



EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

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Tazewell County 4-H Clubs Pilot Agricultural Commodity Curriculum from College of Agricultural, Consumer &

Two Tazewell County 4-H clubs recently participated in piloting lessons for an agricultural commodity curriculum, *Focus on Commodities*, developed by University of Illinois [College of Agricultural, Consumer & Environmental Sciences](#) students Hannah Spangler, Fulton 4-H alumna, and Emma Robbins. By having 4-H members in the Mackinaw Ridge Runners and Tazewell County Club pilot some of the lessons, the College of ACES students were able to see if the curriculum content, learning objectives, and resources worked in a 4-H club setting. Using feedback from 4-H members, the curriculum was revised with 4-H clubs in mind allowing for more group work and interactive activities.

Through discussion and hands-on activities, participating 4-H members learned about two prevalent Tazewell County agricultural commodities, corn and pumpkins.

"You don't have to go very far in Tazewell County to find a field of corn or a field of pumpkins. However, how often do we stop and think about them? The 4-H members piloting these lessons were given a firsthand look at these products beyond what they see daily," [Katharine Girone](#), Tazewell County 4-H program coordinator, stated.

According to a [2017 USDA Census of Agriculture](#), Tazewell County's top produced crop (in acres) is corn for grain. Pumpkin comes in fourth. The pumpkin lesson used data and information collected from Tazewell County pumpkin growers, which created a full-circle experience.

"As a club, we did a great job brainstorming products made from corn and what inputs are needed," Joy Schwarting, Mackinaw Ridge Runners 4-H club leader shared about her club's experience. "In the future, our club would be interested in taking part in lessons like this again!"

Interactive learning activities allow young people to construct new knowledge from real-world activities and are the basis of 4-H's educational philosophy. In fact, the 4-H slogan is, "Learn by doing." [Ben Franklin](#) is credited with saying, "Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn." More recently, a [study from Carnegie Mellon University](#) showed that, even in virtual platforms, interactive lessons are up to six times more effective than lecture-based learning. It's vital for all educational efforts to continue finding new and relevant ways to engage young people in their learning.

The students' project is overseen by [Dr. Amy Leman](#), assistant professor in [Agricultural Leadership, Education & Communications](#). Dr. Leman is a former State 4-H Youth Development Specialist. "Since 4-H is part of [University of Illinois](#), it makes sense that research projects include 4-H in the design. I am happy to connect anyone who contacts me with more information about attending the university or joining some of our experiences designed for high school students."

When the *Focus on Commodities* curriculum is finalized it will be available through [Illinois Ag in the Classroom](#).

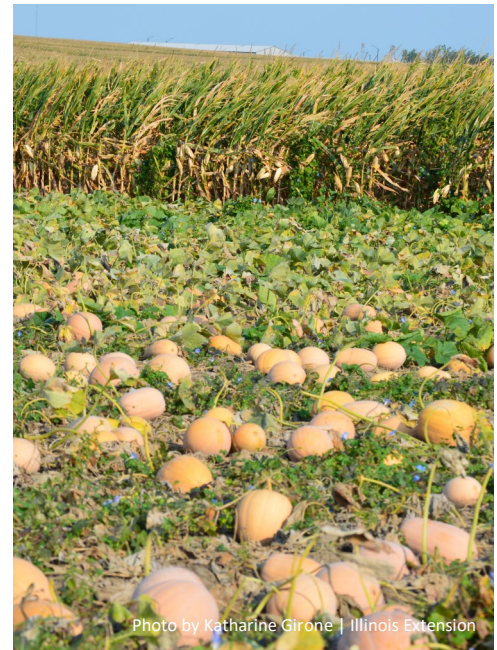


Photo by Katharine Girone | Illinois Extension

Tazewell County 4-H clubs piloted a new lesson curriculum about agricultural commodities, including corn and pumpkin, for use in 4-H clubs and classrooms. Two students from College of ACES developed the curriculum and are nearing the state-wide release of Focus on Commodities.

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