

ROADMAP FOR EXPANDING REGENERATIVE GRAZING IN ILLINOIS 2021-2025



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IL Statewide Working Group

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- Matt Bungler, Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA)
- Eliot Clay, Illinois Environmental Council
- Doug Gucker, University of Illinois Extension
- Pete Huff, Pasture Project and Wallace Center
- Scott Jones, Regenerative Farming Practices
- Ted Krauskopf, Hickory Flat Cattle Company
- Mallory Krieger, Pasture Project and Terra Elossa LLC
- Rick & Kathy Kaesebier, Kaesebier Farms
- Jennifer Paulson, Food Works
- Cliff Schuette, Schuette Seeds
- Lauren Spaniol, Coles County SWCD
- James Theuri, University of Illinois Extension
- Kelsey Vergin, Pasture Project and Wallace Center



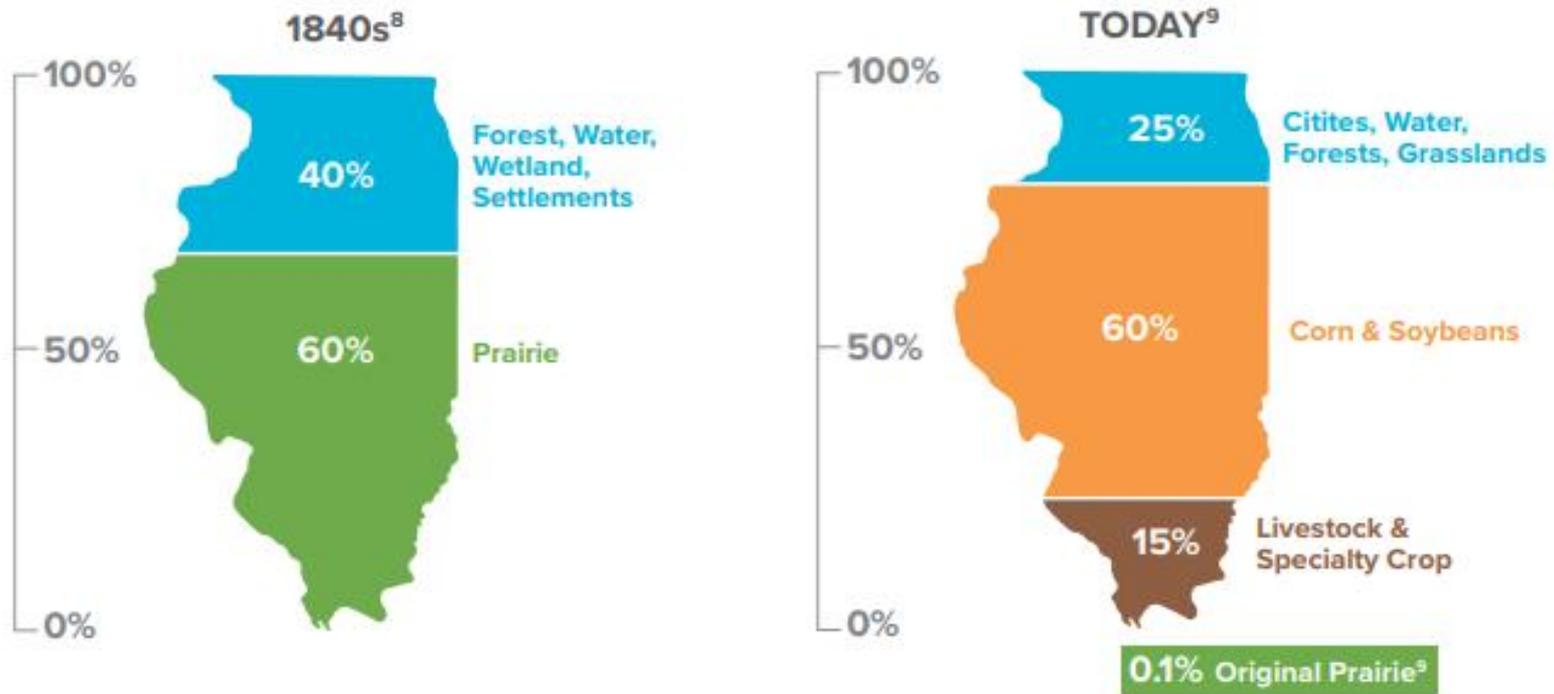
Regenerative Grazing is a principle-driven farming practice of building soil health naturally through pasturing animals on perennial and annual forages and grasses with low or no synthetic inputs, and in a way that supports human and ecosystem health, farm profitability, and community and food system resilience.



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Illinois, once covered in vast acres of dense grasslands, earned the nickname “Prairie State.” That prairie ecology has given way to 16.2M acres of corn and soybean production, earning Illinois the second place ranking as a top agriculture commodity producer.





