



The 2026 ARC/PLC Decision: ARC-CO vs PLC

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Producers are facing a December 11th deadline to make their commodity program election decisions for the 2026 crop year. Today's article includes context for the 2026 ARC-CO and PLC programs and provides guidance and information resources to assist farmers with their enrollment decisions. For most situations, current price projections and yield expectations suggest ARC-CO would trigger larger payments for corn and soybean base acres. For wheat base acres, current projections suggest that ARC-CO and PLC have more similar expected payment levels, with a slight edge towards PLC in most cases. However, individual farm situations can vary. Producers are encouraged to use the decision tools and other resources available to assist in their program enrollment decision.

ARC and PLC in 2026

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) made changes to the ARC and PLC programs which took effect for the 2025 program and will continue for 2026. The OBBBA changes increased both the likelihood and size of payments from the ARC and PLC programs compared to the 2018 Farm Bill versions. For a more detailed discussion of the OBBBA changes to ARC and PLC see the *farmdoc daily* article from [July 15, 2025](#).

In 2025, the OBBBA changes resulted in producers receiving the higher of the ARC-CO or PLC payment. The enrollment decision returns for the 2026 crop year, although at a much later date than

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its usual March 15 deadline, as FSA finalized the base-acre updates that were also part of the OBBBA and will go into effect for the 2026 program. The decision deadline of December 11th, 2026 was announced in a [September press release](#) from USDA. As a reminder, any program payments triggered for the 2026 crop year would not be received by producers until October 2027.

Comparing ARC-CO and PLC in 2026

Table 1 shows the October [WASDE](#) projections for marketing year average (MYA) prices, the PLC effective reference prices (ERP), and the ARC benchmark prices for corn, soybeans, and wheat in 2026. The ERPs for corn and soybeans come from taking 88% of the Olympic average of the MYA prices over the 5 marketing years from 2020/21 through 2024/25 while the ERP for wheat is its statutory reference price. The ARC benchmarks for all three crops are based on the Olympic average of the MYAs from 2020/21 through 2024/25.

For PLC payments to be triggered for corn base acres in 2026, the MYA would need to be below the ERP of \$4.42. The 2026/27 MYA for corn is currently projected at \$4.70 per bushel. Thus, no PLC payments would be triggered for corn for 2026 at the current price projection. Of course, the actual MYA price could be below, or above, current projections.

The ARC benchmark price for 2026 is \$5.03 per bushel. Since ARC-CO is a county revenue program, average county yields will be combined with the actual MYA to determine payments. For counties with 2026 yields at benchmark levels, ARC-CO payments would be triggered at an actual MYA price of \$4.53 or lower. This is based on the ARC-CO's revenue guarantee of 90% of benchmark revenue ($0.90 \times \$5.03 = \$4.53$). For counties with yields above benchmark, lower prices would need to occur for ARC-CO to make payments. For counties with yields above benchmark, ARC-CO could trigger payments at higher prices.

Overall, for counties where the average yield for 2026 is expected to be near or below benchmark levels ARC-CO would be expected to be more likely to trigger larger payments than PLC.

Table 1. Projected MYA Prices, PLC Effective Reference Prices, and ARC Benchmark Prices for Corn, Soybeans, and Wheat for 2026

	Corn	Soybean	Wheat
Projected MYA (based on Oct. WASDE)	\$4.70	\$12.00	\$6.30
PLC Effective Reference Price	\$4.42	\$10.71	\$6.35
ARC Benchmark Price	\$5.03	\$12.17	\$6.98
90% of ARC Benchmark Price	\$4.53	\$10.95	\$6.28

For soybeans, the October WASDE's projected MYA for 2026 is \$12.00 per bushel. This is well above the ERP of \$10.71, the price below which PLC payments would be triggered on soybean base acres. The ARC benchmark of \$12.17 implies that counties with actual yields at benchmark levels would

trigger ARC-CO payments at a soybean price of \$10.95 or lower ($0.90 \times \$12.17 = \$10.95$). Again, county yields above benchmark levels would require a lower soybean price while counties with yields below benchmark would trigger payments at a higher price level. Similar to corn, at current price projections, ARC-CO would be expected to trigger larger payments than PLC for counties expected to have actual yields near or below benchmark levels for 2026.

