

working together, always learning

the Practical Farmer

AUTUMN 2017



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We love to hear from you! Please feel free to contact your board members or staff.

DISTRICT 1 (NORTHWEST)

Nathan Anderson
400 Locust St., P.O. Box 14
Aurelia, IA 51005
(515) 708-5199
n8andy@gmail.com

DISTRICT 2 (NORTH CENTRAL)

Wendy Johnson – Vice-President
2038 March Ave
Charles City, IA 50616
(562) 852-7044
207wendy@gmail.com

DISTRICT 3 (NORTHEAST)

Ann Franzenburg – Secretary
6925 19th Ave.
Van Horne, IA 52346
(319) 640-0262
eafran@netins.net

DISTRICT 4 (SOUTHWEST)

Mark Peterson – President
2311 N Ave.
Stanton, IA 51573
(712) 370-4004
markpete@myfmtc.com

DISTRICT 5 (SOUTHEAST)

Gayle Olson
2272 140th St.
Winfield, IA 52659
(319) 931-1351
olsongayle@gmail.com

AT-LARGE FARMERS

Tyler Franzenburg
1296 65th St.
Dysart, IA 52224
(319) 721-2176
tfranzenburg@outlook.com

Vic Madsen

2186 Goldfinch Ave.
Audubon, IA 50025
(712) 254-3057
vcmadsen@iowatelecom.net

Mark Quee

1951 Delta Ave.
West Branch, IA 52358
(319) 530-3782
farm@scattergood.org

David Rosmann

1809 N Willow St.
Avoca, IA 51521
(612) 219-7396
davidrosmann@hotmail.com

Julie Wheelock

3381 230th St.
Sac City, IA 50583
(712) 830-2402
juliebwheelock@gmail.com

AT-LARGE FRIENDS of FARMER

Gail Hickenbottom – Treasurer
810 SE Browns Woods Dr.
West Des Moines, IA 50265
(515) 256-7876
gchickenbottom@gmail.com

Kurt Van Hulzen

2397 Wadsley Ave.
Sac City, IA 50583
kurtvh@netllc.wb.net

CO-FOUNDERS

Larry Kallem
1417 Indiana Ave.
Ames, IA 50014
(515) 337-1272

Sharon Thompson
Boone, IA

PFI STAFF

For general information and staff connections, call (515) 232-5661. Staff extensions are listed in parentheses.

All email addresses are @practicalfarmers.org

Erica Andorf (303)
Office Manager, erica@practicalfarmers.org

Debra Boekholder (312)
Membership and Events Assistant, debra@practicalfarmers.org

Alisha Bower (315)
Midwest Cover Crop Associate, alisha@practicalfarmers.org

Sarah Carlson (305)
Midwest Cover Crop Director, sarah@practicalfarmers.org

Steve Carlson (308)
Beginning Farmer and Program Associate, steve@practicalfarmers.org

Henry Corbin
Multimedia Assistant, henry@practicalfarmers.org

Laura Frescoln (302)
Program Director, laura@practicalfarmers.org

Meghan Filbert (309)
Livestock Coordinator, meghan@practicalfarmers.org

Stefan Gailans (314)
Research and Field Crops Director, stefan@practicalfarmers.org

Suzi Howk (301)
Finance and Benefits Manager, suzi@practicalfarmers.org

Tamsyn Jones (311)
Outreach and Publications Coordinator, tamsyn@practicalfarmers.org

Liz Kolbe (313)
Horticulture Coordinator, liz@practicalfarmers.org

Nick Ohde (306)
Research and Media Coordinator, nick@practicalfarmers.org

Greg Padget (304)
Beginning Farmer Manager, greg@practicalfarmers.org

Sally Worley (310)
Executive Director, sally@practicalfarmers.org

the Practical Farmer

the Practical Farmer is published quarterly as a benefit of membership, and helps keep farmers and friends of farmers in touch with one another through informative articles on relevant farming topics, current on-farm research, upcoming events and other news of interest.

Newsletter Editor: Tamsyn Jones

(Back issues are available upon request. Unless otherwise noted, articles may be reprinted or adapted if credit is given. Clippings and notice are appreciated).



