Stalcup AgService
Today's LAND OWNER
Spring 2026 Volume XLIX No 1

2026 Outlook

Nathan Deters, AFM

New Year - New Circumstances

Agriculture may not always be wildly profitable, but it's never boring. Issues, both positive and negative, come up on a near daily basis. Before the planters roll for this year's crop, we should review a few of these.

Cost/Price Squeeze

Another article in this issue highlights some glimmers of hope in the grain markets. Unfortunately, rising input costs look to make margins tight even with some modest improvements in prices for our grain. Fertilizer prices lead the list. Prices were already strong for application on the 2026 crop. Much of the fertilizer for this crop was already applied or booked/prepaid following last fall's harvest. High prices, and in a lot of cases, especially for phosphorus products, caused judicious reductions in application rates where soil test levels indicated decent existing levels. Nitrogen needs to be applied yearly to corn acres, and application levels can only be reduced by limited amounts without putting yield results at risk. For both phosphorus and nitrogen, prices are not at record levels, but more importantly, the ratio of corn prices to both of these products are record high, leaving tight margins. Normally a period of lower grain prices is followed by a lowering of fertilizer prices as demand steps back. This has not happened in a meaningful way during this cycle of lower prices since 2022, due largely to geopolitical concerns. We had some hope of this finally correcting somewhat later this year, but the onset of the Iran war has made the situation worse. The Persian Gulf is not only a major supplier of oil, but also nitrogen fertilizer, and the natural gas used in its manufacture. For one major nitrogen product, urea, over 50% of world supplies come from this region. With the onset of war, seizing up of shipping, and actual damage to manufacturing plants, the price of nitrogen has spiked. While we in the U.S. are fortunate to have the majority of our nitrogen products produced domestically, a shortage to other major producers in Asia and South America will still affect our prices, especially looking toward 2027 crop application. Even with a best-case cessation of hostilities in the near term, enough damage has been done to infrastructure and shipping to at a minimum push back any relief we were hoping for in prices. Phosphorus prices look to remain strong as well. China is normally a major exporter but since the beginning of the war, they have put stop to exports to preserve supplies for domestic use. Of course, agriculture is an energy intensive industry, and higher oil prices pass down in the form of increased cost of fuel for crop production, processing, and shipping.

Some Help on the Income Side

Fortunately, all is not negative. Government Farmer Bridge Payments, approved last year as a result of low grain prices, are currently being sent out. On a farm with a ½ corn, ½ soybean rotation, these payments are $37.62/acre. Not a huge amount, but helpful at a time of year when cash flow is normally tight. There is already talk of another possible payment if fertilizer prices keep their upward climb without pulling grain prices higher, although our increasing federal budget constraints may make this a hard sell. More likely is that there will be payments under the USDA farm program this October if grains stay near current levels.

Biofuels to the rescue?

One reason for the modest strengthening in grain prices since the start of the war is how important biofuel has become to grain prices. For both corn, and more recently

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Today's
LAND OWNER

Stalcup Ag Service, located in Storm Lake, Iowa is an employee-owned partnership that has prospered by serving farm management, real estate, and appraisal needs of Northwest Iowa farm owners since 1942.

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Grain Markets

Grant Aschinger, AFM

Volatile is the word that has best fit the grain markets so far in 2026. Ups and downs in the grain markets are nothing new, and most would say are the signs of a healthy market. Traders love volatility as it is how they make money. Direction isn't as important as movement in the eyes of a professional grain trader. Farmers would, of course, just like to see the markets go up and stay there. So far, 2026 has been a year for traders, but it has also provided some opportunity for farmers.

2025 Crop Recap

According to most credible sources, the 2025 corn and soybean crops were both record large in some way. The 2025 corn crop saw the most acres planted in 100 years at 98.7 million. Combine huge acres with a record national yield of 186.5 bushels per acre for an incredibly large crop of 17.02 billion bushels. To put that into perspective, the largest previous total crop ever produced was 15.34 billion bushels in 2023.

Soybeans also had a successful 2025 with a new record national yield of 53.0 bushels per acre. Total soybean bushels produced of 4.45 billion were only second to the 2021 total of 4.465 billion bushels. Last year would have been the largest crop ever, but we planted more acres of soybeans in 2021 with a 1.25 bushel per acre lower yield.