The projected MYA price for wheat in the October WASDE is \$6.30 per bushel, which is \$0.05 below wheat's 2026 ERP of \$6.35. If the actual MYA for wheat was equal to the current projection, a \$0.05 per bushel payment rate would be triggered on any base acres enrolled in the PLC program. Wheat's ARC benchmark price for 2026 is \$6.98 per bushel. For counties with actual yields at benchmark levels, wheat prices at or below \$6.28 per bushel would trigger ARC-CO payments. For counties with wheat yields near or above benchmark levels for 2026, PLC will have the larger expected payment for most farms. Farms in counties with poor wheat yield performance may expect larger payments from ARC-CO for 2026.

Decision Guidance and Information Resources

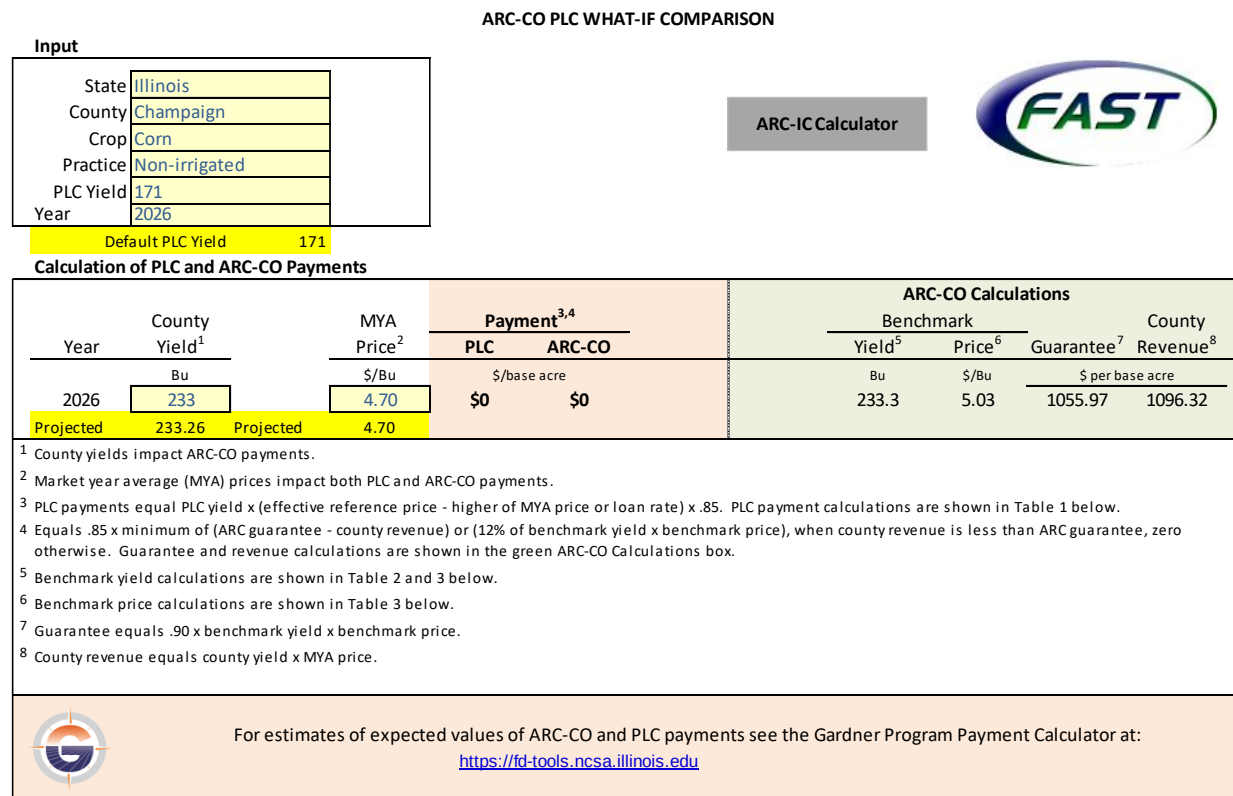
Payments from the PLC program will not be known with certainty until marketing year prices are finalized. This will not occur until the end of the 2026/27 marketing year, which is May 31st for wheat, and August 31st for corn and soybeans. ARC-CO payments will also depend on final county yields which are not typically released by FSA until mid- to late-June. Thus, farmers will be making their program enrollment decisions based on projections and expectations for how the programs will perform. Still, given the delayed enrollment deadline of December 11th, more information is available to assist in the decision compared with previous years when enrollment had to be completed in the spring.

The *farmdoc* team is currently providing two different decision tools that producers can use to assist in their decisions.

Farm Bill What-If Tool

The [2026 Farm Bill What-If Tool](#) is an excel-based tool (direct download link [here](#)) that can be downloaded and used offline. The What-If Tool allows the user to compare payments from the ARC-CO and PLC programs under different price and county yield scenarios. The screenshot below illustrates the ARC-CO and PLC comparisons provided using non-irrigated corn in Champaign, County Illinois as an example.

