

FEBRUARY 2025

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ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

**Forces shaping the rural
economy in 2025**

**Keep safety in mind when
clearing snow**

Cherry recipes to love

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ON THE COVER

Special thanks to Mary Bumann, a North West REC member-consumer, for supplying this month's cover image. Submit high-resolution photos for consideration to editor@ieclmagazine.com. You could receive \$100!

PROTECTING ELECTRIC SERVICE TERRITORY IS OUR TOP 2025 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY

BY ETHAN HOHENADEL



At the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC), the start of a new year also means the start of a new legislative session as we advocate

for our member cooperatives and the member-consumers they serve.

Iowa's 91st General Assembly began on Jan. 13 and our policy and advocacy team is already hard at work. Protecting electric service territory is our top legislative priority this session.

In Iowa, your location determines which electric utility will serve your home, farm or business under the defined electric service territory law. For almost 50 years, these electric service areas have benefited electric co-op member-consumers as the law provides certainty to electric cooperatives so we can safeguard affordable rates, support a resilient electric grid and invest in economic development.

Service territory changes jeopardize economic development

Weakening Iowa's electric service territory law jeopardizes electric cooperatives' investments in rural economic development, which would negatively impact the communities we serve.

For the five years ending in 2022, Iowa electric co-ops had an impressive \$4.7 billion impact in economic development projects. These investments supported more than 7,300 Iowa jobs (retained, attracted or expanded) during that same time period.

In 2023 alone, Iowa electric co-ops secured more than \$41 million in federal economic development funds, resulting in more than \$111 million of new capital investment in the state.

Decades of robust economic development efforts from electric cooperatives have improved quality of life throughout rural Iowa through local job

creation, providing needed services and adding valuable tax revenue. Without electric service territory protections, these rural economic development efforts will be severely diminished.

Reduced electric service territory protections will increase rates

The realities of eroding electric service territory protections are sobering. In other states where service territories have been eliminated, consumers have experienced **higher** electric rates and **decreased** reliability.

According to a 2023 *New York Times* investigation, electric rates have **increased** in deregulated states. The report concludes, "Deregulation has resulted in increased rates/fees in every state where it has been introduced." And, "On average, residents living in a deregulated market pay \$40 more per month for electricity ..." Referencing an American Public Power Association 2021 report, "The average electric rate is **28% higher** in deregulated states, as compared to traditionally regulated states."

Reduced electric service territory protections will decrease reliability

Our analysis of publicly available industry data shows that electric

reliability is **lower** in deregulated Midwestern states compared to Iowa. From 2018-2023, **electric outages in Iowa were 65% shorter on average** compared to deregulated Midwestern states. During that same time period, **Iowans experienced 20% fewer outages** than deregulated Midwestern states. This analysis comes from EIA-861 SAIDI (System Average Interruption Duration Index) and SAIFI (System Average Interruption Frequency Index) data from Iowa, Illinois, Michigan and Ohio and includes major weather events.

Protecting the interests of co-op member-consumers

Weakening service territory protections is unacceptable for Iowa's electric cooperatives and the members we serve. Your locally owned electric co-op supports Iowa's defined electric service territory law and opposes efforts to undermine it, which reduce consumer protections. Learn more about this important issue at www.ProtectRuralIowa.com.

Ethan Hohenadel is the director of policy and advocacy for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.

EDITOR'S CHOICE CONTEST

WIN AN AMAZON KINDLE!

Meet the lightest and most compact Kindle, now with enhanced display features and faster page turns. The front light is 25% brighter at max setting, now as bright as Kindle Paperwhite. With the adjustable front light and dark mode, read effortlessly any time of day on the 6-inch glare-free 300 ppi display.

Visit our website and win!

Enter this month's contest by visiting www.ieclmagazine.com no later than Feb. 28. You must be a member of one of Iowa's electric cooperatives to win. There's no obligation associated with entering, we don't share entrant information with anyone and multiple entries from the same account will be disqualified.

The winner of the Ember Smart Mug from the December issue was **Dawn Dubbelde**, a **Lyon REC** member-consumer.



ENTER ONLINE BY FEB. 28!

FROM YOUR BOARD ROOM

During the December meeting, Franklin REC directors:

- Approved work orders and special equipment capitalization of \$83,801.64
- Approved nominating committee appointments
- Approved write-off of uncollectible accounts
- Approved union contract as presented
- Approved handbook changes for sections 4.14, 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 as presented
- Approved renewal of 2024/2025 FCDA partnership
- Approved estate patronage retirements
- Approved 2025 budget as presented
- Approved changes to the January 2025 board meeting

DOING MORE WITH LESS

Iowa's electric cooperatives play a vital role in powering rural communities, often in areas where homes, farms and businesses are widely spaced apart. Serving these sparsely populated areas comes with unique challenges. Unlike utilities in urban areas that benefit from dense populations and shorter service distances, Iowa's electric co-ops literally cover more ground – both in physical infrastructure and in responsibilities.

