything to sell." He praises the collaboration among Purdue departments, colleagues and the USDA. "I'd say that's a big Wow, what a remarkable effort."

Hurt thanks his wife Becky for always supporting his work, with all its evenings and weekends away. After all those years of working with what he describes as "the wonderful people in agriculture," he is now looking forward to spending more time with her and his children and grandchildren.

He also credits the agriculture deans and department leaders with whom he has worked.

"Purdue Agriculture has always been a leader in advancing the land-grant mission," Hurt said. "These leaders have supported that mission, never losing focus on the people we serve and always serving their needs. They have not only supported the mission, but they also encouraged the faculty to

do what they do really well."

The Glenn W. Sample Dean of Agriculture Karen Plaut returns the praise for Hurt's commitment.

"Chris represents everything that is best about the land-grant mission, dedicating himself to provide economic guidance based on sound research," she said. "Throughout our state and the country, Chris Hurt is a trusted voice for agriculture."

Although best known around the state and country for his research and outreach, Hurt has also welcomed generations of students to his classroom. One thing remains constant, he explains, whether with youth, students, farmers or business people, even with all the change in technology and the world: "The economic principles we teach remain the same. That's why they need to be taught."

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This story, originally published Nov. 30, is being reprinted with permission from Purdue University. Hurt was a mainstay at agriculture-related events throughout the Indiana for decades and was a regular source for media, including The Commercial Review, on agriculture topics.

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Getting leafy

High-tech indoor farm focusing on lettuce market

By ED SEMLER
South Bend Tribune

SOUTH BEND — It's a chilly, wet and windy day — enough to remind us that winter still isn't too far in the rearview mirror.

But inside a new six-acre building on West Calvert Street in South Bend, Matt Gura is keeping a close watch over a sea of baby plants that fill a greenhouse about the size of two big-box retailers, or 174,000 square feet.

It's like a warm day in early summer inside the building, which uses computers and monitors to control light, liquid nutrients, temperature, humidity and even plant-loving carbon dioxide.

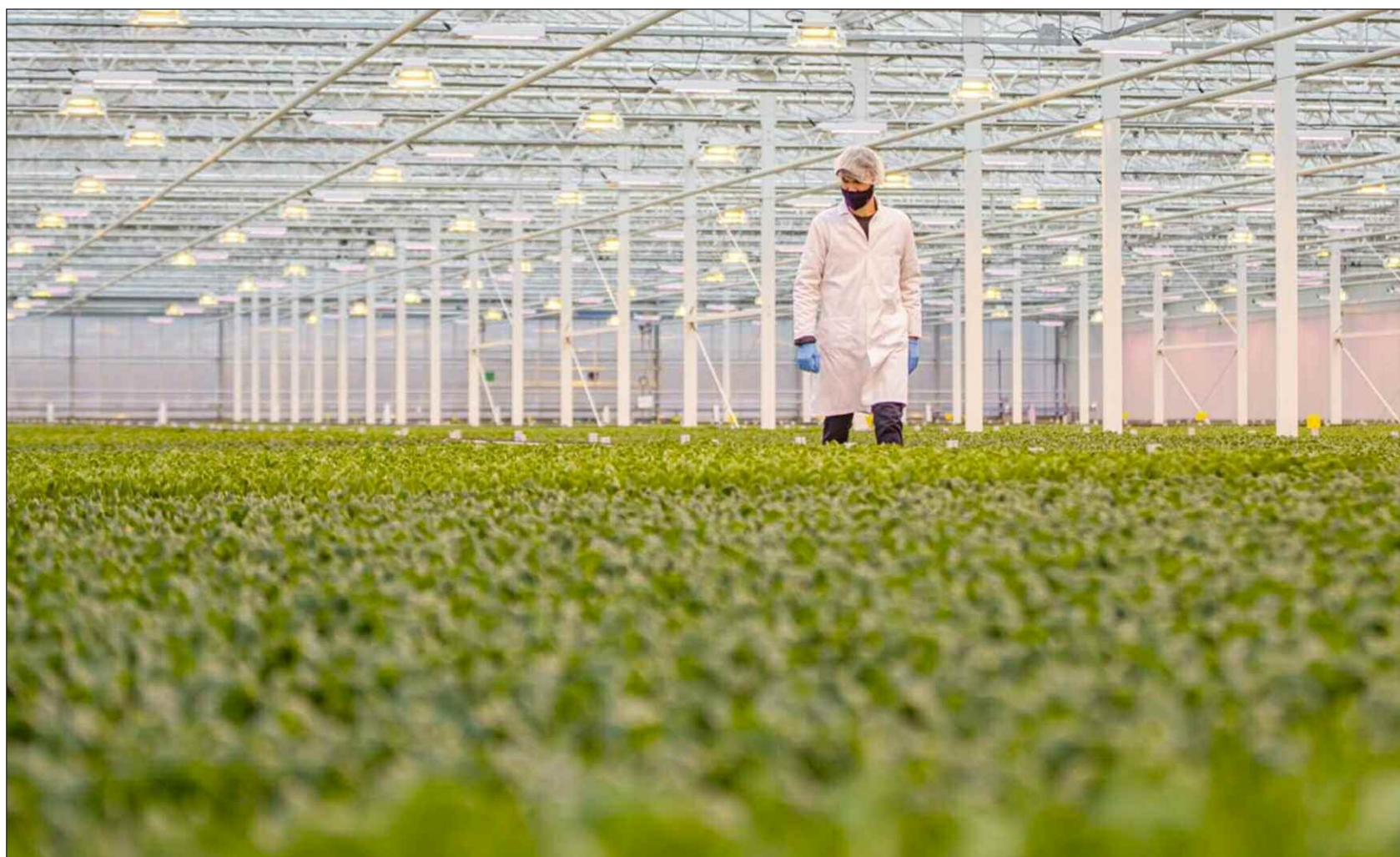
Gura, director of operations at Pure Green Farms — a hydroponic indoor farm on the city's southwest side — touts it as the "most technologically advanced leafy green greenhouse in the world."