Figure 1. Farm Bill What-If Tool Comparison for Non-Irrigated Corn in Champaign County Illinois in 2026*



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Table 1. Payments per Base Acre at Different Yields and Prices											
Program Selection	PLC minus ARC-CO		State = Illinois, County = Champaign, Crop = Corn, Year = 2026 ARC-CO Benchmark Yield = 233.26, Benchmark Price = \$5.03, Guarantee \$1055.97 PLC Yield = 171, Effective Reference Price = \$4.42								
Price Change	\$	0.25									
Yield Change		5									
-2026											
County	2026 Market Year Average Price										
Yield	\$3.45	\$3.70	\$3.95	\$4.20	\$4.45	\$4.70	\$4.95	\$5.20	\$5.45	\$5.70	\$5.95
258	21	19	38	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
253	21	4	21	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
248	21	-12	4	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
243	21	-15	-13	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
238	21	-15	-29	-15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
233	21	-15	-46	-33	-15	0	0	0	0	0	0
228	21	-15	-51	-51	-34	0	0	0	0	0	0
223	21	-15	-51	-69	-53	-6	0	0	0	0	0
218	21	-15	-51	-86	-72	-26	0	0	0	0	0
213	21	-15	-51	-88	-91	-46	0	0	0	0	0
208	21	-15	-51	-88	-110	-66	-21	0	0	0	0
* A positive value indicates that PLC will pay more, a negative value indicates that ARC-CO will pay more.											

Source: [2026 Farm Bill What-If Tool](#), comparison viewed on October 26, 2026.

*2026 crop year payments, if triggered, will not be received by farmers until October of 2027

At a county yield of 233 bu/acre and an MYA price of \$4.70, neither ARC-CO nor PLC would trigger a payment for 2026. The comparison table provides payment comparisons (PLC-minus ARC-CO) for a range of price and yield scenarios. For scenarios with yields below the 233 bu/acre benchmark and prices from \$4.70 down to \$3.70, ARC-CO triggers the larger payment.

For prices from \$4.42 down to around \$3.70 and yields above the benchmark, PLC would trigger larger payments. For scenarios with low prices, below \$3.70, PLC may provide the larger payment as ARC-CO would hit its maximum payment even at lower yields.

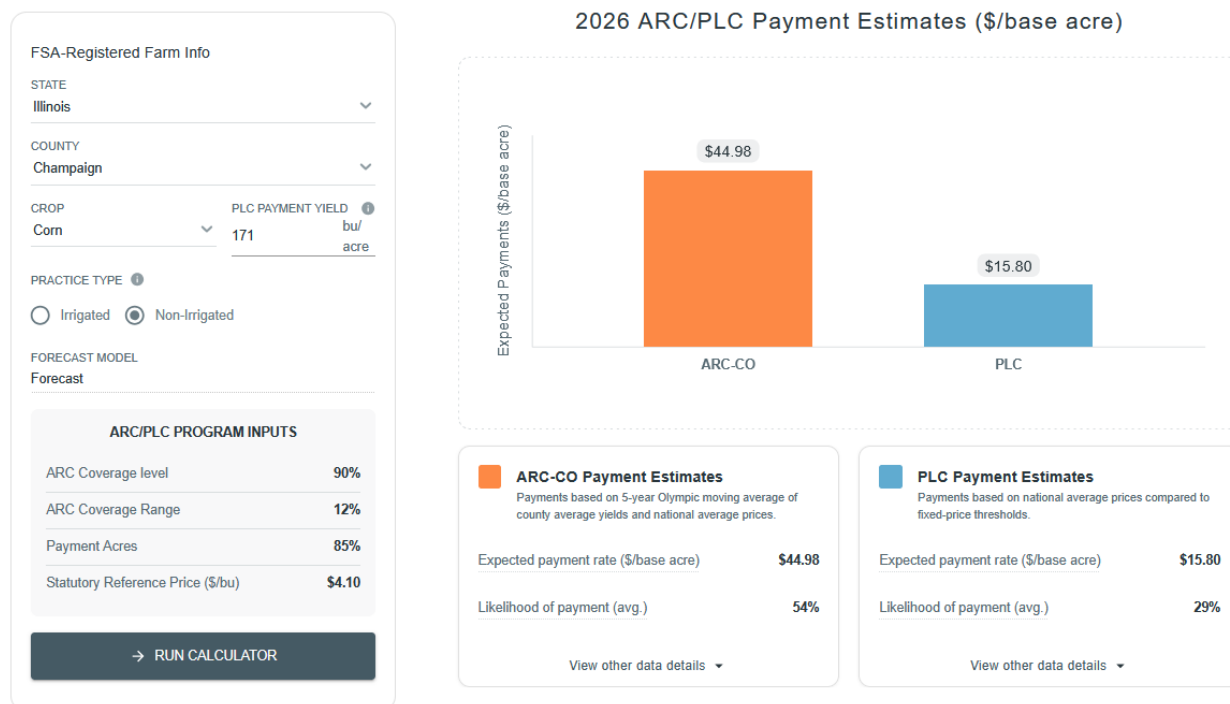
In general, under the most plausible scenarios, ARC-CO would tend to trigger larger payments than PLC. This would extend to most county scenarios for corn base acres and for soybean base acres for 2026. For most wheat comparisons, PLC will trigger the larger payment for higher yield scenarios or scenarios with very low prices while ARC-CO has larger payments for lower yield scenarios with moderate to higher prices.

