

## 2011 Accomplishments

- Lobbied Congress on specific components of the Farm Bill that will directly benefit specialty growers. These include:
  - 1) Funding for the Market Access Program (MAP) and expansion of the Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops (TASC) program.
  - 2) Expansion of Specialty Crop Block Grants program that can be used for improving food safety, investing in infrastructure, enhancing market opportunities and supporting research aimed at specific industry needs.
  - 3) Establishment of a new Specialty Crop Research Initiative to provide science-based tools that address the needs of specific crops and regions and which continue advancements in productivity and technology, with the ultimate goal of improving the quality, taste and nutrition of fruits and vegetables.
  - 4) Expansion of the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program to schools in all 50 states, specifically targeting students from low-income families.
  - 5) Investment in early discovery and eradication to combat invasive plant pests and diseases.
  - 6) Creation of a new permanent disaster program for which apples and other specialty crops will be eligible.
  - 7) Creation and funding of a new Clean Plant Network for the express purpose of diagnosing and eliminating plant pathogens during propagation.
  - 8) Planting flexibility for all crops; however, if full planting flexibility is not achievable, we support making the Farm Flex Pilot Program provisions, as contained in the 2008 Farm Bill, permanent.
  
- ISGA leadership assisted in developing policy on behalf of specialty crop producers by serving on the Farm Bill Task Force, a group consisting of Farm Bureau staff, members and managers, in preparation of the reauthorization of farm policy in 2012.
  
- ISGA monitors legislative issues such as Child Labor, E-Verify, Food Safety and informs members of pertinent information via the ISGA newsletter or e-mail blasts to membership. Staff also assists with promotion of the “Meet the Buyers” events which encourage relationships between farmers and restaurants, grocery stores, and wholesaler industries.
  
- Continued to promote the logo, “Illinois – Where Fresh Is,” which was developed by ISGA and Illinois Department of Agriculture. The logo has been used to promote the farmers’ market tent at the Illinois State Fair and is also being used to promote the freshness of Illinois produce at supermarkets, farmers’ markets, and for producer use on packaging and advertising.
  
- Participated in the farmers’ market promotion at the Illinois State Fair. The Association sold sweet corn, watermelon, apple cider slush, peaches popcorn, and more! The event is not only a fundraiser for the Association (netted \$11,385) but also promotes the freshness and outstanding quality of Illinois produce.
  
- Participated in the Illinois Products Expo by providing samples of apple cider and popcorn to consumers and promoting awareness of the specialty crop industry. Participated in the Farm Progress Show in order to promote the industry and encourage membership. Participated in the Illinois Farm Families “Farmers Feed Us” Campaign by providing a donated basket of specialty crop products to one lucky winner from Illinois.

- ISGA leadership attended the Illinois Ag Legislative Roundtable discussions which includes several commodity organizations and agri-businesses representing Illinois agriculture. The purpose of the meeting was to establish an “Agenda for Illinois Agriculture” which was agreed upon by all parties present. Representatives from several of the organizations will spend time in Washington, D.C. lobbying for the agenda.
- ISGA collaborates with University of Illinois Extension in hosting the annual conference and trade show. ISGA has also joined forces with the agritourism and organic industries to provide sessions at this annual conference. The conference has been renamed the Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organic Conference and Trade Show.
- ISGA is a dues-paying member of C-FAR. C-FAR is in the process of undergoing a reorganization and is now divided into four caucus groups: Corn, Soybean, Livestock, and Specialty Crops-Wheat-Allied Industries. ISGA leadership serves on both the Specialty Crops-Wheat-Allied Industries Caucus and the C-FAR board of directors.
- ISGA applied for a Specialty Crop Block Grant to assist with subsidizing the expenses of the 2012 & 2013 Illinois Specialty Crops, Agritourism, and Organic Conferences. Grant amounts received are \$24,500 and \$26,500 respectively.
- ISGA has access to a 30-minute monthly radio spot on *RFD Illinois* to discuss specialty crop issues. Members are encouraged to participate and, at the same time, have an opportunity to promote their own businesses.
- ISGA published a revised edition of *Prairie Bounty of Illinois*, a guide to direct and community farm markets in the Prairie State. Producer data is received from the Market Maker website where producers are encouraged to register their businesses any time throughout the year. The *Prairie Bounty* has also been placed on the ISGA web site, and staff are currently working with Market Maker in developing a searchable version of the *Prairie Bounty* for the ISGA web site.
- ISGA has recently re-designed their website ([www.specialtygrowers.org](http://www.specialtygrowers.org)) which contains updated information about ISGA, affiliated association news, conference information, calendar of events, industry news and issues, and more.
- ISGA publishes a newsletter called the *Illinois Specialty Grower News*. Each affiliated association has an opportunity to communicate with their members via the four pages allotted to each association.