Fulfilling Fatigue



One morning in early autumn, I arrived at the office feeling fatigued. I was in good company: My colleagues Greg and Laura were brain-weary, too. Why? We had just spent two lovely days at

Whiterock Conservancy with our strategic planning team. Together we re-visited our mission, vision and values, our notion of who we serve at Practical Farmers, and our strategic goals for 2018-2020.

The strategic planning process gives PFI a chance to step back, see where we've been and align where we are headed with the priorities of our membership and where Practical Farmers has the most influence. To help guide our next strategic plan, we looked back at our current plan, which runs through the end of 2017, to see how we are doing accomplishing those goals. The article on page 11 shows a snapshot of how we are doing meeting those goals as we approach the end of the year.

A strategic plan provides momentum, focus and a framework for our efforts. Our last strategic plan was only one page, forcing us to really hone in on goals and strategies. We use this concise document regularly, and will stick to a one-pager again. Right now, the idea of fitting our work and conversations about PFI into one page is daunting, but we will get there!

So why the fatigue? We spent two days debating things like our mission – which describes the business we are in here at Practical Farmers. This required us to practice something I really enjoy, and which is healthy for an organization: constructive conflict. It is difficult, but advantageous, for a group to get together and communicate what they think is important. Mental capacity, time, patience and cooperation are necessary to get to an answer that best fits the organization. It can be uncomfortable – but also illuminating – to take differing perspectives from people working toward a shared goal and meld them into thoughtful conclusions.

Team member Paul Ackley said, "I was once asked, 'What is the most unexpected part of moving toward sustainable, regenerative farming?' 'The people you meet' popped out of my mouth without even thinking.



From left to right: Ann Franzenburg, Paul Ackley, Wendy Johnson and Laura Frescoln, all members of PFI's strategic planning team, practice our mission to motion to help memorize it. Can you guess what word they are practicing?

'And their ideas' could have been added to that phrase. Practical Farmers' [strategic planning team] experience certainly reinforced that."

Our strategic plan for 2018-2020 will be approved by PFI's board of directors in December. Here's a preview of emerging issues that helped inform this guiding document:

- Helping beginning farmers is your top priority. Thanks for letting us know that by answering our member survey!
- Closely related, farm transfer is also a priority for Practical Farmers, and we need to capitalize and build the momentum of this strong program Teresa Opheim started.
- Practical Farmers is being called on to accept donations of, and manage, farmland. We received our first land to manage at the end of 2016 (13 acres donated by the Tedescos near Granger), and more people are interested in this option. Practical Farmers needs to carefully consider our role in farmland ownership. Are we or can we be equipped to own and manage farmland? Is ownership by a non-profit a good long-term solution for farmland access?
- Soil health is also top-of-mind for you. We will make sure to continue and

expand our focus on this paramount topic.

- PFI needs to continue to engage our friends-of-farmer members, as well as the general public, to increase awareness of agricultural issues in Iowa. How can we reach these members while not diluting our core focus on addressing our farmers' needs?

I hope you are as excited as I am to see our marching orders for the next three years! Stay tuned; we will reveal our strategic plan soon!

Cheers to a good night's sleep for all of us working to create an Iowa of resilient farms and vibrant communities,

Sally Worley

Thank you to everyone on our strategic planning team!

Staff:

Sarah Carlson
Laura Frescoln
Greg Padgett
Sally Worley

Members:

Paul Ackley
Tim Landgraf
Clark Porter

Consultants:

Jo Anna Trierweiler
Kristen Miller

Board:

Ann Franzenburg
Wendy Johnson
Gail Hickenbottom



Oat Fables From Three Sisters Farm

by Alisha Bower

One gorgeous day in early September, I took a short drive north from Ames to Williams, Iowa, to visit Three Sisters Farm, where Ortrude Dial raises grain, meat sheep and small grains. Her tidy red-brick farmstead, surrounded by softly munching horses and chickens, seemed straight out of a fairy tale. We sat under a shady tree and talked about the benefits she sees in her operation from incorporating small grains.