The numbers tell the story. On average, Iowa's electric cooperatives serve far fewer members per mile of line compared to other types of utilities. This means cooperatives must maintain extensive networks of poles, wires, substations and equipment, often across rugged and remote terrain. All of this must be done with significantly less revenue per mile, requiring a balance of

operational excellence and financial responsibility.

While the challenges are significant, so is the commitment of Iowa's electric cooperatives to their members. Unlike investor-owned utilities driven by profit, co-ops exist to serve their communities. Decisions are made locally, with input from the members who own and operate the co-op. This grassroots approach ensures the unique needs of Iowa's rural communities are always the top priority.

By pooling resources, embracing innovation and staying true to their mission, Iowa's electric cooperatives exemplify the cooperative spirit. They prove that with determination and ingenuity, it's possible to do more with less while continuing to deliver safe, affordable and reliable energy to the communities they serve.



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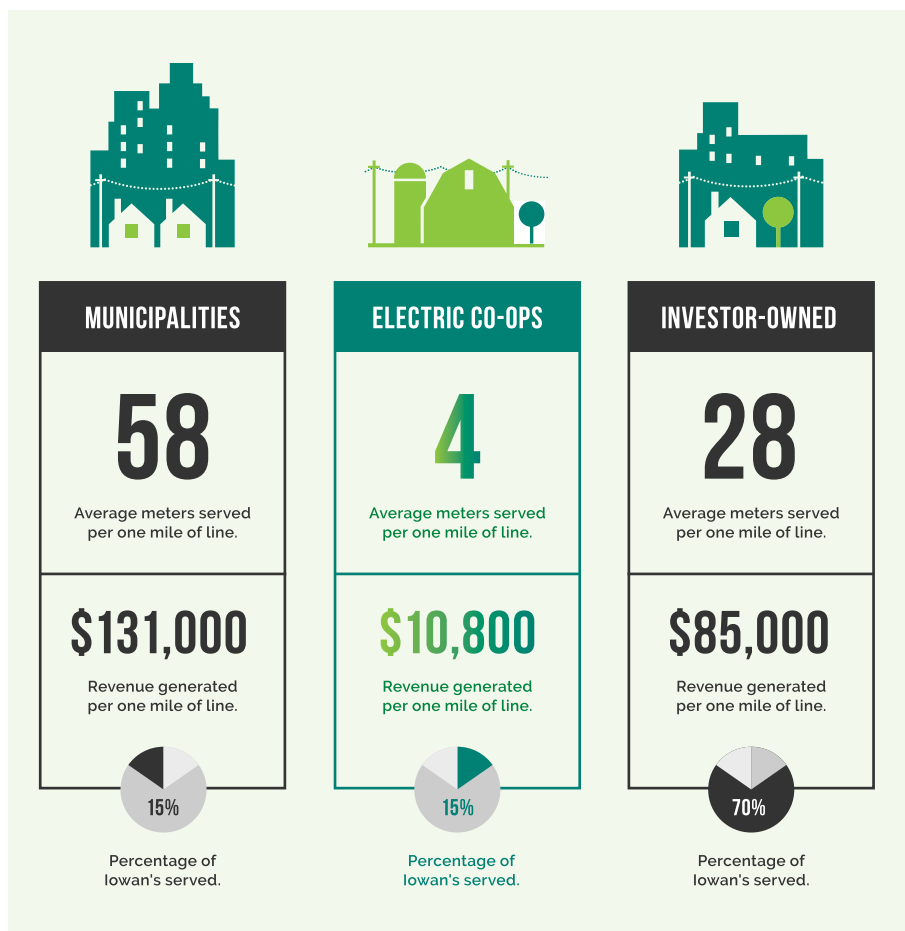
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Monday-Friday 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
Closed Saturdays, Sundays and holidays

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Calls answered 24/7

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1-855-940-3953

Website
www.franklinrec.coop

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR ENERGY BILL

Have you ever wondered what the different charges on your bill mean? Here's a quick guide to help you understand each item better:

- **Facility charge:** This is a fixed monthly fee that helps cover the cost of the equipment to power your service, including maintaining equipment, performing upgrades and ensuring reliable electric service at your location. The facility charge amount depends on the size of your service needs.
- **Energy charge:** This is the cost of the electricity you use each month. It's calculated based on the number

of kilowatts your location uses during the month's billing cycle. *Remember, your bill shows the usage from the previous month – so a bill received in February reflects January's usage.*

- **Energy cost adjustment:** This adjusts your bill to reflect the actual cost of electricity purchased by Franklin REC from its energy supplier, Corn Belt Power Cooperative. This adjustment ensures fair and accurate pricing based on current energy costs.

By understanding these charges, you can better manage your energy use.

Another great tool for monitoring your usage is Franklin REC's SmartHub app, available for your smart device. With SmartHub, you can view your location's energy usage in one-hour intervals, giving you detailed insights into your usage patterns and trends. This can help you make informed decisions about your energy consumption.



Scan the QR code for the SmartHub login.