With these large production amounts come large surpluses. Anyone that paid attention in their beginning economics class knows that oversupply creates pressure to lower the price. USDA has predicted the United States' corn ending stocks on August 30, 2026, will be 2.127 billion bushels. While this is not the largest carryover we have seen in recent years, it is not far off. Soybeans also have a relatively large carryover predicted at 350 million bushels. While this is a comfortable amount, it is manageable.

What Caused Volatility?

We traditionally see markets hitting their lowest at the time when supply available to the market is at its peak. For corn and soybeans, peak available supply is during fall harvest. Prices were low in early October of 2025, although not quite the lowest of the year. The interesting part last fall was while we were finishing harvest, prices were starting to improve. This was mostly caused by rumors of a trade deal with China, that eventually materialized into the sale of 12 million metric tons (440.88 million bushels) of soybeans to China. Corn increased by about 30 cents while soybeans gained about $1.20 by mid-November. The market took 6 weeks to go up while rumors of a deal were circulating. It then took 6 weeks to go right back to where they were during harvest after the deal was confirmed.

This was also a time when traders were essentially "flying blind" when it came to government data. The increases were happening at the same time as the longest government shutdown in history that started on October 1st and ended on November 12th, lasting 43 days. We later found out that speculative traders, who usually are the ones that move the market, had set a new record long position for soybeans during the shutdown.

China never did announce confirmation of the deal to buy our soybeans but did eventually follow through with the purchases. Time

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Today's Land Market

Travis Nissen, ARA

Farmland values in northwest Iowa showed steady footing through 2025, with transaction volume up and quality farms continuing to perform well. Here's what our sales data showed for the year. Note that all figures below reflect cropland-only sales of 35 acres or more with a minimum of 85% tillable ground.

- Total number of cropland-only sales: 287 in '25 versus 264 in '24
- Total acres of cropland-only sales: 27,964 in '25 versus 24,291 in '24
- Total dollars per transaction: $1,312,319 in '25 versus $1,274,665 in '24
- Average acres per transaction: 97.44 in '25 versus 92.01 in '24
- Average $/acre on cropland-only sales: $14,010 in '25 versus $14,180 in '24
- Average $/CSR2 (tillable) on cropland-only sales: $178.15 in '25 versus $179.15 in '24

It's easy to look at our sales data and conclude that the land market is steady — but the harder question is whether that holds true for all farms. The overall $/acre and $/CSR2 comparison between 2024 and 2025 shows a decline of roughly 1%, and breaking the sales into four productivity brackets tells a more complete story. The brackets based on CSR2 rating (85–100, 70–84, 55–69, and 40–54) show that the top bracket actually improved 1.6% over the prior year, while the 70–84 bracket edged down just 1.53%. The two lower brackets saw larger year-over-year declines, though it's worth noting that fewer auction sales occur in those ranges, meaning a single transaction can have a larger impact on the averages. The broader takeaway is that average to above-average farms in strong market areas continue to perform in line with expectations, while farms with lower soil productivity, configuration issues, or less competitive locations have seen greater price variability. If you are considering selling, consulting with a land professional is the best way to assess your farm and how it compares to recent sales in your area.

Through the first three months of 2026, we have tracked 62 cropland-only sales in our region, with an average sale price of $15,180/acre. Twelve of those sales exceeded $20,000/acre, topped by a sale in Sioux County at $26,800/acre. First quarter activity continues to reflect a steady market, with values closely tied to soil quality, configuration, and location.

Land Value Surveys

The semi-annual Realtors Land Institute survey of broker opinions placed northern and western Iowa land at 1.2% to 2.1% lower than the previous six months. Iowa State University Extension's Land Value Survey, released in mid-December with values as of November 1st, showed most counties in northwest and west central Iowa up 0–3%, while north central Iowa saw decreases in the same range. Statewide, values increased 0.7%, with a state average of $11,549/acre. Farm Credit Services of America's benchmark farm update for the second half of 2025 showed a decrease of 0.15% for the period and a decline of 1.8% for the full year across their 21-farm survey.

The table below highlights one or two recent sales of quality farmland for each county in the region (Stalcup-brokered sales are in bold). Please consult one of our real estate professionals with any questions about values, and visit our website for full results of Stalcup auctions.