After working for years in a hog confinement operation and living in town, Ortrude finally decided she needed to get back to the land, and to a more natural approach to agriculture. "There's nothing wrong with these old-fashioned methods," she tells me. Ortrude practices a three- or four-year rotation on all of her crop ground, as farmers commonly did two or three generations ago. This extended rotation brings a range of benefits to her farming system.

Slow and Steady Wins the Race

Ortrude raises both organic and conventional oats. A third of her organic ground is planted to oats every year. On her conventional acres, she uses oats as a nurse crop to establish hay. In the past, Ortrude has harvested oats with a combine or by swathing. "At the PFI small grains conference in Ames, I learned that swathing oats is good for test weight," Ortrude says. "Being patient and letting them sit out in the field longer may actually be beneficial. We had one year where it rained on our swathed oats and we were so nervous. I kept going out to look at them and tried to turn some of them like you would hay. But the rain didn't affect the quality at all in rows I didn't touch – they were better than the ones I moved."



Fields of Green: Ortrude Dial stands in a field where oats were harvested earlier this summer (the yellow color is the oat stubble), and where an underseeded alfalfa and clover crop (the green color) has now taken off. In early September, the clovers were just starting to flower and provide habitat for pollinators.

Another plus side to being patient: Ortrude holds onto her oats for longer, allowing her to secure a higher price for them. She has found that an old wooden corn crib works well for oats, and she has purchased a small grain-drying floor for her modern metal bin. "The grain floor has smaller holes so that oats don't fall through in storage," Ortrude explains. These storage upgrades – or sometimes retrogrades to the old-fashioned wooden bins – allow her to store her oats into the winter, when she can secure spot contracts with Grain Millers for a higher price than those who rush their oats to the miller straight out of the field.

Spinning Straw Into Gold

"What makes the oat crop valuable is the straw," Ortrude says. She sells much of it to her neighbor to line chicken boxes, estimating that she sells half of her straw in small square bales and keeps the other half

“After oat harvest we have this big open field full of clover and alfalfa. It keeps the nutrients in place from manure applications and by fall the whole field is blooming and you see all of the pollinators out there.”

to use as bedding for her own sheep. For Ortrude, harvesting straw is easier than hay because straw is more resilient to rain. She sells her bales for \$3 per small square – though she believes she could get more by differentiating her certified organic straw and charging a higher price for it.

Some might question the practice of routinely removing straw in an organic system, and how that impacts soil fertility. But Ortrude explains that she sources hog manure to help maintain soil fertility organically. "Having hog manure makes it easier to feel good about taking straw

Telling the Tale

In response to feedback from PFI members that integrating small grains is a priority area for their operations, we have undertaken a lot of new programming to address knowledge and other barriers to adding small grains to traditional farms in Iowa.

On Aug. 17, we held our first conference focused exclusively on small grains. The event featured 12 speakers, who delved into topics ranging from variety selection to marketing, and everything in between. After the conference ended, a group of “small grains champions” stayed to participate in a training on how to honestly and effectively tell the story of small grains – their benefits, as well as the challenges of growing them.

Ortrude’s experience and advocacy for small grains led PFI to identify her as a small grains champion. In August, she joined us for the small grains conference and boot camp. “The boot camp was super helpful,” Ortrude says. “I’ve never received any formal training on how to make an outline for a presentation or design a PowerPoint, so I learned a lot.” As for production, Ortrude went to the conference with an interest in the possibility of double-cropping or getting a soybean crop in after small-grain harvest in the same growing year. With the knowledge she gathered from



Nearly 80 people attended PFI’s first small grains conference in August. Ortrude Dial among them (she’s in the blue shirt at the table in the center).

the conference sessions, she says she is going to plant soft red winter wheat for the first time this year and sell it to a buyer across the Mississippi River in Illinois, and then plant a short-season soybean variety after small-grain harvest.