KEEP SAFETY IN MIND WHEN CLEARING SNOW

If the snow piles up this winter, Franklin REC wants to remind all member-owners to prioritize safety and maintain clear access to all power equipment at your service location. Snow-covered electrical equipment not only poses safety hazards but also affects electric service reliability for homes and businesses.

Before removing snow, please take note of the locations of pad-mounted transformers, meters, regulators, cabinets, poles and overhead wires. Snow piled on or around this equipment can impede Franklin REC crews' ability to perform maintenance or make emergency repairs. Maintain at least 10 feet of clearance in front of power equipment and 3 feet on the sides and back to ensure proper access for lineworkers.

When clearing snow from roofs or using large tractor-mounted snowblowers, be mindful of overhead power lines. Blowing snow directly at power lines can knock high-voltage fuses out of

their holders or cause rocks in the snow stream to chip or break porcelain insulators, leading to outages. Restoring power during winter conditions can take longer due to the challenges posed by cold weather.

In addition to safety considerations, Franklin REC highlights the responsibility of member-owners to keep a clear path to all equipment year-round. Per Section 6.2.2 of the Franklin REC tariff, "Electric service may be disconnected for failure of the member-consumer to permit the Cooperative reasonable access to the Cooperative's equipment." Obstructing access prevents our

linemen from performing routine maintenance and addressing outages promptly.

To ensure uninterrupted service and safety for all members, Franklin REC respectfully requests the removal of any items attached to or located near cooperative equipment. If your service location is impacted by an outage, repairs may be delayed until the pathways are cleared and safe for crews.

For questions or concerns, contact the Franklin REC office at 641-456-2557. Thank you for helping us provide reliable and safe service this winter.



HOW ELECTRIC CO-OPS ARE PREPARING FOR THE FAST-GROWING DEMAND FOR ELECTRICITY

BY SCOTT FLOOD

The demand for electric power continues to increase, and America's peak demand is forecast to grow by 38 gigawatts through 2029 – the equivalent of adding another California-sized state to the nation's power grid. At the same time, power producers plan to retire more than 110 gigawatts of baseload, or always-available, generation by 2033.

When demand outpaces supply of any commodity – corn, gasoline or electricity for example – prices tend to increase. In addition, there's increasing concern about the potential for rolling outages as power providers struggle to meet peak demands.

Local co-op members may not notice the impact of the supply and demand imbalance for some time, but it's captured the attention of electric co-op directors and their staffs.

"The leadership at many electric co-ops is seeing unprecedented growth in demand," explains Stephanie Crawford, regulatory affairs director for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

A decade ago, a huge commercial project might boost a co-op's total load by 20 or 30 megawatts. "Now they're getting multiple requests for projects in the hundreds of megawatts," she adds.

AI and cloud computing are driving demand

Artificial intelligence (AI) and cloud computing are key drivers of this added demand. As use of AI skyrockets and a greater share of computer applications and storage migrate to the cloud, all that data needs to be stored somewhere. Data centers, which are massive groups of high-capacity computer servers, provide the most efficient way to handle it.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, data centers can consume as much as 50 times the energy per floor space of other types of commercial buildings. A single large data center may use over 100 megawatts of power, the equivalent of powering 80,000 homes. Data centers already account for nearly 2% of the nation's electricity use, and the Electric

Power Research Institute predicts that will grow to 9% by 2030.

"It's not only a question of needing to build or obtain more capacity, but in many cases, also creates questions about the availability of transmission and distribution," Crawford notes.

Data centers can significantly benefit local economies by creating high-paying jobs during construction and operation, generating substantial tax revenue, attracting related tech industries, boosting local infrastructure development, and stimulating demand for local services like security and maintenance, effectively creating a ripple effect through the community.

Co-ops focus on knowledge and relationships

For electric co-ops, the efforts fall into two categories: increasing knowledge and building relationships. A generation ago, power supply discussions were fairly straightforward for co-op directors, given the widespread availability of baseload generation. Today's directors increasingly find themselves learning about sophisticated and challenging issues as they weigh decisions affecting their co-op's operations and financial viability for years to come.

Co-ops have long emphasized relationship-building, and Crawford stresses that will continue with companies developing large projects such as data centers.

"Early and frequent conversations between the co-op and the entities seeking additional energy are critical," she explains. "That includes honest conversations about the costs and timelines involved."

