

# FARMER

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Erickson on five counts, the most serious being "criminal enterprise," which carries a minimum prison term of 10 years without parole and a maximum of life without parole.

Federal prosecutors in the Peoria area have issued that charge only twice before, each time winning convictions and lengthy prison sentences. Until last year, higher government approval was required to bring that charge against a suspect.

The indictment against Erickson — which also names four other people — charges him with organizing the sophisticated marijuana-growing operation broken up last October when a two-day police raid on Knox County farmland netted at least \$12 million worth of the illegal weed.

Erickson, whose trial tentatively is scheduled for next Friday, was released Friday after posting \$2,500 bail. The government had sought \$100,000 bail, arguing that the new and stiffer charges might prompt Erickson to flee.

But Erickson told a federal magistrate that, since his original arrest last fall, he has sold his house and moved in with his parents.

Erickson, 44, a onetime member of the Knox County Board, was arrested at his parents' home in Galesburg on Thursday evening.

Indicted along with Erickson this week were four other people not previously named in connection with the marijuana farming operation: Kathy Barker, 36, identified as Erickson's girlfriend; Sarah Ashley, 19, and Julie Lovedahl, 21, both identified as Erickson's cousins; and Eugene Lovedahl, 26, who is Julie Lovedahl's husband.

Chambers explained the additional indictments Friday by saying, "The scope of conspiracy has enlarged," adding that a second suspected kingpin still is being sought.

Leroy Erickson, who is the father of Ashley and Julie Lovedahl, has been at large with his wife since shortly after the police raids last fall. A state investigator Friday acknowledged the possibility that Erickson and his wife are hiding in the wife's native country of France.

The Lovedahls, who were arrested at Leroy Erickson's Galesburg house, also were arraigned Friday. But they will not be asked to enter a plea until next Tuesday, after they have been assigned public defenders.

Barker was arrested in Missouri and remains in custody there.

Ashley remains at large, and investigators say they do not know where to find her, although they are fairly certain she is not with Leroy Erickson and his wife.