Selected Sales of Good Farmland - Iowa

Date	Acres	% Tillable	County	$/Acre	CSR2
March	72.50	99%	Sioux	$26,800	91.6
March	77.11	95%	Carroll	$17,700	84.1
March	87.72	96%	Boone	$16,600	89.3
February	79.17	97%	Cherokee	$19,300	96.3
February	120.00	97%	Pocahontas	$10,500	81.6
February	79.63	99%	Clay	$22,100	94.9
February	120.00	97%	Story	$17,500	82.9
February	63.80	97%	Greene	$14,500	78.7
February	80.00	99%	Lyon	$25,600	68.0
February	156.00	95%	Shelby	$9,000	69.6
February	80.00	98%	Wright	$13,200	87.2
February	63.00	99%	Franklin	$10,000	79.4
January	147.08	97%	Webster	$12,600	86.1
January	79.39	95%	Dickinson	$15,600	90.5
January	41.09	91%	Pottawattamie	$15,850	50.8
January	119.36	97%	Carroll	$16,000	75.0
December	85.85	100%	Ida	$11,200	86.6
December	67.52	100%	Sac	$15,800	93.5
December	54.99	97%	Lyon	$21,000	68.7
December	74.37	100%	Monona	$16,700	92.9
December	57.50	100%	Calhoun	$13,600	86.4
December	113.00	97%	Buena Vista	$14,500	95.4
December	213.14	97%	Audubon	$12,800	76.1
December	94.00	100%	Crawford	$13,100	90.6
December	80.00	99%	Pocahontas	$11,200	80.3
December	80.00	90%	Hancock	$16,200	60.5
November	58.69	95%	O'Brien	$19,900	94.4
November	146.50	100%	Osceola	$16,350	84.8
November	76.12	95%	Ida	$20,500	87.3
November	66.52	100%	Kossuth	$11,500	76.3
November	80.00	100%	Franklin	$11,450	82.3
November	80.00	97%	Humboldt	$15,000	85.9
November	73.54	98%	Plymouth	$20,700	89.1
October	80.00	96%	Hardin	$14,400	93.2
October	80.00	100%	Sioux	$23,900	93.5

The South Dakota table is on page 5

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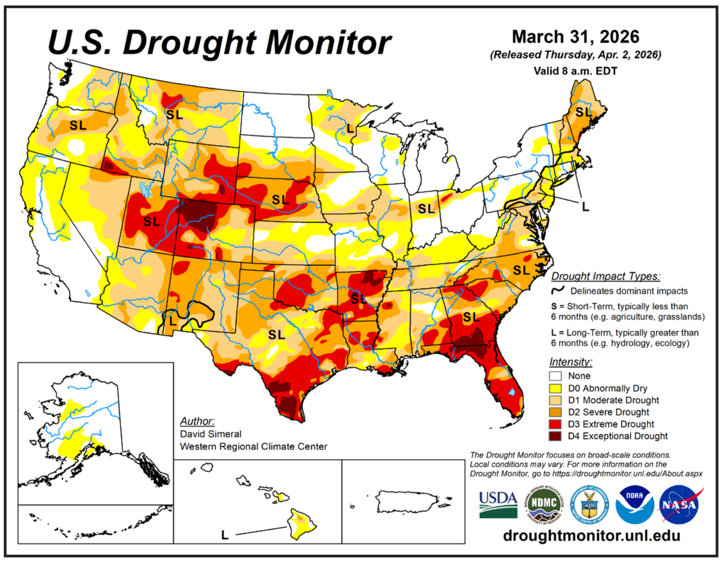
2026 Outlook

soybeans, over 40% of domestic production goes into fuel (Ethanol and Soy Oil for Renewable Diesel). We are thus more able to benefit from the follow on effects of higher crude oil than we were in the past. While the ethanol industry is fairly mature, with little growth in production slated, there is room for more growth in the soy oil bio/renewable diesel area.

Weather

As of this writing in early April, no corn or soybean planting has been done, and the first seeds will likely not be going in the ground until mid-April given a cool and wet forecast for early this month. The second half of March was good for field work - a lot of fertilizer, tillage, and small grain seeding was accomplished. Fall of 2025 was also favorable for tillage and fertilizer application, so when the conditions are finally right for planting, progress should be rapid.