Do you have a small-grains story you want to tell? Have you seen the benefits of oats or other small grains? Contact Alisha Bower, (515) 232-5661 or alisha@practicalfarmers.org, to learn more about what’s involved and the resources available to support you in spreading the good word about small grains. ■

every year,” Ortrude says. “If I had only my own sheep manure, I’d have to think harder about the pros and cons of taking straw off.” She sources hog manure from her neighbor, Travis Twedt. They have known each other for a long time, having met at the hog confinement. Since then, both have embarked on their own farming ventures – but the two regularly share equipment and labor. Applying Travis’ hog manure to Ortrude’s crop ground lets Travis dispose of his manure (a challenge for hog farmers) while supplying Ortrude with a source of fertilizer for her crops. The exchange is just one example of how the neighbors have worked out win-win arrangements for their farms. It’s not just income this straw is spinning – it’s spinning community, too.

The Ugly Duckling

The biggest management challenge for organic farmers is controlling weeds. How difficult that task is depends, in large part, on how well (or poorly) previous land managers controlled weeds to limit the weed seed bank. Inheriting a weedy farm



Protector of Sheep and Straw: Luna, who works at Three Sisters Farm herding and guarding sheep, scents a mouse in the oat straw bales held in storage until prices go up in the winter. Says Ortrude: “We’ve learned not to store the straw for more than a year or the mouse damage will reduce the value of the bales.”

is an organic farmer’s worst nightmare – and Ortrude’s reality. “My newest field has a huge weed bank. They were as tall as the tractor the first time we went in,” she says. “We’ll think seriously about going to oats next in the rotation to control weeds, and getting in the field in the summer to fill in a huge ravine out there that could swallow a small car.” Adding oats, or any

small-grain crop to the rotation, can help farmers control weeds because the small-grain crop is harvested in July. This timing lets farmers chop problem weeds down before they’ve set a viable seed. And if oats are underseeded with alfalfa and clover – which is Ortrude’s practice – the field is covered continuously, suppressing weeds by keeping soil covered.

“After oat harvest, we have this big, open field full of clover and alfalfa,” Ortrude says. “It keeps the nutrients in place from manure applications, and by fall the whole field is blooming and you see all the pollinators out there.” As Ortrude has found, working with the natural tendencies of the small-grain crop and legume cover crop, it’s possible to turn adversity to advantage – creating something beautiful in the process. ■

Getting Started with Direct Meat Sales

Beginning farmers share their tips and experience

by Greg Padget

Starting a farm can be challenging and capital-intensive. Because of this, some beginning farmers have turned to raising livestock and direct-marketing meat as their entry into farming. In this article, some beginning farmers share their experiences and lessons learned.

Finding Your Markets

When selling a product, the first thing you typically think about is who will buy your goods – and the usual factors go into solving this question. Do you have the right location? Will people pay your asking price? How will they find your product? Asking questions can help you find the solution that works for your farming operation. The same applies when direct-selling meat – but there are also some differences between marketing meat this way compared with other products.

With meat, there are two primary ways to directly market it: either by the cut or by the side (for instance, selling a whole animal or half of one). Tom Wilson raises pastured pork, poultry and lamb at Remnant Hills Farm near Nevada. He has found that, by selling nearly all his meat by the cut, he and his partner, Taylor Williams, are able to sell directly to consumers through farmers markets, online co-ops and their buying group. “We need to gross as much as possible at this point in the business, and that is the best way,” Tom says, explaining that selling through these channels lets him build relationships with his customers and turn them into regulars. For instance, regular farmers market customers have joined his buying club to purchase meat and eggs year-round.

Tom has found that being located near the Des Moines and Ames markets has provided access to customers who are able and willing to pay a premium, whereas his peers in rural locations may not have that opportunity. By contrast, Peter Kerns, who operates Turkey River Farm in Elkader, has found that selling pork custom-processed



Bill and Stacey Borrenpohl

“Shop around, and then shop around some more. Ask a ton of questions – and then talk with other similar producers to figure out what questions you missed.”

