



Illinois CCA Adviser

1402 Ann St., Pontiac, IL 61764 (815) 674-6644

www.illinoiscca.org lisa@illinoiscca.org



I believe in the CCA Program and hope you see the value too!

by Karen Corrigan

As your Illinois CCA Chair, I believe in the CCA Program and the importance of the continuing education provided. I want to share this column I wrote for the Field Adviser website with all of you:

The Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) program is a benchmark for agronomy professionals that provides base-level standards for agronomic knowledge through a national and regional testing process and raises those standards through continuing education. Being certified emphasizes credibility and recognizes that a person is committed and experienced in what they do. (www.certifiedcropadviser.org)

I sometimes hear criticisms towards the CCA program that I want to address.

1. *"So and so is making recommendations or selling products that are not considered sound practices."*
CCAs, just like any other profession, are not immune to those who do not do their jobs well or those who skirt the ethical rules. Why though is the CCA program judged on their weakest members? We don't judge all doctors by the one who shouldn't have graduated from medical school. We don't judge police by their most corrupt individuals. We don't judge other professions by the ones who are the worst at their jobs. So why do we knock all CCAs for the misdeeds of a few? I know plenty of great CCAs who work hard to help their customers be profitable and be good stewards of the environment.
2. *"Being a CCA just proves you can pass a test."*
"You must pass a test to be a realtor, an electrician, and a financial planner so why should a CCA be ridiculed for passing an exam? The exam is hard; it is supposed to be. The science of agronomy is complex.
3. *"Career individuals have no time to study or take a test."*
The CCA program is now offering opportunities to take the international and state exams separately; therefore, less materials to study all at once, which may help some people who are taking the exam during a busy time in life. I know this aspect upsets some current CCAs who took all the exams on the same day. Just because my parents walked to school uphill in a blinding snowstorm doesn't mean I should have to do the same thing. Times change, programs evolve. The program also now offers 4 testing windows of multiple days instead of just 2 days per year, giving people the opportunity to avoid their busy seasons. Your Illinois Board is also working hard to make the exam more accessible to everyone, especially those who may have had challenges with a firewall while testing. More information on an in-person exam option will be available next year.
4. *"No farmer has ever asked me if I have my CCA so why should I get one?"*
I've never had a farmer ask me if I had one either but that doesn't mean it isn't a good credential to have. Personally, my CCA is my commitment to my own professional development and being current on the latest science in my role as an agronomist. My master's education was in weed management. Achieving a Certified Crop Adviser designation shows that I am a more well-rounded agronomist.
5. *"The Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are just a scam to make more money for the program."*
Most credit hours are not offered by the CCA program; therefore, they do not receive money for them. CCAs now can self-report for up to 20 hours. Training, seminars, and meetings that were already being attended for work can be counted. The hours can be submitted online. Illinois Soybean Association's Field Advisor resource hosts [webinars](#) and event presentations throughout the year on various ag topics that are worth one or more CEUs that can be self-reported. If you haven't found CropsTV by Iowa State Extension yet – it is around \$100 for more than 25 hours of credits. It is a deal! More importantly – it is great information. Many companies also offer free webinars that can be self-reported.
6. *"The program does not police its members for violations."*
A formal complaint system is in place, and all filings will be investigated. The program cannot reprimand or revoke someone's membership on rumors. I understand for various reasons that people do not want to sign their names to a complaint but on the other hand one must also understand that the program cannot legally start an investigation based on hearsay.

I believe in the CCA program. Enough to write this blog post and to serve on the Illinois CCA Board as chair. I also think the CCA program will become more important as the industry becomes more regulated. We can just look to California where a CCA is required to certify Nutrient Management Plans already. I'm not asking for you to give CCAs a gold star or throw us a parade – I'm just asking you not to put us in the same category as the person who recommends putting anhydrous on when it is 80F in September.