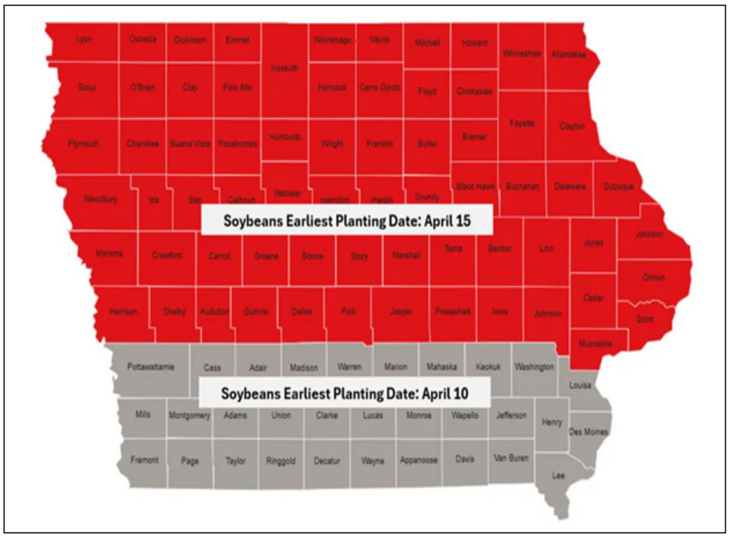
The drought monitor map shows some drought creeping in from the west, but a good rain on Easter week, along with adequate subsoil moisture levels should have us in decent shape for early crop establishment. Longer term, most meteorologists are planning for a relatively strong El Nino pattern to rapidly establish this summer. While there are no guarantees on weather forecasting, El Nino events have historically been associated with more moderate temperatures and rainfall in the center of the country versus the extremes that can come with the La Nina event.



Crop Insurance Early Planting Dates

Grant Aschinger, AFM

Planting season is the most critical time of year when it comes to growing corn and soybeans. We only get one chance to put the crop in the ground and choosing the wrong date can be quite costly. This is why federal crop insurance has early planting dates. The USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) publishes the earliest planting date for each county where insured crops are grown. In 2026, the early planting date for corn in Iowa and much of the Midwest is April 10th. This means if you planted a field on April 9th, it would not be eligible for replant coverage if the field had to be replanted for any reason. The soybean early planting dates are more spread out than corn. Most of Iowa's early soybean date is April 15th. Southern Minnesota is April 20th and Eastern South Dakota is April 25th.



While most farmers strictly adhere to the insurance date, they also pay close attention to the weather forecast. Cold and/or wet weather can severely damage the plant population and cause uneven emergence in both corn and soybeans. Both can be detrimental to final yield.

Seed providers also have an interest in making sure farmers do not plant too early. Most seed companies do not overproduce the seed they sell; therefore, they don't have large surpluses of quality seed available for preventable replants. There is a good chance they will not be able to provide their best varieties the second time around.

Planting season for us is the beginnning of a new and exciting season. We are finally executing on the plans we made during the winter. We usually get a short window to plant our crops into the right conditions, and crop insurance early planting dates are usually a good guideline to follow.

Stalcup Buys Midstates Farm Management

'If our clients don't succeed, we don't succeed' is Stalcup philosophy for more than 80 years

Stalcup Agricultural Service, Inc., headquartered in Storm Lake, announces the acquisition of Midstates Farm Management from Midstates Bank in Council Bluffs, effective Jan. 1, 2026, adding 11,000 acres to its management accounts.

The Midstates acquisition includes farm management accounts across 53 farm properties in 11 counties in West Central and Southwest Iowa. The acquisition brings Stalcup's professional farm management portfolio to more than 120,000 acres, in addition to real estate sales and appraisal services in Iowa, South Dakota, and Nebraska.

Steve Kock, AFM, joins the Stalcup staff as an Accredited Farm Manager, real estate broker, and certified general real estate appraiser. For 30 years, Kock provided these services on behalf of Midstates Bank, a full-service bank with locations in Avoca, Council Bluffs, Harlan, Kingsley, LeMars, Minden, Missouri Valley, Mondamin, Neola, and Sgt. Bluff.

"The acquisition expands Stalcup's presence in the southwest quadrant of Iowa, and is consistent with our partnership business model and philosophy that 'if our clients don't succeed, we don't succeed,'" said Kent Smith, AFM, president of Stalcup.

"We are proud to add a highly-qualified, accredited farm manager in Steve, who has extensive knowledge of the area where these farms are located," added Smith. "The acquisition allows Stalcup to expand its territory to the south where we can provide hands-on professional services to more clients."