— BILL BORRENPOHL

by the whole and half animal, as well as offering a fully processed 35-pound sampler pack, works well in his rural area. Peter did his research before deciding how he would market his pork. He felt confident in his decision because he had consulted his mentor and learned how to use this system. “These options work well for many customers,” Peter says. “But I am working on getting to a point where I can sell retail cuts. Just because this is how I sell now doesn’t mean it won’t change.” Always learning from your customers and meeting their needs can be helpful when direct-marketing.

Bill and Stacey Borrenpohl live in rural Jackson County, Iowa, where they raise beef, pork, meat goats and eggs at Woven Strong Farm. They decided that growing and establishing a strong customer base and finding repeat customers willing to

pay for quality meat cuts would be their marketing focus. “We’d rather sell halves and wholes – much less work and more profitable,” Stacey says. “Wholesale is the one market we’ve only dabbled in. It is a challenge as [wholesale buyers] are limited in the types of cuts they will take – and so far, it hasn’t been a big volume.”

Finding Your Processor

As you are determining your markets, you also need to evaluate your meat processing options. Beginning farmers have discovered that processing doesn’t come easy in Iowa. Many lockers that once serviced small quantities of livestock have closed, forcing farmers to travel longer distances and schedule processing dates well in advance. While Tom Wilson uses the nearby Story City Locker to process his pork and lamb, he is forced to travel 260 miles roundtrip to Bloomfield to access one of only two state-inspected poultry processors in Iowa. “The long drive to have chicken processed will keep us from looking at any real increase in the number of birds we raise,” Tom says. Doing your research in the beginning will help you figure out where you are going to process and what additional expenses you will incur, such as travel time and expense.

Bill and Stacey shopped around their nearby lockers to find one that could handle the diversity of livestock they wanted to process. They were fortunate in that they had a couple of options within an hour’s drive, and a few other options farther away. They ultimately chose two lockers. One processes custom orders of whole and half animals; the other is a state-inspected facility that processes retail cuts. “The locker is so critical – they are handling the final product for an animal we’ve been raising for six to 18 months,” Bill says. “It matters a great deal how they handle the product, and their pricing likewise is a big component of the direct cost as well. Take time to build relationships.”

Peter found himself searching for nearby pork processors when he was starting out. He used the Iowa Department of



Left and center: Tom Wilson and his partner, Taylor Williams, use their farmers market stand to help promote their buying club. **Right:** Peter Kerns tends to his heritage-breed Mangalitsa and Red Wattle pigs



"Trusting your processor is pretty important. Ask as many questions as needed for you to feel comfortable about all aspects of their handling and processing . . . There are months of work going into one day at the locker. As a small-scale livestock farmer, than can be make-or-break for your business." — TOM WILSON

Inspections and Appeals website to find lockers that were state-inspected (processing at such a locker lets him sell his meat by the cut directly to customers). After identifying a few nearby lockers, he started calling around, asking about practices and processes. "It was important that I created a list of questions for processors," Peter says. "What is your slaughter method? What is your hanging policy? What offal do you work with and what do you dispose? Do you co-mingle sausages and value-added products? I had a lot of questions and I think it's important for small-scale meat producers to know the answers to them for the processors they work with."

The communication doesn't end with the initial questions. Tom can't stress enough how constant communication with the locker is key to a strong relationship. "Trusting your processor is pretty important," he says. "Ask as many questions as needed for you to feel comfortable about all aspects of their handling and processing of your livestock and meat. There are months of work going into one day at the locker. As a small-scale livestock farmer, that can be make-or-break for your business." Working with Story City Locker helped reinforce for him the importance of communication and trust. "They have been great to work with for our pork processing," he says. "They helped us figure out what

we were doing with our first couple groups of pigs, and have since been open to any additional requests."

Finding the Right Insurance and Licenses

Selling meat directly to consumers comes with some risk and regulations; you don't want to get caught without the right coverage and licenses. Do your homework and cover yourself from the start. "Shop around, and then shop around more," Bill and Stacey suggest. "Ask a ton of questions – and then talk to other similar producers to figure out what questions you missed."

