

County Farm Bureau Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): Changes Between COUNTRY and Illinois Farm Bureau

NEW as of 11.11.24

Q: What's happening with Illinois Farm Bureau associate memberships that renew in October, November or December related to combined bill?

A: Eligible associate membership dues can be combined with a COUNTRY premium bill that generates between 90 days ahead and 60 days after the membership renewal date. For example, a membership renewing December 1 can bill with a COUNTRY premium bill generating between September 1 through January 31. To prevent memberships that renew in October, November or December from invoicing with a COUNTRY policy that renews January 1, 2025 or later, COUNTRY stopped generating combined bills for monthly payers on November 5, and will stop generating all combined bills on November 22. Any combined bill that has not generated by that date will be separately invoiced by the Illinois Farm Bureau. Because of the timing of this, it's possible that:

- Someone who is used to a combined bill will receive a standalone invoice
- Memberships could be invoiced after the membership effective date

Previously, we indicated that all membership renewals beginning January 1, 2025 and after would be stand-alone billed.

Q: Does the 2024 membership bill need to be paid?

A: Clients who have policy renewals in 2024 must maintain an active Illinois Farm Bureau membership for this policy term. COUNTRY will not require Illinois Farm Bureau memberships for non-farm policies or rates for policy terms beginning January 1, 2025, and after. Illinois Farm Bureau is a separate organization, and members can always choose to maintain their memberships.

NEW as of 10.21.24

Q: What do corporate agreement changes mean for COUNTRY reps and agency leadership?

A: COUNTRY is modernizing its relationship with the Illinois Farm Bureau and Illinois county Farm Bureaus to align with our current needs. A decision was made to end existing lease agreements and modernize the servicing relationship between COUNTRY and county Farm Bureaus. COUNTRY will be ending the practice of subleasing office space to reps at county Farm Bureau buildings. As these subleases end, county Farm Bureaus will be asked to offer reps the option of creating a new lease agreement directly with the county Farm Bureau. Those reps impacted by these subleasing changes will learn more through direct communication. We are still evaluating agency manager space needs and expect to complete the evaluation and communicate with all impacted agency managers by mid-November.

NEW as of 10.7.24

Q: How does the IFB membership dues payment grace period of 3 months affect the insurance policy status?

A: Membership status is determined by the county and Illinois Farm Bureaus in accordance with IFB policy resolutions and guidelines. At the time of policy review, COUNTRY takes the membership status provided by IFB and applies it in accordance with COUNTRY underwriting rules and insurance laws.

Q: A member is calling to pay for A membership dues that are currently past due. Should I be collecting for next year as well?

A: Farm Bureau membership is voluntary. If a member is calling to voluntarily pay a past due membership invoice, you may also notify the member that an A membership renewal invoice for next year's dues will be sent separately. If the member volunteers to pay the next year's dues, at that time you may collect it, but it is not appropriate to attempt to collect future year's dues based on perceived future use of a membership benefit. It is up to the member whether or not to renew.

It is always appropriate to express your appreciation and try to retain the member.

Q: What action is COUNTRY taking related to Single Pay & COUNTRY Combined Billing through December 31, 2024?

A: Single Pay at New Business: We'll continue single payments for eligible new business through Nov. 29, 2024. Starting Nov. 30, 2024, two separate payments should be collected; one for COUNTRY down payment and one for new Farm Bureau membership dues. Membership dues can be paid online at MyIFB.org or at the member's local county Farm Bureau Office. Although separate payments will begin on Nov. 30, the current underwriting rules remain in effect for all new business and renewals through Dec. 31, 2024.

Combined Billing: Since COUNTRY will not be requiring Farm Bureau membership for Personal Lines and Commercial policies, we're winding down and discontinuing all combined billing in Illinois by Dec. 31, 2024.

NEW as of 9.30.24

Q: When will COUNTRY retrieve its corporate property and files from leased space at the county farm bureau?

A: COUNTRY plans to leave its corporate office furniture for the county farm bureau's use as of the agreed upon lease termination. COUNTRY will remove all other corporate property before that date, including any corporate files, technology hardware (monitors, laptops), technology cables, office equipment (printers, copiers, etc.) and supplies. Priority for removal will be for those county farm bureaus with the earliest lease termination dates. Please notify COUNTRY of any old files and similar items that need to be removed by sending an email to: office.coordinator@countryfinancial.com

Q: Will COUNTRY be removing office equipment, tech cabling, etc. if a rep enters into a direct lease with the county farm bureau?

A: If a rep enters into a direct lease to remain at the county farm bureau location, the rep may request that office equipment, tech cabling etc., remain in the office. The rep should contact Agency Administration at office.coordinator@countryfinancial.com to identify the location as an Authorized Office and to request that the office equipment, tech cabling, etc. remain at that location.

NEW as of 9.16.24

Q: How will IFB pay for this new Mitigation Grant Program?

