

Issue 26-02

ACDC NEWS

February 2026

Questioning reliability of data from the USDA

We are adding to the ACDC collection a University of Illinois document that signals mounting doubts about the reliability of crop estimates from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Observers are questioning the data during a period of USDA downsizing.

“USDA’s final estimates in January for how many corn acres farmers planted and harvested in 2025 represented unprecedented increases from initial estimates in June,” reported Tom Polansek of Reuters. “Already-low grain prices sank more than 5%, at a time when growers were struggling to make money.”

USDA staff losses may have contributed. More than 20,300 employees left the Department during the first five months of the new federal administration. Downsizing has especially hit some smaller agencies, such as National Agricultural Statistics Service (34% loss), Economic Research Service (29% loss), and National Institute of Food and Agriculture (35% loss).

You can read “[USDA crop data reliability remains under scrutiny](#)” by open access.

About a new financial approach to rural community journalism

We are adding to our ACDC online search system the citation for a 2025 book published by Routledge. A copy of it is in the University of Illinois Library. Authors Teri Finneman, Nick Mathews, and Patrick Ferrucci based it on extensive research into the changing and challenging environment of rural publishers and rural readers.

Reviving rural news: transforming the business model of community journalism in the US and beyond (102 pages) demonstrates that “a new financial approach to community journalism is urgently needed and viable.” It holds interest for students and researchers of local, community, and rural journalism as well as practitioners “looking to bring about real-world change in journalism organizations.”

Source: Agricultural Communications Documentation Center, University Library, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL, 61801 • **Phone:** 217-300-0029 • **Email:** [@library.illinois.edu • **Website:** <https://www.library.illinois.edu/funkaces/acdc/> • **Bluesky:** \[@illinoisacdc.bsky.social\]\(mailto:@illinoisacdc.bsky.social\)](mailto:@library.illinois.edu)

Information needs for climate smart farming in Bangladesh

“Coastal regions of southern Bangladesh are highly vulnerable to climate change, posing serious threats to agricultural productivity and the livelihoods of farming communities. Climate-smart agricultural practices (CSAP) offer promising solutions to enhance resilience, but their effective adoption depends on farmers’ access to timely, relevant, and need-based information.” A 2025 article in *Big Data in Agriculture* assessed needs of coastal farmers. Findings suggested that tailored extension strategies informed by farmers’ individual characteristics are essential.

You can read [Information needs for climate smart agricultural practices among coastal farmers in southern Bangladesh](#) by open access.

Shelf intelligence: retail’s next competitive edge

Retailers face critical inventory issues such as out-of-stocks, overstocks, and misplaced items. These issues play out into an estimated loss of \$1.73 trillion in lost sales annually. So retailers across North America and Europe are replacing associates who walk the aisles daily to monitor stocks. Instead, retailers use fixed cameras, autonomous robots, and mobile devices for shelf intelligence.

And it can pay off. New research reported in *The Packer* indicated that retailers using shelf intelligence with a hybrid data capture strategy are 136% more likely to maintain profitability than those relying on a single approach.

You can read “[Why shelf intelligence is becoming retail’s next competitive edge](#)” by open access.

Welcome to a new student assistant

We are delighted in welcoming Avni Sabharwal, a new undergraduate student assistant to the Agricultural Communications Documentation Center with Funk ACES Library. She started February 22. Avni is in the second year of her Crop Sciences major. Her experience includes managing databases, working with



spreadsheets, and providing customer services. In the ACDC she will catalog and process materials.

Communicator events approaching

Here are several nearing events you may find helpful, including contact information you can use for details. We welcome suggestions or revisions for this calendar.

April 13-16, 2026

“Charting new territory in agricultural and extension education.” Conference of the Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) in San Jose, Costa Rica. Information: <https://aiae.org/2026aiaeconference/>

April 15-17, 2026

“Hungry for more.” 2026 Agri-Marketing Conference of the National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA) in St. Louis, Missouri.

Information: [2026 Agri-Marketing Conference - NATIONAL AGRI-MARKETING ASSOCIATION](https://www.nama.org/2026-agri-marketing-conference)

April 15-18, 2026

“SEJ 2026.” Conference of the Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) in Chicago, Illinois.

Information: [SEJ2026 Annual Conference — Presented by the Society of Environmental Journalists](https://www.environmentaljournalists.org/2026-annual-conference)

April 28-30, 2026

“TOCA rocks!” Annual meeting of the Turf and Ornamental Communicators Association (TOCA) in Cleveland, Ohio.

Information: [TOCA Annual Meeting - Turf & Ornamental Communicators Association \(TOCA\)](https://www.turfandornamentals.com/2026-annual-meeting)

May 14-16, 2026

2026 annual equine media conference of American Horse Publications (AHP) in Lexington, Kentucky.

Information: [AHP Equine Media Conference – American Horse Publications](https://www.americanhorsepublications.com/2026-equine-media-conference)

Strategy for communicating

We close this issue of *ACDC News* with a communications insight from Frank Skinner about prayers:

I suppose praying is like parking: You get as close as you can.

ACDC is a deep and open resource for you, so please feel free to invite our help as you search for information, local to global. You are welcomed to follow us on Twitter [@ACDCUIUC](https://twitter.com/ACDCUIUC). And please suggest (or send) agricultural communications documents we might add to this unique and valued international collection. We welcome them in hard copy (sent to Agricultural Communications Documentation Center, 510 ACES Library, 1101 S. Goodwin Avenue, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL 61801) – or in electronic format sent to acdc@library.illinois.edu