Illinois Ranks Second in the Nation for Corn¹⁰ & Soybeans¹¹



Illinois Farms with Beef Cattle²⁶



Cattle Operations in Illinois²⁴



Grass-Finished Producers²⁷ in Illinois

All Graphics Based on 2019 Data

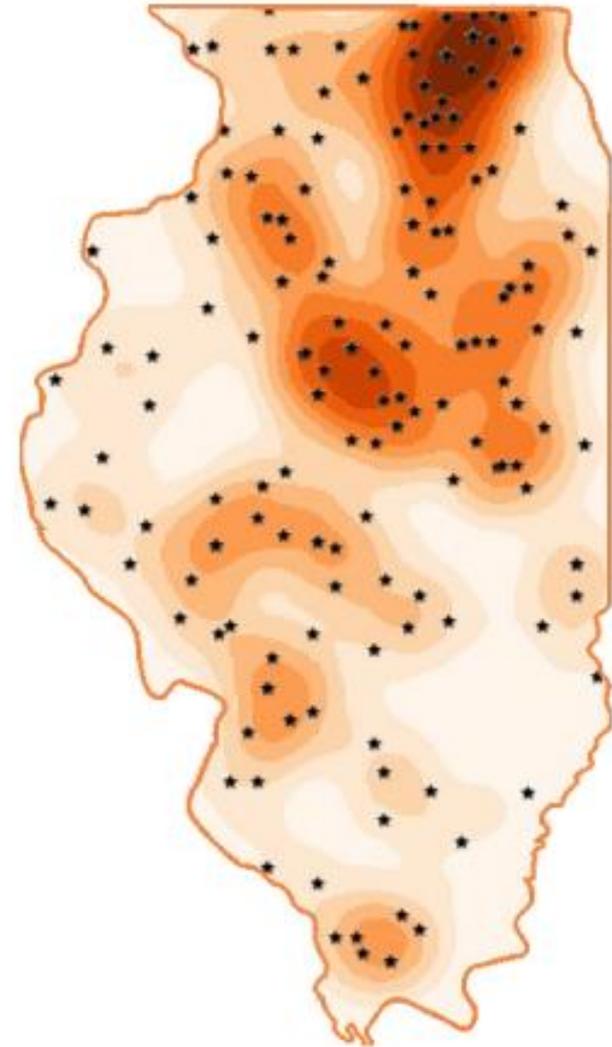


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Distribution of known grass-finished beef operations²⁵

The current value of grass finished beef in Illinois is estimated at \$15-27.5M in 2019.

National, grass-fed beef sales are increasing – growing 10% from 2018-2019 – but the sector is still small, representing just 4% of the total beef industry in the U.S.



Economics

- Transitioning from continuous to regenerative grazing can increase farm net revenue by \$100/acre
- Regenerative graziers spend less on hay, fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides, and other chemical inputs, manure management, and infrastructure.
- Particularly impactful on profitability on highly-erodible soils.
- 2020 study of 15 Wisconsin grass-fed beef farms showed average annual return of \$135/acre, within 10% of row crop averages for the area.
- 3-year MN & IA study found that regeneratively grazing cover crops had returns of \$123/acre.



Roadmap Target Goal

Convert 40,000 acres of Illinois farmland to regenerative grazing management by 2025



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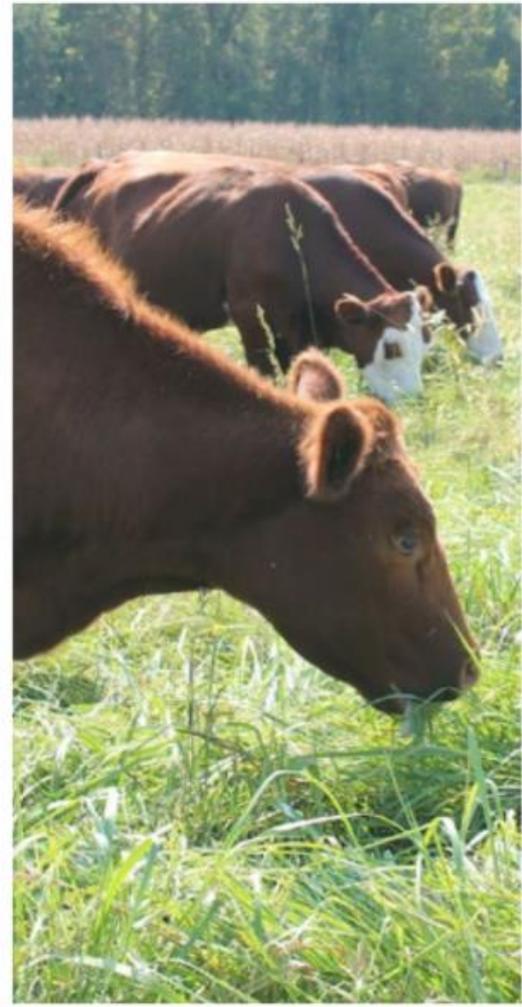


Photo Credit: Paige Buck

9 Recommendations

1. Develop consistent definitions, practices, and quality standards for grass-based beef that emphasize regenerative practices.
2. Develop a formal training program for technical assistance providers.
3. Support more direct farmer education activities.
4. Conduct outreach and education for bankers and financial lenders.
5. Create financial incentives for farmers and landowners to transition their operations to include regenerative grazing.
6. Create financial incentives for every small to medium meat processors to support increased in-state processing access.
7. Build a campaign to promote grazing cover crops amongst grain producers.
8. Build awareness among Illinois consumers and end market buyers of the benefits of purchasing Illinois grass-finished beef.
9. Form or select an organization to serve as a long-term champion of regenerative grazing in Illinois.



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**View the roadmap at
[www.pastureproject.org/resources
/publications](http://www.pastureproject.org/resources/publications)**

Thank you