A: We are confident IFB has the resources to fund this Mitigation Grant Program, and we do not anticipate impacts to IFB's existing programs and services.

Q: Will IFB be providing something in writing guaranteeing these grants into the future? Will something be signed by IFB?

A: The new Mitigation Grant Program has been approved by the IFB Board, but it is a grant program, not a contract. This is consistent with how we handle other programs like this, including the current Grant Program under the second partnership. That program is managed under the purview and discretion of the IFB Board. The handout your CFB received at the September 11, 2024, meeting outlines the program as it was approved by the IFB Board.

Q: Will CFBs be allowed to take back billing for Associate Members as part of this change?

A: Currently the bylaws provide that Associate Members are billed by IFB, at its expense. If the CFBs want to begin billing for their Associate Members, they need to propose a bylaw amendment to reflect that change.

Q: Can we raise Associate Member dues?

A: Currently the IFB bylaws provide that Associate Member dues to Illinois Farm Bureau are \$10, and the Uniform Cooperative Agreement provides that Associate Member dues to the county Farm Bureaus are \$10. Amendments to the IFB bylaws and/or Uniform Cooperative Agreement would be necessary to change these amounts.

Q: What's the future of Partners Magazine?

A: Partners Magazine will continue until we get a clearer picture of our future A member landscape.

Q: What are the impacts to IFB resources and programs?

A: We are confident IFB has the resources to implement the financial mitigation plan for county Farm Bureaus and that there will not be any disruption in IFB programs and services.

Q: Has the decision been made to eliminate A members?

A: No. This would require a bylaw amendment. IFB is working with county Farm Bureaus on a new associate member marketing campaign.

Q: Will Abenity be turned off?

A: No. Our tangible member benefits won't be affected for members accessing the Abenity Application.

Q: Will IFB help county Farm Bureaus evaluate rental rates for COUNTRY reps in their buildings?

A: If a county Farm Bureau needs assistance with a lease agreement, they can contact either their own counsel or OGC for a form lease agreement. However, the negotiation of rental terms, including rates, with reps will need to be handled by the county Farm Bureaus.

Q: In regard to the grant program, will there be another freeze in the dues amount?

A: The grant programs under the Second Partnership (AFBI) are administered by the Illinois Farm Bureau board, with assistance from the Grant Committee. So, any changes to grant program criteria would need to be approved by the board.

Q: How does this impact IFB delegate strength at AFBF?

A: Illinois Farm Bureau's delegate strength at the American Farm Bureau Federation annual meeting is based upon total membership (both voting and non-voting). Thus, any decrease in Illinois Farm Bureau membership could decrease the number of delegates at AFBF.

Q: How does this change impact our advocacy efforts at the state and national levels?

A: The impact of the changes of removing the underwriting requirement for non-farm insurance clients will have no impact on the organization's efforts at the state and national policy implementation level. In our lobbying efforts we shifted to focusing only on our farmer members in our lobbying endeavors over 20 years ago. This approach better reflects the emphasis on the goal of improving the economic well-being of agriculture. Also, we found it much more difficult to explain the difference between our membership numbers and actual farm census data. Focusing on farmer members better allowed us to show that we represent a majority of farmers in Illinois.

Q: Will there be fewer IFB Districts in the future?

A: No. A change to the number of IFB districts would require a bylaw amendment.

Q: It was a bylaw change that put combined billing into place, will it take a bylaw change to change it?

A: No. A bylaw amendment isn't necessary to stop combined billing.

Q: Will there be any financial mitigation from IFB to support cFB PACs, Foundations, or AITC programs?

A: That was not figured into the mitigation plan, however since we will be sending out all standalone bills to our A members, counties can add a line item asking for a donation to CFB PACs, Foundations, and AITC Programs.

Q: When will combined bill cease?

A: Since COUNTRY will not be requiring Farm Bureau membership for Personal Lines and Commercial policies, combined bill will be winding down and discontinuing in Illinois by Dec. 31, 2024.

Q: How will associate member dues billing work?

A: It will work the same way it does now for associate member stand-alone billing and voting membership. As combined billing winds down, the volume of stand-alone bills will go up. Stand-alone billing will be fully transitioned back to Illinois Farm Bureau for memberships that begin January 1 and after.

Q: How will refund requests be handled for A members that renew or reinstate their membership before the end of 2024?

A: If a member has paid their dues early, and requests a refund before their membership year begins, they can receive a refund. Once their membership year has begun, IFB's general policy is that no refunds will be issued. Members who are seeking a refund should contact the Farm Bureau directly.

Q: Will the M membership cost increase for members?

A: The dues rate for M members are currently determined by local county Farm Bureaus.

Q: What is changing?