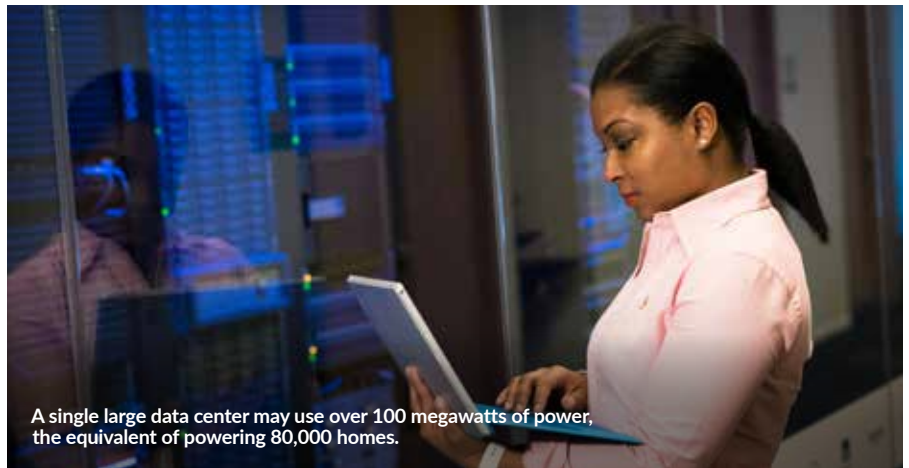
For example, while a data center project might ultimately need a significant supply of megawatts, if its operations are phased in gradually over several years, the co-op may have additional time to prepare for the maximum load. They might consider creating a partnership with the project owner to develop new generation assets on the project's site, reducing transmission concerns.

Reliability is a cornerstone

The large tech companies involved in deploying data centers and similar projects are highly sophisticated and well-resourced. They tend to be less interested in obtaining the lowest cost and are more focused on reliability.

"What we're hearing from co-ops is that the companies building data centers typically have done their homework before they start talking to co-ops," Crawford says.

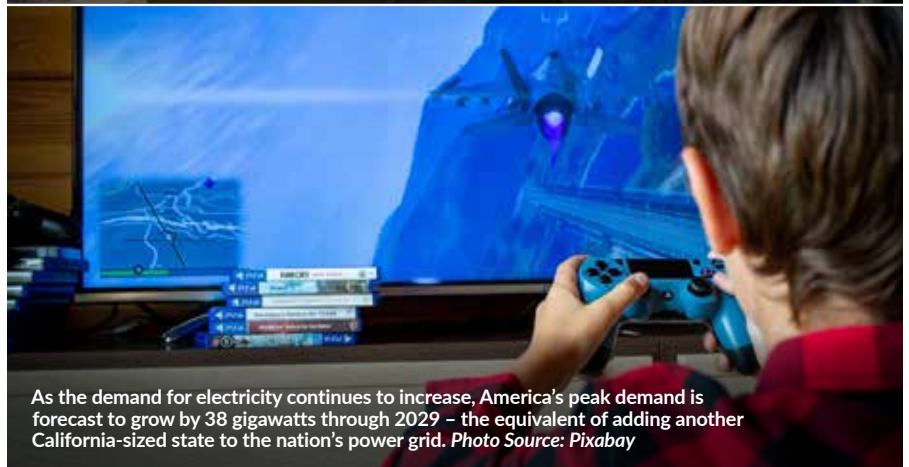
While the developers may be ready to pay for the substantial infrastructure upgrades needed to serve their data centers, she notes that the conversations may end up



A single large data center may use over 100 megawatts of power, the equivalent of powering 80,000 homes.



Today's co-op directors increasingly find themselves learning about sophisticated and challenging issues as they weigh decisions affecting their co-op's operations and financial viability for years to come.



As the demand for electricity continues to increase, America's peak demand is forecast to grow by 38 gigawatts through 2029 - the equivalent of adding another California-sized state to the nation's power grid. Photo Source: Pixabay

focusing more on project timelines and data center obligations to remain as co-op member-consumers. In addition to supply chain issues related to transformers and other components that are in increasingly short supply, projects may face regulatory delays at all levels.

While co-ops prepare for projects from organizations new to the co-op, Crawford notes the importance co-op leaders also place on keeping a finger on the pulse of their existing commercial accounts.

"Being proactive and reaching out to understand how a commercial account's energy needs may be changing in the coming years informs conversations and decisions about timing, rate design and other factors, even if they're not making specific requests yet," she says. "That helps the co-op serve emerging needs while protecting the reliability for all of its members."

Scott Flood writes on a variety of energy-related topics for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Cherry Recipes

TO LOVE



CLASSIC SOUR CREAM CHEESECAKE

- 1½ cups graham cracker crumbs
- ¼ cup sugar
- ⅓ cup margarine or butter, melted
- 3 8-ounce packages cream cheese, softened
- 1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
- 3 eggs
- ¼ cup lemon juice from concentrate
- 1 8-ounce container sour cream
- 1 21-ounce can cherry pie filling, chilled

Combine crumbs, sugar and margarine or butter. Press firmly on bottom of 9-inch springform pan. In large mixing bowl, beat cream cheese until fluffy. Gradually beat in sweetened condensed milk until smooth. Beat in eggs, then lemon juice and sour cream. Pour into prepared pan. Bake at 350 degrees F for 50-55 minutes or until lightly browned around the edges, the center will be slightly soft. Cool and refrigerate. Top with cherry pie filling before serving. Refrigerate leftovers.

