Ks IDOA FY21budget

IDOA proposed budget covers programs, new responsibilities

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FarmWeek

Gov. J.B. Pritzker essentially maintained the Illinois Department of Agriculture’s (IDOA) budget for agricultural and natural resource programs, but also acknowledged the department’s increased responsibilities related to industrial hemp and adult-use cannabis.

During Pritzker’s budget address Wednesday, the governor noted cannabis sales are expected to generate $46 million for the general revenue fund in fiscal year 2021.

IDOA’s proposed $119.3 million total budget includes $47.9 million from the state general revenue fund, a $3.3 million increase from FY20. Appropriations include $500,000 for industrial hemp, $7.8 million for cannabis and maintaining the $2.6 million for medical cannabis.

Pritzker proposes adding more IDOA employees for a total of 320. Staff involved with cannabis oversight will increase from eight to 48. IDOA projects the state will issue 40 licenses for craft cannabis growers, 21 for cultivation centers, 40 for cannabis infusion and 100 for cannabis transport.

IDOA would double available funding for a cover crop incentive program related to crop insurance from $300,000 to $600,000. Farmers depleted the 50,000-acre cap within days of the first signup in December.

Soil and Water Conservation Districts would again receive $4.5 million for operations and $3 million for cost share.

For the fiscal year starting July 1, IDOA would receive stable funding to fulfill ongoing regulatory responsibilities with $7.4 million for pesticide administration, $1.2 million for ag product inspection, including fertilizer and feed.

County board match funding for University of Illinois Extension would be maintained at $10.994 million and Cook County Extension will again receive $2.4 million.

Level funding is budgeted for fairs and expositions at $900,000; county fair rehabilitation at $1.3 million; and county fairs and agricultural societies at $1.798 million.

The capital fund budget includes $1.85 million for permanent improvements at the Illinois State Fairgrounds and $750,000 at the DuQuoin State Fairgrounds.

Other ag-related proposals include maintaining $5 million for the agriculture education line item, which provides incentives for secondary ag programs that meet standards, extended-year contracts for high school ag teachers and professional development.

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