It wasn't until someone asked a question on Practical Farmers' livestock email discussion group about commercial insurance that the Borrenpohls realized their vehicle was not properly insured for transporting meat. "It was a frustrating discovery, as we thought we had asked all the right questions," Stacey says. "We started asking for referrals from fellow farm families for quality agents to quote. We talked to several agents until we found the one we knew would get us covered – without overselling us product." Bill and Stacey stress that they are not the experts when it comes to finding the right insurance. They recommend that you ask lots of questions and seek recommendations from others. When Tom was looking for insurance, he worked

closely with his agent. "We made sure he knew what we were raising and how we were marketing that product so he could put together the policy," Tom says, stressing the importance of making sure your insurance company understands your operation and covers you correctly.

Another area you need to consider is obtaining the proper licenses. Tom sells at farmers market stands and stores his products at the farm. He discovered he needed to have a "potentially hazardous" food license for each county in which he sells at farmers markets. When storing meat you intend to sell in your own freezers, the state of Iowa requires that you have a warehouse license. The food license costs about \$100 per county, while the warehouse license can vary based on your sales history. Check with your county's department of appeals and inspections to find out what you need.

These expenses can add up, so don't forget to factor this cost into your business when determining your prices. Just like meat processing, ask lots of questions and do your research. Talk to your processor, talk to other farmers, talk to your insurance agent: You can never ask too questions. Use the answers to figure out what is going to work for you and your farm. ■

Dicamba Damage Elevates Drift Discussion

by Liz Kolbe

"I don't enjoy spraying any chemicals," says a western Iowa farmer, who wishes to remain anonymous. "But I got a special knot in my stomach when I was spraying dicamba." With an eye on some nearby Palmer amaranth, this farmer tried Monsanto's Roundup Ready 2 Xtend soybeans this year.

He carefully followed the label directions for Engenia, an herbicide developed for dicamba-tolerant soybeans and cotton. He was mindful of wind direction, and had a successful application. But several weeks later, he found cupped leaves – symptoms of dicamba damage – in his neighbor's soybeans. He was not alone.

In Iowa this year, 258 cases of agricultural pesticide misuse are under investigation by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's (IDALS) Pesticide Bureau. In about 100 of those cases, dicamba is suspected, with damage affecting 150,000 acres of the state's soybeans. This represents nearly double the number of pesticide misuse complaints the Pesticide Bureau receives in an average year – but these figures are dwarfed by the reports from Arkansas and Missouri, where Roundup-resistant weeds are common and Xtend soybeans are more frequently used.

A Widespread Problem

In Missouri, the Bureau of Pesticide Control at the Missouri Department of Agriculture (MDA) is investigating 280 dicamba-related cases across 54 counties and 325,000 acres, with the highest density of reports in the southeastern part of the state. In Arkansas, the State Plant Board, a division of the Arkansas Agriculture Department (ASPB), is investigating a staggering 966 dicamba misuse complaints in 26 counties, mostly along the eastern edge of the state. Other soybean- and cotton-producing states are reporting issues, including Illinois, Tennessee and Kentucky. An estimated 3.1 million acres of soybeans have been damaged by dicamba misuse in 2017.

Why Now?

Prior to this year, dicamba has primarily been used in Iowa for early-season broadleaf weed control in corn. 2017 is the first year dicamba has been used for weed control in Iowa's soybean fields. For the first time, Monsanto's Xtend soybean stacks Roundup resistance with dicamba resistance. Not only do dicamba-resistant

soybeans open up more acres to spraying with dicamba, they allow for multiple applications on those acres much later into the season – through August – when non-resistant soybeans, trees and specialty crops are susceptible to damage. Across the country, 20 million acres of Xtend soybeans were planted.



New Technology, Similar Problem?

All pesticides are susceptible to drift, but dicamba is particularly problematic because of its ability to volatilize – to become re-airborne hours or days after application. When this happens, the herbicide can move for miles. Volatilization is more likely to occur at higher temperatures (above 86 degrees Fahrenheit), and when the herbicide is sprayed on foliage instead of soil (as a pre-emergent herbicide).

