

# BUSINESS solutions



## Technology Use is Growing in Agriculture

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# BUSINESS solutions

**Technology is changing the face of farming.** Madison Commu-  
nications is proud to be a part of the technology revolution in agriculture, a critical  
industry for the world's increasing population and a vital part of the Illinois economy.

On page 3, you'll find the answer to the question, **What is a Smart Farm?** Today's  
farmers rely on online tools that offer communication, information, and access.  
You'll learn how Wi-Fi enables all internet-enabled devices on a farmland to work  
off of one network.

In keeping with the agriculture theme of this *Business Solutions* issue, we're featuring  
**Agriculture Spotlights on Sievers Equipment Co. and Prairietown Feed Service** on  
pages 4 and 5. These two companies—both customers of Madison Communications  
—are excellent examples of family businesses that have grown due to hard work and  
an openness to embrace new technologies and opportunities.

You can **Satisfy Your Growing Curiosity About Farming** on page 6, where we share  
interesting facts from the Illinois Department of Agriculture. Then on page 7, get a reminder  
to **Call or Click Before You Dig** to help prevent damage to our underground lines.

We're here to provide the communications services your business needs to work  
efficiently, whether you're growing crops or growing your customer base in a  
completely different field. Give us a call to discuss the right solutions for you.

Sincerely,

The Madison Team





# What is a Smart Farm?

Seamless online access increases efficiency, security, and profit



It's an exciting time to be in farming. With an expected 9.6 billion people to feed by 2050, the agriculture industry must continuously find ways to produce more food more easily.

## Working Smarter

As operations become more internet-based, farmers have an increasing need for online access from anywhere on their property, using a smartphone or other mobile device. Just as homeowners benefit from having Wi-Fi throughout the house for printers, laptops, TVs, smartphones, tablets, and other devices, entire farms can benefit from seamless online access. Dawn Huth, Sales & Marketing Manager at Madison Communications, explains, "Fast and reliable internet service allows farmers to take advantage of today's technology."

### The following is just a sampling of the many farming activities with online applications:

- Communication between farm employees to keep everything running smoothly
- Access to livestock feed and grain management
- Monitoring of bin and fuel or fertilizer tanks
- Use of GPS services to bring together information from field, animal, and machinery with sensors, along with localized weather data and soil information to assist with decision-making
- Record-keeping regarding births and other critical information
- Internet-based video surveillance
- Access to markets to participate in auctions and more easily follow real-time changes in commodity prices and market information

- Ease of financial management with farm business planning, direct product sales, herd management, ROI calculators, and business accounting

Such solutions enable farmers to increase efficiency, enhance security, protect assets, and remain competitive.

## Tomorrow's Farming

A smart farm is a one that's fully internet-enabled through a fast Wi-Fi connection in and around farm buildings, including grain bins and dryers, using existing fiber internet as a base. A single Wi-Fi network can be built to include all areas of a farm's operations, even across multiple locations. This technology enables all internet-enabled devices on a farmland to work off of one network. Users get quick access to the monitoring data from these devices and the internet reliability required for optimal performance of security cameras.

A Wi-Fi system can be created to meet the needs of all aspects of a farm's operation. The right Wi-Fi equipment and layout depends on each farmer's goals and concerns, as well as building specifications, and the distance between locations.

As technology continues to expand, new ways will be found to make smart farms faster and more efficient. Huth comments, "Tomorrow's farming will be much different than today's. Technology is changing everything."



# Sievers Equipment Co. and Prairietown Feed Service

As technology use increases in agriculture,  
Madison Communications provides important connections

Sievers Equipment Co. and Prairietown Feed Service are alike in several ways. Both are family businesses. Both have a history of successful growth. And both count on phone and internet services from Madison Communications.

## Sievers Equipment Co.

Sievers Equipment Co. sells and services Case IH Tractors, Axial Flow Combines, and virtually everything in between. The company has six locations—in Hamel, Hillsboro, Greenfield, Auburn, and Carlinville, Illinois, and in St. Peters, Missouri—from which to serve Southern and Central Illinois as well as Metro St. Louis and the St. Charles river bottoms. In addition to large farm equipment, Sievers Equipment Co. also carries an extensive line of new and used Case IH tillage tools, sprayers, hay tools, compact tractors, and more. Its staff of 120 is committed to helping farmers maximize productivity and minimize downtime.

Founded in 1971 by farmers Walter and Ruth Sievers, Sievers Equipment Co. began as an Allis Chalmers dealership in Edwardsville, Illinois, and moved in a few years to Hamel. In the ensuing decades, the equipment lines changed and locations were added. But it remains a family-owned and family-operated business.