Ruth Seehusen • Greene
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

QUICK CHERRY DESSERT

- 1 package chocolate pudding
- 1 can cherry pie filling
- whipped topping, optional

Prepare pudding and mix with cherry pie filling. Top with a dollop of whipped topping, if desired. Serves 8

Darlene Thomas • Somers
Calhoun County Electric Cooperative Association

CHERRY CRUNCH CAKE

- 1 chocolate cake mix
- 2 eggs
- 1 21-ounce can cherry pie filling
- ¾ cup nuts, chopped
- ¾ cup chocolate chips
- ½ cup brown sugar

Mix cake mix, eggs and pie filling. Pour in a greased 9x13-inch pan. Sprinkle nuts, chocolate chips and brown sugar over top. Bake at 350 degrees F for 30-35 minutes. Serves 15-20

Carma Mack • Audubon
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

CHERRY WINE BALLS

- 3 cups vanilla wafers, finely crushed
- 2 cups powdered sugar
- 1 cup pecans or walnuts, finely chopped
- ¼ cup cocoa
- ½ cup cherry wine
- ¼ cup light corn syrup
- granulated sugar, as needed

Mix wafers, powdered sugar, nuts and cocoa. Stir in wine and corn syrup, then shape into 1-inch balls. Roll wine balls in granulated sugar. Cover tightly and refrigerate several days before serving. These are easy to make in a food processor. Yields 5 dozen

Patricia Glandorf • Williamsburg
T.I.P. Rural Electric Cooperative



Visit www.ieclmagazine.com and search our online archive of hundreds of recipes in various categories.

INDIVIDUAL CHERRY CHEESECAKES

- 3 8-ounce cream cheese packages, room temperature
- 1¼ cups white sugar, divided
- 5 large eggs
- 1¾ teaspoons vanilla, divided
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 can cherry pie filling

Cream the cream cheese and 1 cup sugar together. Add eggs one at a time, beating well. Add 1½ teaspoons vanilla, then pour cream cheese mixture into foil-lined muffin tins, filling each ¾ full. Bake at 300 degrees F for 40 minutes. These will not brown. Meanwhile, mix sour cream, ¼ cup sugar and ¼ teaspoon vanilla. Once cheesecakes have baked, cool for about 4 minutes. Then add a small spoonful of sour cream topping and a dab of cherry pie filling to each. Bake for 5 more minutes. Remove from oven, cool, then refrigerate. These can be frozen. *Yields 24 cheesecakes*

Kathy Grote • Wall Lake
Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative

CHERRY COFFEE CAKE

- 1 cup margarine
- 1¾ cups sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 3 cups flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- 1 can cherry pie filling

Cream margarine, sugar and eggs. Add vanilla and dry ingredients. Spread batter on bottom of a 12x18-inch jelly roll pan prepared with cooking spray. Drop pie filling on batter by spoonful, swirl with knife. Bake at 350 degrees F for 30 minutes, no longer or the cake will get too dry. *Serves 24*

Anita Destival • Sumner
Butler County Rural Electric Cooperative

TROPICAL SMOOTHIE

- 1½ cups lemonade
- ½ cup frozen mango chunks
- ½ cup frozen pineapple chunks
- 1 cup frozen cherries
- ½-1 cup sugar

Mix all ingredients in blender. *Serves 2*

Bethany Van Wyhe • Lester
Lyon Rural Electric Cooperative

CHERRY MARASCHINO BARS

- 1¼ cups flour, divided
- ½ cup butter or margarine
- 3 tablespoons powdered sugar
- 1 cup white sugar
- 2 eggs
- ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ¾ cup chopped nuts, optional
- ½ cup coconut
- ½ cup or more red maraschino cherries, drained and diced

Combine 1 cup flour, butter or margarine and powdered sugar. Blend well and spread in a buttered 8-inch pan. Bake at 350 degrees F for 25 minutes. Meanwhile, combine sugar, eggs, ¼ cup flour, baking powder, salt and vanilla. Beat until smooth and well blended. Stir in chopped nuts, if desired, coconut and maraschino cherries. Spread on the baked crust layer and return to the oven for 25 minutes. Cool and cut into 2x2-inch bars. *Serves 16*

Twyla Godbersen • Arthur
North West Rural Electric Cooperative

WANTED:

CAMPING RECIPES

THE REWARD:
\$25 FOR EVERY ONE WE PUBLISH!

Deadline is Feb. 28

Submit your favorite recipes to enjoy around the campfire. Please include your name, address, telephone number, co-op name, recipe category and number of servings on all submissions.



EMAIL: recipes@ieclmagazine.com
(Attach your recipe as a Word document or PDF to your email message.)

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Iowa Electric Cooperative Living magazine
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Des Moines, IA 50322

COBANK: FORCES THAT WILL SHAPE THE U.S. RURAL ECONOMY

At the end of 2024, CoBank – one of the largest providers of credit to the U.S. rural economy – released its “2025 Year Ahead Report: Forces that will Shape the U.S. Rural Economy.”

The financial services firm says the U.S. continues to benefit from solid economic growth, low unemployment and moderating inflation. However, the outlook for the rural economy is more volatile and uncertain. Rural industries are disproportionately exposed to federal policy, and the outcome of the 2024 election cycle promises to bring significant changes in the federal government’s approach to everything from international trade and immigration to energy exploration and rural economic development.