Online ARC/PLC Calculator

The online [ARC/PLC Calculator](#) tool provides expected payment estimates for comparison between ARC-CO and PLC based on individual farm scenarios (county, crop, farm-level PLC yields). Figure 2 provides a screenshot of a scenario comparison for non-irrigated corn in Champaign County Illinois. The expected ARC-CO payment is around \$45 per base acre while the expected PLC payment is just under \$16 per acre. These payment estimates are based on averages across a range of simulated price and yield scenarios that are calibrated to current expectations and projections. The likelihood of an ARC-CO payment for this scenario is 54%, meaning that in 46% of the outcomes payment is zero. The likelihood of a PLC payment is 29%, meaning that in 71% of the outcomes the PLC payment is zero.

Again, in general, ARC-CO is expected to trigger larger payments and have a higher likelihood of triggering a payment across most counties for corn and soybean base acres. For wheat, expected PLC payments tend to be slightly larger with a slightly higher likelihood of triggering compared to ARC-CO in most counties.

Figure 2. ARC/PLC Online Calculator Expected Payment Comparison for Non-Irrigated Corn in Champaign County Illinois in 2026*



The projected payments are a result of a simulation model. The model takes into account the uncertainty in prices and yields, and shows the average payment.

Source: <https://fd-tools.ncsa.illinois.edu/arcplc>, comparison viewed on October 26, 2026

*2026 crop year payments, if triggered, will not be received by farmers until October of 2027

Summary

The commodity program decision deadline for program crops harvested in 2026 is December 11, 2026. Current projections and expectations for prices and yields suggest that ARC-CO would be expected to trigger larger payments than PLC on corn and soybean base acres in most counties. The comparison for wheat base acres is currently much closer and will depend on county yield expectations and the individual farm's PLC yields. The November WASDE report will provide updated price projections for the 2026 marketing year and could shift expectations for potential payments. USDA's November [crop production report](#), also scheduled for release on November 10th, will provide updated state level yield and production estimates which, along with farm-level yield experience, can be helpful to inform county level yield expectations.

Producers are encouraged to utilize the decision tools and resources being made available to assist in the decision. These include the [Farm Bill What-If Tool](#) and online [ARC/PLC Calculator](#). The online calculator will be updated one additional time in the days following the November 10th WASDE report release. A recent farmdoc webinar – “[First Look at the ARC/PLC Decision for 2026](#)” - was also provided to aid with enrollment decisions.

Finally, the delayed decision deadline of December 11th means that farmers will have more information about their individual farm yields for 2026 before making their program enrollment decisions. This allows for a better analysis of potential payments from the individual ARC program (ARC-IC), which may be a good option for farms that experienced localized yield losses on specific FSA farm numbers. The [Farm Bill What-If Tool](#) includes an ARC-IC Calculator that is now updated with all available information. We plan to discuss the ARC-IC option in more detail in an upcoming farmdoc daily article and in an [upcoming webinar](#) we have planned for Tuesday November 17th – “Final Look at the 2026 ARC/PLC Decision” (direct registration link [here](#)).

References

First Look at the ARC/PLC Decision for 2026, *farmdoc* webinar from October 22nd, 2026. Video and slides available at <https://farmdoc.illinois.edu/webinar/first-look-at-the-arc-plc-decision-for-2026>

Schnitkey, G., N. Paulson, C. Zulauf and J. Coppess. "Impacts of the Commodity Title Changes Under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) for Midwestern Farms in 2025." *farmdoc daily* (15):128, Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, July 15, 2025.