

# PrairieFarmer<sup>®</sup>

## 2026 MASTER FARMER AWARD

Celebrating 100 years, the Prairie Farmer Master Farmer Award was established in 1925 to honor farmers with outstanding agricultural production skills, who also demonstrate extraordinary dedication to their communities. These individuals have demonstrated exceptional leadership within the Illinois agricultural community and their local communities.

### Eligibility Criteria

- Candidates must farm in Illinois, deriving the majority of their income from agricultural production.
- Candidates must have proven agricultural production records, are leaders in their community, and give back to the community in substantive ways.
- Candidates may be individuals, couples or siblings; judging is equally weighted.
- Candidate should be actively engaged in production agriculture.

### Guidelines for Nomination

- Submit completed nomination form.
- Attach a minimum of 8-12 letters of support, *including at least one from a neighboring farmer*.
- All digital submissions must include the application and letters of support in a single email.

### Application Notes

- For a couple or siblings, please assume each question pertains to both individuals and answer accordingly.
- All information remains confidential.
- In the event the nominee does not win, the application will be held and re-submitted the following year, for a maximum of three years. Please notify Prairie Farmer if you would like to amend your nomination in subsequent years.

### Judging Committee

- Selection is made by Illinois agricultural leaders, including experts in agronomy and agricultural finance, past Master Farmers, agricultural research or University authorities, and Prairie Farmer editorial staff.

### Recognition

- Master Farmer winners will be recognized at the Master Farmer Awards Luncheon, held in early March. Members of the new class will be announced on *prairiefarmer.com* on March 1, and in the March issue of Prairie Farmer.

### Nominations due Monday, September 12, 2025

- Mail nominations:  
Holly Spangler  
Editor, Prairie Farmer  
3369 E. Cucumber Hollow Rd.  
Marietta, IL 61459
- Send digital submissions:  
[holly.spangler@farmprogress.com](mailto:holly.spangler@farmprogress.com)

# 2026 Prairie Farmer Master Farmer Nomination

## Nominee Information

Name	
Spouse	
___	This is a joint nomination for both spouses.
___	This is an individual nomination for the nominee only.
Street Address	
City, State, ZIP Code	
County	
Cell Phone	
Home Phone	
Work Phone	
E-Mail Address	
Age	
Farm Name	
Crops/Livestock	

## Type of nomination:

- \_\_\_ I am nominating myself for this award.
- \_\_\_ I am nominating someone for this award and they know they have been nominated.
- \_\_\_ I am nominating someone for this award and they do not know they have been nominated.

## Nominator Information *(not necessary if nominating yourself)*

Name	
Organization	
Street Address	
City, State, ZIP Code	
County	
Cell Phone	
Home Phone	
Work Phone	
E-Mail Address	
What is your relationship to the nominee(s)?	
How long have you known nominee(s)?	
Signature	

## FARM HISTORY AND MANAGEMENT

1. When and how did candidate(s) begin farming?
2. Describe the scope of the farm operation today.
3. Describe any family involvement or partnerships in the farm operation, and what role each spouse plays in the farm operation. **Include spouse's occupation, if off the farm.**
4. Describe the candidate's financial growth since beginning their farming operation. What steps has the candidate taken to grow the farm business?
5. Compare farm operation at start of career to today. Please include total tillable and non-tillable acres.

<b>Year started farming</b>	
Acres rented	
Acres owned	
Livestock type and number	
<b>Today</b>	
Acres rented	
Acres owned	
Livestock type and number	

6. Describe the candidate's record keeping system and approach to financial planning. How are financial and production records used in planning?
7. Describe the candidate's farm financial planning, financial goal setting and financial strategies. Share contact information for one lender.
8. What steps has the candidate taken to establish a succession and estate plan for their operation?
9. Has the candidate(s) ever derived income from off-farm sources? Please detail the history of off-farm employment, including the year, the percentage of work time spent off the farm, and the percentage of total annual income derived from off-farm employment during that time.

## CROPS AND LIVESTOCK

1. Describe the candidate's crop production practices.

<u>Crop</u>	<u>Acres</u>	<u>5-year average yield</u>

2. Briefly describe the candidate’s crop production practices, such as soil tests, tillage, herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, fertility and other applicable crop production strategies. Please also address the biggest agronomic challenge on their operation.
3. Describe the candidate’s crop marketing strategy.
4. Describe the candidate’s livestock production practices.

<u>Species and operation</u> (ex: Feeder pigs, cow/calf herd, etc)	<u>Scope and size</u>

5. Briefly describe the candidate’s livestock production practices, such as animal health measures, pasture management, breeding, waste management, feeding and other applicable production strategies. Please also address your most significant animal production challenge.

6. Describe the candidate’s livestock marketing strategy.

7. How has the candidate adopted and used technology in their farming operation? What’s the most important technological advancement the candidate has implemented on their farm?

8. Please share the candidate’s conservation philosophy and describe any soil or water conservation measures they’ve implemented on their farm, including how their conservation measures have improved the environment in their community.

9. If applicable, describe any specialty crops or niche production strategies.

## EDUCATION

Please include highest level of education for the candidate and spouse (if applicable).

Candidate

<u>Level of Education</u>	<u>Institution</u>	<u>Major</u>	<u>Graduation year</u>

Spouse (if applicable)

<u>Level of Education</u>	<u>Institution</u>	<u>Major</u>	<u>Graduation year</u>

## FAMILY

List names and occupations of nominee's children (if married, include spouse's name)

<u>First and Last Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Name of Child's Spouse</u>

## AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP

List agricultural organizations the candidate(s) has been involved with, such as Farm Bureau, SWCD, commodity organizations, co-ops, and more. **Note year of involvement**, offices held and community impact. In the case of a joint nomination, please include separate lists for each individual.

## COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

List non-agricultural organizations the candidate(s) has been involved with, such as schools, government, civic or community organizations, churches and more. **Note year of involvement**, offices held and community impact. In the case of a joint nomination, please include separate lists for each individual.

## HONORS

List any awards or honors bestowed on candidate(s). In the case of a joint nomination, please include separate lists for each individual.

## SUMMARY

Describe three key strengths of this operation.

## NOMINATOR'S STATEMENT

Please describe why you feel this candidate(s) should be honored with this recognition.

## NOMINEE'S STATEMENT

The candidate(s) may attach his or her own additional remarks, which may be helpful to the judges.