According to the comprehensive report, the high level of policy uncertainty facing rural industries adds to their already long list of headwinds and challenges.

The CoBank 2025 outlook report examines several key factors that will shape agriculture and market sectors that serve rural communities throughout the U.S.

1 U.S. economy: A new economic era begins

Most economists are forecasting 2025 U.S. gross domestic product growth around 2.5%-3.0%, essentially the same as today. However, those forecasts are based on rather mild assumptions about forthcoming policy changes. When taken in isolation, President Trump’s proposed policies – tax cuts, decreased labor supply and tariffs on imported goods – are all inflationary. Consequently, longer-term interest rates have already edged higher, and the market has downshifted expectations for further federal rate cuts in 2025. There is a good chance the proposed tariffs and the crackdown on undocumented immigrants will be more disruptive than markets have priced in, particularly in industries like construction and agriculture.

2 U.S. agricultural economy: Trade war could send ag economy from bad to worse

The short-lived commodity boom precipitated by global droughts, the war in Ukraine and COVID-19 supply

issues is now a distant memory. Row crop prices are down nearly 50% from their 2022 highs. But production costs have remained elevated, and profitability has plunged to decade-plus lows. The silver lining is that dairy and livestock producers are generally profitable due to low feed costs and resilient consumer demand. However, more headwinds may be coming for both the crop and livestock sectors.

3 Grains, farm supply and biofuels: Policy uncertainty weighs on exports, biofuels

A strengthening U.S. dollar and the potential for trade disputes and record-large South American crops weigh heavily on the outlook for grain and oilseed prices in 2025. U.S. farmers are widely expected to struggle with further margin compression as weaker commodity prices test farmers’ ability to lower production costs. Crop input decisions will be evaluated much more closely with a focus on inputs that provide the greatest return on investment. The bearish outlook for oil prices diminishes the demand

picture for ethanol, biodiesel and renewable diesel. Uncertainty over U.S. biofuel policy under the new administration also clouds the demand outlook for biofuels.

4 Animal protein: Rising margins improve prospects for growth

Falling feed costs and rising producer margins have renewed expansion interest in animal protein segments. However, labor, construction and land costs remain elevated, tempering expectations for any meaningful supply growth in the near term. U.S. beef cow herd expansion is not expected to start until 2026 or 2027. The smaller herd will further support higher feeder and fed cattle prices in the coming year. With consumers now pushing back on beef prices that are already near historic highs, packer margins will remain under pressure well into 2025.

5 Dairy: Record investment will continue to grow the category

The U.S. will see an unprecedented \$8 billion in new dairy processing investment through 2026. Some of the new plants are poised to come online in 2025, with about half of the investment in the cheese category. The expected surge in cheese and whey output will likely put downward pressure on dairy product prices in the second half of the year. Sourcing additional milk supplies to fill new plant capacity is a looming question. 2023 and 2024 will go down as the first back-to-back years since the late 1960s that U.S. milk production

took a downturn. On the flip side, higher component levels in farmgate milk, largely butterfat and protein, have lifted finished product yields.

6 Food and beverage: Health and nutrition take center stage

The headline news for food, beverage and consumer packaged goods in 2025 is President Trump's nomination of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to lead the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Kennedy's purported goals include eliminating ingredients banned in other countries and "getting the chemicals out" of America's food supply. Meanwhile, consumers' renewed focus on their health and the popularity of GLP-1 weight-loss drugs are showing signs of impacting food manufacturers. According to J.P. Morgan research, GLP-1 users purchase around 8% less food compared with average consumers. Food and beverage manufacturers' concerns about volume attrition are likely to continue well into 2025.

7 Power and energy: What an IRA rollback might look like

President Trump's return to the White House will signal a significant shift in U.S. energy policy. While he has promised to end the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), slowing the clean energy momentum that has accelerated under the IRA may be more difficult than imagined. Popular programs in the IRA have directed significant investments to many rural and economically distressed communities. And more than a dozen

House Republicans have voiced concern that repealing the IRA could jeopardize ongoing development in their communities. Clawing back IRA funds that have already been allocated could prove to be very difficult. The more likely scenario is that unallocated IRA funding will be redirected to other priorities.

8 Digital infrastructure: Rural connectivity faces new challenges

Political uncertainty and low participation in the Broadband, Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program raises big questions for bridging the digital divide in the year ahead. The \$42.5 billion BEAD program, created by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, includes unprecedented government support. However, a lack of operator participation could blunt the impact of this well-intended program to bring reliable broadband access to underserved rural areas. Many small operators lack the specialized expertise or financial resources to meet some of the complicated BEAD requirements.



Scan the QR code to read the full report.



CELEBRATING SERVICE ANNIVERSARIES

Join us in congratulating two of Franklin REC's crew chiefs on their milestones with Franklin REC.

Their dedication and commitment have been vital to our success. Thank you, Chace and Tom, for your years of service and the expertise you bring to our team!