A: COUNTRY decided to:

- change our Property/Casualty (P/C) underwriting rules related to Illinois Farm Bureau®/county Farm Bureau (together "Farm Bureau") memberships for non-farm clients in Illinois beginning **Jan. 1, 2025**. Membership will no longer be required for non-farm clients in Illinois. We'll continue to require Farm Bureau membership for our agribusiness products and rates (including farm-rated autos) at new business and renewals.
- modernize its relationship with county Farm Bureaus related to service agreements and leases.

Q: Why is COUNTRY making these changes?

A: COUNTRY has a longstanding, successful history with the Illinois Farm Bureau and the county Farm Bureaus (together, "Farm Bureau"), and we'll maintain this relationship into our next 100 years. COUNTRY operates in a highly competitive marketplace and our business practices need to remain contemporary with current realities. We also need to ensure we're meeting client needs and aligning to our long-term strategy.

Q: Does this decision negatively impact the relationship between COUNTRY and IFB?

A: No. Important to note, COUNTRY was founded by Illinois Farm Bureau®, and that relationship won't change based on these decisions. As has been the case for nearly 100 years, a strong COUNTRY organization contributes to a strong Farm Bureau organization, and vice-versa.

Q: What do the membership requirement changes mean for COUNTRY Financial clients in Illinois?

A: What do the membership requirement changes mean for COUNTRY Financial clients in Illinois? Current Property/Casualty (P/C) underwriting rules remain in place until Dec. 31, 2024, which means:

If a client's Farm Bureau membership is paid to 2025, they will NOT be required to maintain an active membership. The renewal dates are based on when the Farm Bureau membership is set to renew again, not the client's policy. The paid-through date for the Farm Bureau membership can be verified in IMIS.

For example, a client's policy renews on 12/15/2024 but her Farm Bureau membership is paid through 1/31/2025. She isn't required to pay another yearly membership.

Personal Lines and Commercial lines (all companies) won't require Farm Bureau memberships effective Jan. 1, 2025.

COUNTRY will continue to require a qualifying Farm Bureau membership for our Agribusiness products and rates (including farm-rated autos) at new business and renewals.

Q: Who is a COUNTRY Agribusiness client?

A: Agribusiness clients are those with one or more of the following policies or rates:

- Farm
- AgriPlus®
- Farm umbrella
- Farm-use auto
- Crop Hail
- Cargo
- Livestock Mortality (except FFA and 4-H)
- Stand-alone Pollution Liability

Q: What is a qualifying Farm Bureau membership?

A: Each agribusiness policy will require at least one active Farm Bureau membership*. For the majority of agribusiness policies, where we insure a farm owned by an individual or trust, this is already the case. When we insure a farm organized as a business (LLC, Partnership, Corporation), underwriting will verify that there is at least one qualifying farm bureau membership, which could be the business itself or one or more owners of the business. For example, if two brothers inherited their parents' farm which is a farm business, and one brother already has a qualifying Illinois farm bureau membership, that would satisfy our underwriting review.

*includes memberships applied for, in accordance with Farm Bureau membership requirements, at new business issuance and reinstatements.

Q: What happens with the current Farm Bureau memberships – Can they get a refund?

A: Current Property/Casualty (P/C) underwriting rules remain in place until **Dec. 31, 2024**, which means:

- All new business in COUNTRY Preferred and COUNTRY Mutual will require Farm Bureau memberships through the remainder of 2024; and

- Clients who have policy renewals in 2024 **must** maintain active memberships for this term, and the new rules will apply to their 2025 renewals.
- Farm Bureau memberships are annual, and current active Farm Bureau members can enjoy their membership benefits through the end of their membership year.
- If a client has a membership that expires **Jan. 1, 2025 or after**, it will no longer be required for COUNTRY non-farm clients, but they can continue to support Illinois agriculture by renewing their membership (billed separately by Farm Bureau).

Q: What happens to clients who have a COUNTRY Casualty policy?

A: All clients with farm-use rated vehicles in COUNTRY Mutual and COUNTRY Casualty will be required to have a Farm Bureau membership.

Q: Are new business processes changing for agribusiness policies on Jan. 1?

- **A: Farm Bureau membership applications and membership lookup:** You'll continue to use iMIS to assist clients with new memberships or existing member verification, when applicable. All prospective and reinstating members are classified in accordance with Farm Bureau membership rules as stated on the Farm Bureau application.
- **Separate Farm Bureau membership payments:** Clients with agribusiness policies or rates can pay Farm Bureau membership dues online at MyIfB.org or at their local county Farm Bureau office

Q: Where can COUNTRY employees and reps, IFB employees and county Farm Bureaus go for more information around this change?

A: Visit the [Common Ground site](#) for more information. This site will be updated periodically with information related to these changes. Check periodically for the latest updates, including FAQs, talking points and more. Also, talk with your direct leadership, if you have questions.

Q: Where can Illinois clients go for more information?

A: Information is available on COUNTRYFinancial.com/CommonGroundClient