

Economics of Illinois Agriculture: Adapting to Changes

Adapted from a Lesson by Krista Crossland from Petersburg

Grade Level: 12

Subject(s): Social Studies: Economics

Resources:

Illinois State Museum's Oral History of Illinois Agriculture online searchable AV database - <http://ohia.museum.state.il.us/>



Objective: Students will determine three recent changes in Illinois Agricultural that challenged farmers to stay productive and competitive. They will present the ideas in panel discussions on the pros and cons of going into farming today (six people to a panel; with two major changes discussed per panel).

Illinois agriculture is a model of how technological and scientific developments have affected human productivity, human comfort and the environment. Choose and document three significant changes in Illinois agriculture that have allowed Illinois farmers to grow and adapt in recent history.

Choose from a list of given areas. (ISBE standard is in ()).

- technological advancement (15.A.5a)
- changes in marketing of products (15.C.5a)
- changes in government policy (15.C.5c)
- changes in land value and price (15.A.5c)
- cultural attitudinal changes (15.B.5a)
- changes in land use (15.A.5c)
- international trade policy changes (15.C.5c)
- changes in monetary and lending policy (15.A.5a)
- changes in labor and its conditions and cost (15.A.5a)

Listen or watch a variety of clips from the website (minimum - 10 - provide a list of your citations) Try to include at least one interview from before 1950 to get some perspective. (Interviewees from DeKalb County were specifically asked in 1986, shortly after the land price crash and farm crisis, what changes they had experienced and how they had fared. Many of the 2007-2009 video interviewees were asked about their strategies to weather change.)

When you have gone through enough interview clips so that you feel comfortable making some generalizations about specific changes or adaptations, use the information you learned to summarize. Did all or most of your interviewees concur with one another? Were their experiences similar? Did their testimony match what has gone on elsewhere

(verify your sources by comparing them with one another and with outside sources or statistics). Search for journal articles or conference papers online for verification.

Prepare a short panel presentation with your group of six. Using the information from the ISM farmers' experiences, extrapolate it to discuss the challenges or opportunities of going into farming as a career. What assets are needed? Must one inherit a farm to afford to run one? Is it better to rent than own? What actions are necessary to succeed in farming? What are always the risks? What does your panel recommend?

ISBE/National Standards:

Social Studies: Economics:

15.A.5a Explain the impact of various determinants of economic growth (e.g., investments in human/physical capital, research and development, technological change) on the economy.

15.A.5c Analyze the impact of various determinants on the levels of GDP (e.g., quantity/quality of natural/capital resources, size/skills of the labor force).

15.B.5a Analyze the impact of changes in non-price determinants (e.g., changes in consumer income, changes in tastes and preferences) on consumer demand.

15.C.5a Explain how competition is maintained in the United States economy and how the level of competition varies in differing market structures (e.g., monopoly, oligopoly, monopolistic and perfect competition).

15.C.5c Explain how government intervention with market prices can cause shortages or surpluses of a good or service (e.g., minimum wage policies, rent freezes, farm subsidies).

Content Assessment: An essay test on each of the nine changes in farm economics could be given to assess how students learned from their own searches and by listening to others' results. Or they could choose to answer in narrative form four of the five questions based on the standards.

- 1) Explain how technological change in the last twenty years has brought advantages and challenges to the economics of Illinois farming.
- 2) Explain how the cost of labor and cost of land has impacted the economic growth of farming in Illinois since the 1980s.
- 3) Discuss three changes in food choices have occurred with consumers that influences what farmers grow in Illinois? (e.g., eat local movement, growth of processed foods, replacement of oil for fuels)
- 4) Discuss how the growth of international trade and its regulations has affected the economic viability of Illinois farmers.
- 5) List and explain two government programs that have impacted Illinois farmers in the last ten years. (e.g., embargos, tariffs, subsidies)

Panel Discussion Rubric from: <http://www.users.on.net/~katf/detention/panel.htm>
(The categories and descriptions are good, though their purpose is specious.)