CHACE KLEIN

8 YEARS OF SERVICE



TOM DEMRO

11 YEARS OF SERVICE

CHILI COOK-OFF HEATS UP AT FRANKLIN REC

December marked the return of Franklin REC's cherished Chili Cook-Off, when employees and board members showcased their culinary talents in a friendly competition for the title of Chili Cook-Off Master. Scott Hagenson, line superintendent and the 2023 Chili Cook-Off Master, wowed the panel of judges with a delicious pork-based recipe. However, Administrative Assistant Christy Mason, the co-op's kitchen guru, swept the competition with her unique chili creation to be crowned the 2024 Chili Cook-Off Master.

The Chili Cook-Off has become a beloved tradition at Franklin REC, bringing together creativity and camaraderie during the holiday season. The event continues to build excitement each year, and anticipation is already growing for the next competition and the new flavors it will bring!

Congratulations to this year's winners:

First place: Christy Mason, administrative assistant

Second place: Cole Marzen, chief lineman

Third place: Scott Hagenson, line superintendent



This year's Chili Cook-Off winners (pictured from left to right) Scott Hagenson, Christy Mason and Cole Marzen.



IS 2025 THE YEAR TO INVEST IN YOUR HOME?



If your New Year's resolution was to enhance your home, Franklin REC is here to help! We've revamped our rebate program to focus on energy-saving opportunities, making it easier for you to save while improving your home.

Whether you're upgrading to a new ENERGY STAR®-rated appliance or planning to install a heat pump, our rebates could be just what you need. Have you already weatherized or insulated your home this winter? Gather your receipts – you might qualify for a rebate!

Approved rebates will appear as credits on your electric bill, making energy savings even more rewarding. For more information about Franklin REC's rebate program, call our office at 641-456-2557.

Let us help you make 2025 a year of smart home investments!

NOTICE: RATE ADJUSTMENT EFFECTIVE FEB. 1

Franklin REC's rates have been updated as of Feb. 1, in accordance with the new rate summary. These changes will appear on your March bill statement.

If you have any questions about the new rate structure, please contact our office at 641-456-2557. Thank you for being a valued member of Franklin REC.

DEADLINES APPROACHING FOR YOUTH TOUR AND SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

There's still time to apply for this year's Youth Tour in June! Franklin REC is seeking a high school sophomore or junior, or home school equivalent, within our service area to represent the cooperative. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a student to experience an all-expenses-paid trip to our nation's capital, visiting historical sites, and learning about electric cooperatives and their impact on policymaking.

How to apply: Visit the Franklin REC website and navigate to the "Community Tab." Select "Iowa Youth Tour" to access the application form and all necessary details for the selection process. The deadline to apply is Monday, Feb. 24.

For more information, contact the cooperative at 641-456-2557 or email contact-frec@franklinrec.coop.

FRANKLIN REC OFFERS SCHOLARSHIPS

Franklin REC is proud to offer three \$500 academic scholarships to qualifying high school seniors or home-schooled students who demonstrate a strong commitment to our community through volunteer work with local organizations, events, church and other community-centered initiatives.

Qualifications

- Applicant must be a dependent of an active Franklin REC member at the time of the application period.
**Children and grandchildren of Franklin REC employees and board members are not eligible.*
- Applicant must be a graduating high school senior or home-school

equivalent in the 2024-2025 academic year.

- Applicant must be enrolled in a full-time undergraduate program or trade school within 12 months of graduation.

Requirements

A completed Commitment to Community scholarship application form.

- A personal accomplishment letter outlining your educational goals, work and personal experiences, extracurricular activities, community involvement, scholastic achievements, and any additional information that

you feel is important to your application.

- Three Character Evaluation and Recommendation forms from the following individuals:
 - One recommendation from a high school superintendent, principal, guidance counselor, teacher or advisor.
 - One recommendation from a community member with whom you have worked in conjunction with on community projects.
 - The third recommendation is at your discretion. Cannot be a family member.



The completed application, personal accomplishment letter, and three references must be received no later than **Monday, Feb. 24.**



HOW TO SAFELY USE A GENERATOR

Before using a portable generator, it's essential to understand the potential dangers associated with using them, such as their production of carbon monoxide (CO). CO is an odorless, colorless and tasteless poisonous gas that is called the "silent killer" because it is virtually undetectable without the use of technology like CO alarms. Follow these tips when using a generator.

1 Read and follow all manufacturer operating instructions to properly ground the generator. Be sure you understand the directions before hooking up the generator.

2 A generator is a temporary power source. It should never be used as a permanent solution.

3 Maintain adequate ventilation because generators emit CO.

It's against fire code to operate a generator in your home, garage or other enclosed building. Place it in a dry location outdoors.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends generators be positioned at least 20 feet from doors, windows and vents to prevent CO from entering the home.

4 Never plug a portable electric generator into a wall outlet or connect directly to a home's wiring. This can energize utility power lines and injure you or others working nearby. Electrical back feed can also damage the generator and home electrical equipment.