Walter and Ruth's sons, Gary and Jim Sievers, have worked at Sievers Equipment Co. since the beginning, and now the third generation of the family are active in the business: Gary's sons, Brian, Greg, and Mark Sievers, along with Jim's son, Tim Sievers.

Madison Communications provides high speed internet service to Sievers Equipment Co. along with an advanced IP Office phone system. According to Brian Sievers, this technology is essential to keep up with industry changes.

"I started at the dealership around 1990, and the amount of change I've seen since then has been remarkable. Tractors and combines now have multiple computer modules on them, all service trucks are equipped with laptops, and most farm equipment includes sophisticated guidance systems. All of that requires internet connections," Sievers says.



He adds, "Sievers Equipment Co. is based in Hamel, and we're fortunate to be able to get services from Madison Communications. We've grown as a company, and Madison Communications has helped us do that with bandwidth and phone systems to tie our six stores together and reduce some costs. I wish Madison Communications could just follow Sievers Equipment Co. around and expand their service territory to fit us! Madison Communications has a better product offering and better pricing than other companies."



**“We’ve grown as a company, and Madison Communications has helped us do that with bandwidth and phone systems to tie our six stores together and reduce some costs.”**

— BRIAN SIEVERS, DIRECTOR, SIEVERS EQUIPMENT CO.

### Prairietown Feed Service

Located in Dorsey, Illinois, Prairietown Feed Service is a full-service agricultural supply retailer. It carries feed, seed, fertilizer, and crop insurance, and also offers a grain elevator and grain hauling. As President Jared Goebel notes, “Basically, we sell everything but chemicals and anhydrous ammonia.” The company currently has 14 employees, some of whom have worked there for 25-50 years.

Wilber Goebel—Jared Goebel’s grandfather—opened Prairietown Feed Service in 1956, and it was originally a feed store that provided a delivery service. In 1963, Wilber Goebel took a big risk and borrowed \$65,000 to build a mill. In the 1970s, fertilizer was added as was trucking in the 1990s. Since the start of the 21st century, the company began selling seed, crop insurance, and commercial grain storage.

Still family owned and operated, Prairietown Feed Service has enjoyed remarkable growth. Jared Goebel says, “We went from a 500-square-foot showroom to a 3,500-square-foot showroom, and from a grain elevator with a 50,000 bushel capacity to one with a 620,000 bushel capacity. This building expansion has allowed our company to increase our product offerings.”

Change has also taken place with the service provided by Madison Communications. In August 2017, a new Hosted PBX phone system was installed to better meet the needs of this growing business.

“The clarity of phone calls is much better with Hosted PBX compared to the old phone system we were using before. We now have voicemail we can check from off-site. We also gained the ability to pick up a phone from one desk or workstation and move it somewhere else while retaining the same features. For example, there may be a few months of the year when we’ll want to pull a phone from the main office and use it in the scale house,” Goebel says.

What does Goebel value about his partnership with Madison Communications? He replies, “Their internet service is very reliable—no complaints. I think the biggest thing for me, however, is that Madison Communications is local. I can call anyone there, even people in upper management, on their cell phones if need be. There aren’t layers of bureaucracy to get through. Madison Communications is run like a small business, just like Prairietown Feed Service.”



**“The clarity of phone calls is much better with Hosted PBX compared to the old phone system we were using before.”**

— JARED GOEBEL, PRESIDENT, PRAIRIETOWN FEED SERVICE

# Satisfy Your Growing Curiosity About Farming

Get the facts from the Illinois Department of Agriculture



## What agricultural goods are produced in Illinois?

Illinois is a leading producer of soybeans, corn, and swine. The state's climate and varied soil types enable farmers to grow and raise many other agricultural commodities including cattle, wheat, oats, sorghum, hay, sheep, poultry, fruits, and vegetables. Illinois also produces specialty crops such as buckwheat, horseradish, ostriches, fish, and Christmas trees.

## How does agriculture benefit Illinois' economy?

Marketing of Illinois' agricultural commodities generates more than \$19 billion annually. Corn accounts for 54 percent of that total. Marketing of soybeans contributes 27 percent, and the combined marketings of livestock, dairy, and poultry generate 13 percent. The balance comes from sales of wheat and other crops, including fruits and vegetables.

Billions more dollars flow into the state's economy from ag-related industries such as farm machinery manufacturing, agricultural real estate, and the production and sale of value-added food products. Rural Illinois benefits principally from agricultural production, while agricultural processing and manufacturing strengthen urban economies.