"And it's in South Bend," he says.

Though it might seem odd to build a massive indoor farm in northern Indiana — considering the cold weather and the perma-cloud that seemingly hangs over the region each winter — leaders at South Bend-based Ceres Partners, an agricultural investment firm, studied the project for years.

They believe there is an opportunity to disrupt the lettuce trade, which is largely dominated by growers in California who ship products to markets in the Midwest.

There's more sunlight here than most of us realize, and the fact that it doesn't get too hot in the summer means that the cost of trying to keep the



South Bend Tribune/Robert Franklin

Matt Gura of Pure Green Farms in South Bend walks along a catwalk as he checks out lettuces being grown inside a large greenhouse. Gura touts it as the "most technologically advanced leafy green greenhouse in the world."

building cool won't be out of line, Gura said.

A combination of LED and high-pressure sodium lights will supplement the light needs of the plants, and there's an automated shade that can be used to cut down on light coming in or out of the greenhouse as needed.

In the winter, the indoor farm will use offal heat from the nearby South Bend Ethanol plant, and discussions are underway to possibly use carbon diox-

ide produced by the facility if it makes economic sense for both businesses.

Ceres also liked the location because it's near its headquarters near the University of Notre Dame as well as major transportation links that will be crucial on getting the leafy greens produced by Pure Green Farms to grocers, restaurants and other customers throughout the region, said Brandon Zick, chief investment officer for the firm.

"There's 55 million people within a 300-mile radius," said Joe McGuire, a seasoned produce distribution executive who was brought in to serve as CEO of Pure Green Farms. "There's 75 million people within 400 miles."

That distance gives Pure Green a significant shipping advantage over traditional leafy green producers that are located in California, Arizona and other far-away locations.

By the time lettuce is har-

vested and processed in California, for example, it might take 10 days to reach store shelves in the Midwest. Conversely, the romaine, arugula and leaf lettuces grown at Pure Green could be on store shelves in a couple of days or even less.

"We think there's going to be strong demand for fresher produce that's grown in the market," McGuire said.

The first shipments have gone out to Kroger stores in

Indiana, and it won't be long before Pure Green is available at Martin's Super Markets and other grocers.

'Never touched by human hands'

Beyond the freshness factor, Pure Green believes it can separate itself from other salad providers because it is not using pesticides or other sprays that might be needed to control bugs and plant diseases outdoors.

See Leafy page 6B

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