

Test Field Scouting Skills With High School Crop Scouting Competition

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COLLINSVILLE - A farmer knowing how corn or soybean crops are progressing or being able to identify an insect can mean the difference between a profitable harvest and a bad year. The youth Illinois Crop Scouting Competition puts teams of agriculture students to the test. This hands-on contest in August gives high school students from across the state the opportunity to learn and network.

“This competition is back for a second year with more challenging and team-building exercise that give these future ag professionals the chance to engage with their peers from around the state and agriculture researchers and experts,” says competition coordinator Chelsea Harbach with University of Illinois Extension.

Harbach, an Illinois Extension Agriculture Educator, says crop scouting is an important skill for farmers that can help lead to higher yields and increased profit per acre. Scouting keeps farmers aware of what is happening in the field with crop growth or yield stealers, including diseases, insects, and weeds. With this information, growers can strategically make the best management decisions to maximize yield and profit.

In the competition, teams of students will rotate through 10 stations to test their knowledge on topics including the weeds, insects, and diseases identification, corn and soybean growth stages, abiotic injury, pesticide application, integrated pest management, and more.

“We want to help students apply what they’ve learned in the classroom with field experience that will give them skills that will be useful for future careers in agriculture and environmental sciences,” Harbach says.

University staff will judge the teams and the top three teams will win cash prizes. The top two teams will advance to represent Illinois at the Midwestern regional competition.

The competition will be 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. August 4 at University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana South Farms corn and soybean fields located at the Crop Sciences Research & Education Center, 4202 South 1st St., Savoy, IL 61874.

It is open to high school students completing grades 9 to 12 in the spring of 2022. They will form teams of two to five students and must be led by an adult coach. Teams are encouraged to sign up before the end of the school year. For event details or to register for free by July 1, visit at go.illinois.edu/CropScouting. For more information, contact Harbach at harbach2@illinois.edu.

*SOURCE: Chelsea Harbach, Commercial Agriculture Educator, Illinois Extension
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