5 Turn off the generator and allow cooling before refueling.

Gasoline and its vapors may ignite if they come in contact with hot components or an electric spark. Store fuel in a properly designed container in a secure location away from the generator or other fuel-burning appliances, such as water heaters. Always have a fully charged, approved fire extinguisher located nearby.



6 Protect your appliances. Turn off or disconnect all appliances and lights before you begin operating the portable generator. Once the generator is running, turn your appliances and lights on one at a time to avoid overloading the unit. Remember, generators are for temporary usage, so prioritize your needs.

7 Generators pose electrical risks, especially when operated in wet conditions. Use a generator only when necessary when the weather creates wet or moist conditions. Protect the generator by operating it under an open, canopy-like structure on a dry surface where water cannot form puddles or drain under it. Make sure your hands are dry before touching the generator.

8 Keep children and pets away from portable generators at all times. Many generator components are hot enough to burn you during operation.

9 Use proper extension cords. Use only safety-tested, shop-type electrical cords designed and rated for heavier, outdoor use to connect appliances. Many generators are equipped with twist-lock connects to reduce the chance of accidental disconnections due to vibrations.

10 Shut down the generator properly. Before shutting down a generator, turn off and unplug all appliances and equipment being powered by the generator.

11 Remember maintenance between uses. Drain the gasoline from the generator while it is being stored. It's also a good idea to inspect the fuel and oil filters, spark plug, oil level and fuel quality, and to start the generator on a regular basis before an emergency situation happens.

For more information, visit [Safe Electricity at safeelectricity.org](http://SafeElectricity.org)

SERVING UP LASAGNA LOVE

BY DARCY DOUGHERTY MAULSBY

During these cold winter days, nothing can brighten your day like classic comfort food. For me, that often means homemade lasagna.

Ahh ... lasagna! Layers of melted cheese piled on delectable meat and tender pasta, all smothered with a savory sauce that would bring tears to the most cynical Italian's eyes.

Did you know lasagna didn't originate in Italy? While its roots can be traced to ancient Greece, we can thank the ancient Romans for embracing – and refining – this culinary delight.

While I don't recall the first time I tried lasagna, I'm sure it was during my childhood. Perhaps I was influenced by Garfield the cat, the snarky comic strip character of the 1980s who was obsessed with this perfect pasta.

Becoming a lasagna chef

My love for lasagna reignited a few years ago when I was writing a newsletter for the Green Hills retirement community in Ames. As I interviewed a Green Hills newcomer about her hobbies, she mentioned she was a Lasagna Love volunteer. I'd never heard of this. Tell me more!

Lasagna Love is a simple, grassroots concept that took off during the COVID-19 pandemic. Volunteers (called "Lasagna Chefs") cook and deliver homemade lasagnas to families in need within their local communities.

Families can request a meal without having to explain their situation. They're matched with a nearby volunteer chef, and the chef delivers the meal directly to their doorstep. The mission is to spread kindness and create a sense of community through food.

I was so intrigued that I signed up that same day at www.lasagnalove.org to become a Lasagna Chef. (Anyone can volunteer, by the way.) It wasn't long before Lasagna Love matched me with



a young, single mom in Auburn who was working and going back to school. I never met her (I simply dropped off the lasagna at her front door, as she requested), but it felt good to help someone in need.

Food is love made visible

As more matches came through Lasagna Love, I prepared and delivered homemade lasagnas to local families in Manson, Sac City, Lohrville and Rockwell City. Some recipients greeted me at the door and expressed their gratitude. One lady texted me after she baked and served the lasagna, informing me it was the best she'd ever eaten.

The more I participated in Lasagna Love, the more curious I became about the program's history. Rhiannon Menn, a mother and chef from the West Coast, saw that many of her fellow moms were struggling to manage stress, anxiety and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic. Facing her own feelings of helplessness, Menn decided she could cook.

She posted in two local Facebook groups offering a free homecooked meal and received seven replies. Menn

prepared seven pans of lasagna for people she didn't know, drove around San Diego and delivered these meals to strangers. That's how Lasagna Love was born.

Since then, Lasagna Love has grown into an international movement of kindness, impacting thousands of volunteers and recipient families each week. Sometimes those moments of kindness mean more than you know.

Around Thanksgiving 2024, I received a request to make lasagna for an older couple in Lake City. I've known these people my whole life and enjoyed an hour-long visit with them in their home after I dropped off their lasagna. A few weeks later, I was shocked to hear that the wife had suddenly passed away.

I was grateful I had the opportunity to serve this wonderful couple through Lasagna Love. I look forward to helping more families in the year ahead. Truly, food (especially lasagna) is love made visible.

Darcy Dougherty Maulsby lives near her family's Century Farm northwest of Lake City. Visit her at www.darcymaulsby.com.



IOWA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE LIVING

The magazine
for members of
Iowa's electric
cooperatives

February 2025

Visit our website at www.franklinrec.coop

A man with a beard, wearing a white button-down shirt with a "Touchstone Energy Cooperative" logo, is looking towards another person whose back is to the camera. They are in a control room with blue and green digital displays in the background.

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