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Rising Diesel Costs Are Hitting Farmers Hard During Harvest

A recent Farm Bureau analysis detailed the global supply disruptions and tight fuel markets behind the increase in diesel prices. For farmers, the effects show up directly in the cost of operating equipment and indirectly through higher transportation costs.

To illustrate the direct farm-level impact, Farm Bureau modeled fuel costs across several representative row crop and specialty crop farms. For each crop, the model combines average acres per farm from the 2022 Census of Agriculture with crop-specific diesel-use estimates drawn from university Extension budgets and production studies. That estimated seasonal fuel use is then multiplied by the change in the U.S. farm diesel price, which increased from \$3.01 per gallon in September 2025 to \$5.61 per gallon in September 2026, a gain of \$2.60 per gallon. This analysis uses the Illinois farm diesel price reported by USDA AMS. Regional differences in fuel prices may result in higher costs for producers in other parts of the country.

The results show how a diesel fuel price increase can impact

farmers differently during harvest. Per our analysis, the average corn farm covers 279 acres and uses an estimated 3,077 gallons of diesel per acre (for all harvest-related activities), resulting in 857 gallons of diesel used over the fall harvest period. At the \$2.60-per-gallon price increase, that adds roughly \$2,227 to the farm's diesel bill.

The impact also differs on a per-acre basis. With a \$2.60-per-gallon increase in diesel prices, Farm Bureau estimates additional diesel costs of about \$3.56 per acre for soybeans, \$7.98 for corn, \$5.28 for cotton, and \$14 for rice. For farmers planting a winter wheat crop this fall, the model projects an additional \$2.50 per acre in diesel costs.

Specialty crop farmers likewise face drastic price increases during harvest. Farm Bureau projects that a \$2.60-per-gallon increase in diesel prices contributes to an estimated \$18.23 per acre increase in harvest diesel costs for potatoes, \$18.67 for almonds, and a staggering \$57.59 per acre for apple growers. These harvest cost increases for 2026 arrive in the aftermath of historically high

production costs for these three crops in 2025.

Flexibility During Harvest

For farmers and ranchers, diesel is essential input that cannot be skipped when crops are ready to harvest, livestock need to be moved, or products need to reach their intended market. Farm Bureau analysis shows that a \$2.60-per-gallon increase can translate into thousands of dollars in additional harvest fuel costs alone depending on the crop and production system.

With those costs rising, policymakers are looking for ways to provide immediate relief by reducing the tax burden on diesel and giving states greater flexibility to respond to local conditions. Temporary dyed diesel exemptions are one tool, but broader flexibility around state and federal fuel taxes could provide more direct relief to farmers and ranchers during periods of unusually high fuel costs.



Sand County Foundation Announces Pennsylvania Leopold Finalists For 2026

The Sand County Foundation has announced three finalists for the 2026 Pennsylvania Leopold Conservation Award.

The Leopold Award, named after renowned conservationist Aldo Leopold, honors farmers and forestland owners who go above and beyond in their management of soil health, water quality and wildlife habitat on working land.

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau partners with the Sand County Foundation each year to present this award to the most deserving farmer in Pennsylvania.

This year's finalists are:

Maple Valley Cattle Company in Somerset County. Operated by Mike, Amanda, and Evelyn Butterfield, this beef operation utilizes rotational grazing, cover crops, and pest management strategies.

Spiral Path Farm in Perry County. This organic produce farm implements crop rotations, cover cropping, reduced tillage practices, and compost utilization.

Willow Run Farmstead in Berks County. On her 75-acre beef farm, Deanne Weber employs rotational grazing and forested riparian buffers to support strong soil health and water quality.

Help Lead Pennsylvania Agriculture

Farm Bureau is an organization representing farm families engaged in all types of agriculture — from farms of every size and commodity, to craft breweries, to farm-to-table restaurants and agritourism experiences.



Scan to Join

Registration Is Now Open For PFB's 2026 Annual Meeting In Hershey

Register now to attend Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's 76th Annual Meeting. Join us as we celebrate our 2026 accomplishments, honor fellow Farm Bureau members, establish new Farm Bureau policy, and elect leadership for 2027!

Register before October 27th to attend the Women's Leadership Committee Luncheon, Opening Session, or the Annual Banquet.

When: This year's Annual Meeting will take place from Sunday, Nov. 15 through Tuesday, Nov. 17.

Where: Annual Meeting will be returning to The Hershey Lodge in Hershey, PA this year.

How to register: Learn more and register at pfb.com/AM26

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is the state's largest farm organization, representing farms of every size and commodity across Pennsylvania. PFB advocates policies that protect the right to farm and improve farmers' bottom line while growing the public's understanding of agriculture through educational outreach. PFB members experience our value in action through the opportunity to shape our advocacy agenda, valuable services and discounts, and programs to develop leaders in Pennsylvania agriculture. Learn more and join at www.pfb.com/members.