## How are Illinois' agricultural commodities used?

With 2,640 food manufacturing companies, Illinois is well equipped to turn the state's crops and livestock into food and industrial products. In fact, the state ranks first in the nation with \$180 billion in processed food sales. Most of these companies are located in the Chicago metropolitan area, which contains one of the largest concentrations of food-related businesses in the world.

Illinois' agricultural commodities also provide the base for such products as animal feed, ink, paint, adhesives, clothing, soap, wax, cosmetics, medicines, furniture, paper, and lumber. Each year, 274 million bushels of Illinois corn are used to produce more ethanol than any other state—about 678 million gallons. Illinois also markets other renewable fuels including soybean-based biodiesel.

## Check Out Other Ag Businesses Served by Madison Communications

### Sloan Implement

9425 Rt 140 in Hamel  
618-633-2626  
[www.sloans.com/hamel](http://www.sloans.com/hamel)

### Hamel Seed & Farm Supply

7381 W Frontage Rd in Worden  
618-633-2611

### Hamel Coop Grain Company

121 North Old US Route 66 in Hamel  
618-633-2215  
[www.hamelcoop.com](http://www.hamelcoop.com)

### The Mennell Milling Company

415 East Main Street in Mt. Olive  
217-999-2161  
[www.mennell.com](http://www.mennell.com)







Brian Allen, Madison Communications Locator

## Call or Click Before You Dig

There are two  
convenient ways  
to contact JULIE

**J**ULIE stands for Joint Utility Locating Information for Excavators. It's a free service that provides Illinois excavators and underground utility owners with a message handling and delivery service committed to protecting underground utilities and the safety of people working or living near them.

Illinois state law requires anyone planning an outdoor project that involves digging to notify JULIE first, regardless of the depth or the size of the project. You can visit [illinois1call.com](http://illinois1call.com) and fill out an E-request, or you can call 8-1-1 (the nationwide number) or 1-800-892-0123 (JULIE's toll-free number).

Though most people are aware of this law, unfortunately not everyone follows it. As experienced by Madison Communications, phone and internet lines do get damaged during construction and other types of projects on business property. When this happens, landline phone lines or the lines that go to cell towers can get cut, resulting in neighboring businesses and individuals not being able to make calls.

Fortunately, phone and internet lines are designed so that only a limited service area can be affected by any one cut. However, a cut line is more than just an inconvenience; it could be a matter of safety. In a worst-case scenario, phone customers could lose access to 911.

When a line does get cut, up to 16 hours may be required before it can be fixed. In addition to the time needed, the cost can be substantial—in the thousands of dollars—and the responsible party could be charged.

It's important to note that the person doing the digging is responsible for making the call. So if a business hires a contractor to do some digging, it's the contractor's responsibility to make the call. If a line is cut and they haven't called, they're responsible for the cost.

**Madison Communications thanks you for your cooperation in contacting JULIE before digging. Learn more at [illinois1call.com](http://illinois1call.com).**

## Who's Minding Your Business?

**Brian Allen**  
**Locator**

Brian Allen became the Locator at Madison Communications in June 2017, having previously worked for four years at USIC, the largest underground utility locating and damage prevention company in North America.

What's a typical workday like for Allen? He replies, "I organize tickets in the morning and route myself out for the day. When I arrive at the ticket location, I go over the full extent of the project and figure out what all is in conflict and where they plan to dig. I look over prints, then visually inspect the area to make sure it goes along with prints and mark it out accordingly. My job is different every day, and it makes me proud to know I play a major role in protecting our infrastructure."

## Know the Color Code

After an 811 call is made, locate crews mark the location of underground utility lines with paint or flags using this universal color code:

- **Red** – Electric
- **Orange** – Communications, Telephone/CATV
- **Blue** – Potable Water
- **Green** – Sewer/Drainage
- **Yellow** – Gas/Petroleum Pipe Line
- **Purple** – Reclaimed Waters
- **White** – Premark site of intended excavation

Make sure you check the digging area carefully before proceeding with your project.

# RAISE YOUR HAND

## IF YOU NEED MORE INTERNET SPEED

Don't settle for yesterday's internet plan when you have a business full of today's devices. Upgrade now to get your hands on the speed you and your employees need.



Service availability and internet speed will depend on location. Restrictions may apply. Offer expires October 31, 2017. Contact us for details.

**CALL 800-422-4848 TO TRY FASTER  
INTERNET FREE FOR 30 DAYS!**

[www.gomadison.com](http://www.gomadison.com)