Congratulations Dennis Bowman**2025 Illinois CCA of the Year**

Dennis Bowman of Maroa has played a key role in shaping the CCA program in Illinois, serving on the board for 14 years. His contributions include suggesting speakers and programming, promoting certification among Extension staff and creating maps to visualize the geographic distribution of CCAs across the country. The CCA Award recognizes Bowman's service in helping farmers navigate nutrient, soil and water management, pest management and crop production issues. Dennis currently serves as the digital agriculture specialist at U of I Extension, a role he's held for about four years. His work combines traditional crop advising with emerging technologies such as drones, geographic information systems and artificial intelligence.

Illinois CCA Board and staff serving on numerous planning committees to help improve the International CCA Program

Illinois CCA Chair Karen Corrigan was recently elected to serve as the International CCA Program Board Vice-Chair. She currently sits on the Executive Committee and will become Chair in two years. Karen has been working to make the exams more accessible for everyone (and help those who might be uncomfortable taking an exam online or who have dealt with firewall issues). She currently serves on a task force to improve the application process for CCA Candidates who have passed the exams and are seeking certification. She has also been involved in the committee to build relationships and strengthen the CCA Program presence with the FFA organization. FFA students take the CCA exam as part of the National Agronomy CDE at the National FFA Convention. Illinois CCA Vice-Chair Kris Reynolds is also participating in a task force working with FFA students and the Sand County Foundation. CCA Coordinator Lisa Martin participated in strategic planning for ICCA and is on the committee to help improve the CCA Mobile App and the CEU App online, along with another committee that is working to create more employer incentives to reward employees who have stepped up and earned their certification. Changes are happening within the ICCA program, and we are glad to be a part of the discussions.

Ethics Requirement

Starting in 2026, all CCAs must complete 1 hour of ethics as part of their CEUs. Resources and webinars will roll out soon to help you meet this requirement.

Do you know someone who would be a good CCA?

Invite them to attend the **CCA Study Session on Jan. 8** at the Illinois Soybean Association. Lots of Agronomy basics will be covered and the session will be beneficial to new employees as well as potential CCAs. Registration will be available on the Illinois CCA website soon.

CEUs are available anytime, anywhere. They are not just in person or just in Illinois anymore!

Peoria Farm Show <https://greaterpeoriafarmshow.com>
Peoria Civic Center Dec. 2-4, 2025

IL CCA Conference www.illinoiscca.org
iHotel Champaign Dec. 11, 2025 (815) 674-6644

2025 Farm Assets Conference farmdoc.illinois.edu
AgriCenter Bloomington Dec. 12, 2025

IN CCA Convention www.indianacca.org
Indianapolis Dec. 9-10, 2025 up to 16.0 CEUs

Field Advisor Forum www.fieldadvisor.org
Atkins Golf Club, Champaign January 15, 2026

IFCA Conference www.ifca.com
Peoria Civic Center Jan. 20-22, 2026

NREC Investment Insights www.illinoisnrec.org
iHotel, Champaign Feb. 2026

Webinars are a great way to earn approved CEUs from the convenience of your home or office. When you watch these LIVE, and an application for pre-approved CEUs has been granted, you will receive approved CEUs. There are many pre-recorded FREE webinars online for those who cannot attend LIVE to watch later. You can do this and then go online and report the webinar as a self-reported CEU. Self-reporting is fast and easy. Some great examples of webinars you can self-report are at:

<https://fieldadvisor.org/webinars> - ilsoyadvisor is now fieldadvisor. View past webinars for self-reporting and register for more

<https://farmdoc.illinois.edu/> - webinars held regularly

ILFB.org/FieldDays -multiple field day events, hosted by Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB), are available for viewing online.

Crop Protection Network - [Crop Protection Network.org](http://CropProtectionNetwork.org)

Iowa State Crops TV - Previous episodes are available on YouTube <https://www.aep.iastate.edu/cropstv/>

University of IL Extension hosts many webinars on their Crop Flix site (<https://extension.illinois.edu/global/crop-management-demand>).

Lisa is always available by phone at (815) 674-6644 or email lisa@illinoiscca.org if you have any certification questions.

The CEU Application Process is simple if you host a meeting. If you have an agenda and speaker info it will take less than 10 minutes to get an application submitted.