Kock's breadth of experience is a welcome addition to Stalcup's existing roster of seven accredited farm managers and two accredited rural appraisers.

"I am excited for the opportunity to work with this respected team of farm real estate professionals and bring Stalcup's unique emphasis on client relationships and personal service into this area," said Kock, a graduate of Iowa State University. His office will be located at 1911 N. LaVista Heights Road in Avoca.

"It's also important to point out that Stalcup is one of the few firms in the nation with 100 percent accreditation of its farm managers and appraisers by the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers," Kock added. "Clients know they're getting the best educated, most-trusted ag professionals in the nation working for them."

One of the Midwest's oldest and most-respected farm management and real estate companies, Stalcup is owned in partnership by its farm managers, ensuring that each client is dealing with a manager whose future benefits from best-practice dealings. The firm was founded in Storm Lake in 1942 by H.E. "Buck" Stalcup. Stalcup Ag Service's core values have never wavered, following Buck Stalcup's vision of innovation and integrity, and building lasting relationships based on trust and respect.

The American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers® (ASFMRA®), based in Glendale, Colo., is the largest professional society for rural property land experts, boasting over 2,200 members in 30 chapters throughout the United States.

Private Auction/Sealed Bid

71.53 ac +/-, Pleasant Twp, Wright Co.

Bids are due by 4:00 p.m. Monday, April 27, 2026

Check our website for updated sales results and other listings and auctions.

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Selected Sales of Good Farmland - South Dakota

Date	Acres	% Tillable	County	$/Acre	PI
February	80.01	93%	Lincoln	$16,600	86.2
January	81.20	99%	Union	$14,200	61.8
November	71.24	95%	Turner	$7,825	68.9
November	70.14	100%	Union	$17,200	96.0
October	160.00	97%	Lincoln	$16,200	85.8
October	77.63	95%	Minnehaha	$15,500	65.9
October	78.68	99%	Hutchinson	$11,450	84.4
October	156.24	95%	McCook	$10,000	71.8

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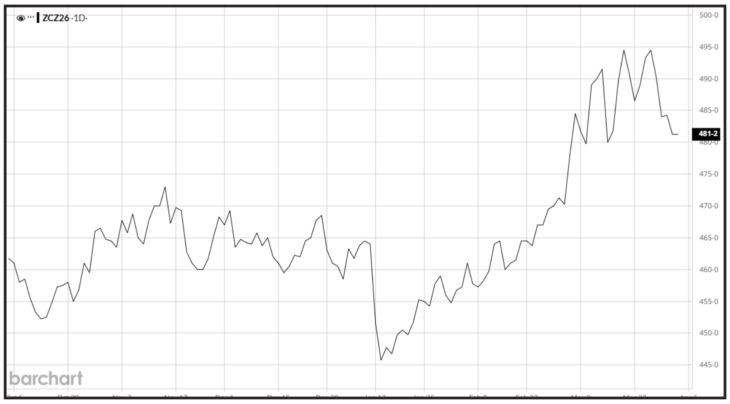
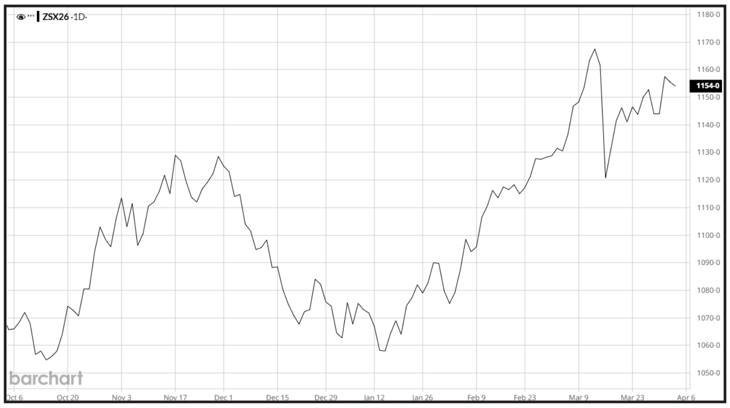
Grain Markets

will tell if they follow through on the 2026 through 2028 plans to purchase at least 25 million metric tons of soybeans per year from the United States.

Corn Futures



Soybean Futures



USDA's January Report

The January 12, 2026, USDA production report surprised most traders and farmers in a bad way. Expectations going into the report were for USDA to lower the national yield to 184 bushels per acre and possibly lower harvested acres, thus lowering overall production. The numbers showed the opposite with an increase in yield to the previously mentioned 186.5 bushels per acre and an increase of 1.2 million harvested acres. The result was a 5% drop in the corn price when the market closed that afternoon. Soybean estimates were benign and resulted in a small loss that same day.

Since that cold day in January, we have seen quite a shift. The corn market was slowly recovering the losses after the report. Several seasoned grain traders have said not to panic following a market moving report like the one on January 12th. The markets tend to make their way back to where they were within 4-6 weeks. By Friday, February 27th, the corn market was back to within 4 cents of where it was before the negative report.

Iran

On February 28th, the United States and Israel began the attacks on Iran, and the market volatility began. Daily trading ranges in corn and soybeans have been wider than before as both human and algorithm traders digest headlines and what they might mean for each market. Corn and soybean markets have both seen good opportunities for farmers to make sales of their crops at prices that were considerably better than before the fighting began.

Corn prices have always had a correlation with the price of oil. While corn and oil do not move in lockstep, we generally see them move together in relative terms. Restricted shipping of energy products through the Strait of Hormuz has created quite a volatile energy market, along with most other markets.

2026 Estimates

Another factor that also played into the markets since late February were 2026 planting estimates from USDA at their Ag Outlook Forum. Baseline estimates released on February 19th were 94 million acres of corn with a 183 bushel per acre yield, and 85 million acres of soybeans with a 53 bushel per acre yield in 2026. These numbers are based on economic models, long-term trend-line yields, and anticipated market demand.

USDA's early March survey-based acreage estimates released on March 31st call for 95.338 million acres of corn and 84.7 million acres of soybeans. Assuming trend-line yields, these acres will provide ending stocks similar to our current projections. Actual planted acres and yields never fully mirror expectations. We can plan all we want, but mother nature will always have a large say in the end results this fall.

One interesting factor in the current cash grain markets is the current prices being offered compared to this fall and early winter. For the past several years, the cash market has traded at a premium to the future market. This is to say, prices for fall delivery of the new crop were lower than prices for delivering last year's crop. This is not how prices look currently. We don't want to speculate as to what this means, just a change from previous years that may help us understand where prices are headed.

Livestock numbers are still down, creating lower feed usage. Exports of corn are record large, while soybean exports have fallen from what they once were. Biofuels policy is still an unknown going forward but does show potential to create huge demand for our commodities within the domestic market.

Marketing the crops we produce is one of the hardest parts of farming. Weather here and in other parts of the world, geopolitical issues, and disrupted world shipping are all major factors that can negatively or positively affect our markets. We don't have a crystal ball that says everything is going to work out fine, but there is no other industry we would rather be in than the one that feeds the world.

Dennis Reyman Receives National Appraiser of the Year Award

Dennis Reyman, AFM, ARA, received the National Appraiser of the Year Award from the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers (ASFMRA) at its annual convention last November.

The prestigious Henry A. Long, Jr. National Appraiser of the Year Award honors an Accredited Rural Appraiser who has made an impact on the profession through appraisal education, service on professional appraisal boards, community involvement, and whose clients and colleagues affirm his professionalism and excellence within the appraisal profession.

Reyman's steadfast contributions to the profession and commitment to the ASFMRA have been reflected in his receiving other national awards: the D. Howard Doane Award in 2023 for professional contributions; and the H.E. Stalcup Excellence in Education Award for farm management in 2021.

Reyman served as national president of the association in 2020-2021, where he provided solid leadership during the pandemic, deftly executing creative solutions during that challenging period.

Reyman currently serves on the National Appraisal Education committee. He served as the farm management co-chair and appraisal co-chair of the Government Relations Committee from 2008 to 2019. He was president of the Iowa Chapter Board of Directors in 2009 and its Education Foundation in 2010.

Reyman launched the ASFMRA Land Report on RFD-TV during his national presidency, and continues as a regular contributor to that weekly program which airs mid-day on Wednesdays.

Reyman, who earned dual designations as an Accredited Farm Manager and Accredited Rural Appraiser, has worked at Stalcup Ag since 1993. Reyman is also involved in farmland real estate and is licensed in three states.

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