To use Xtend soybeans, farmers are required to spray new "low-volatility" formulations of dicamba. Currently, three herbicides have been approved for use with dicamba-tolerant seeds: Monsanto's XtendiMax, BASF's Engenia and DuPont's FeXapan. While these herbicides still have the potential to volatilize, Monsanto claims the new formulations reduce the likelihood of volatilization by 90 percent compared to older formulations of dicamba like Banvel.

States' Response

IDALS has not made any formal statements about dicamba, but the departments of agriculture in Missouri and Arkansas have. On July 7, the MDA issued a stop-sale order on all dicamba products, preventing any further use. Six days later it issued a notice of release from the stop-sale, allowing applicators with special-use permits to continue using the three dicamba herbicides, with a temporary label that included new more stringent requirements. Most notably, certified applicators are required to complete an online form *prior* to each application of dicamba. Only a handful of states require annual pesticide use reporting by applicators; Iowa, Missouri and Arkansas are not among them.

In Arkansas, the agriculture department, along with the legislature and governor, enacted an emergency rule to ban the sale and use of dicamba for 120 days, which began on July 11. Governor Asa Hutchinson further requested that a task force "review dicamba technology, examine current problems with its use and application, and make long-term recommendations for the future." In August, the task force made two recommendations: a cutoff date of April 15 for applying dicamba herbicides in Arkansas in 2018 (to be re-visited in 2019); and increasing independent university testing of any new herbicides or product packages prior to market availability.

The task force consisted of farmers, seed dealers, and association and ag industry representatives. Representatives from BASF, Dow, Monsanto, Bayer, DuPont and the University of Arkansas presented to the task force in an advisory role. According to Monsanto's published presentation



Opposite: Cupped soybean leaves show telltale evidence of dicamba damage. (Photo from University of Alabama)

Left: Kathy Dice and Tom Wahl, owners of Red Fern Farm, experienced widespread phenoxy herbicide damage this year – the first time they have ever been a victim of pesticide drift.

to the task force (dated Aug. 18), it had completed 1,016 site visits (of 1,356 total visits planned) where dicamba damage was suspected. At 660 of those sites, the applicator self-reported errors in application based on the first seven label requirements. The company cited this finding as part of its argument that applicator error is to blame for most of the damage, rather than the product itself.

Academic Response

Weed scientists have also been involved in the conversation. Bob Hartzler, agronomy professor and extension weed scientist at Iowa State University, has been tracking the dicamba issue in his ISU Extension blog. He notes that Iowa's comparatively low weed pressure and extensive corn acres make dicamba use on soybeans less prevalent than in Missouri and Arkansas – and where dicamba is used on soybeans in Iowa, our climate and landscape render the chemical less susceptible to volatilization. But he is still uneasy. "While the magnitude of problems in Iowa during the 2017 growing season is much less than in states south of Iowa, the number of injured fields is significant," Bob wrote. "My concern is that problems with off-target movement will increase in the future as use increases."

Kevin Bradley, a professor of plant science at the University of Missouri, has been diligently compiling dicamba issues this year and reporting his findings on the university's IPM blog. In a post from July, he commented on the divide between applicators and farmers, and the product's representatives: "Can you look at the scale and magnitude of the problem

on these maps and really believe that all of this can collectively be explained by some combination of physical drift, sprayer error, failure to follow guidelines, temperature inversions, generic dicamba usage, contaminated glufosinate products and improper sprayer clean out – but that volatility is not also a factor?"

All pesticides are susceptible to drift, but dicamba is especially problematic because of its ability . . . to become re-airborne hours or days after application.

This question was taken to field trials in Arkansas, and the findings were presented to the state's task force by Jason Norsworthy, professor and endowed chair of weed science at the University of Arkansas. After presenting results of his team's volatility trials on Engenia and XtendiMax, he shared three conclusions: dicamba behaves differently in warmer summer months than in the spring; there is "significant volatility" of newer products in the field; and "use of the current dicamba formulations across vast acres in the summer months will cause widespread damage to sensitive plants, including non-agricultural species."

A Bigger Drift Problem

"I had phenoxy herbicide damage, presumably dicamba, on pretty much every acre of my farm this year – first time ever," says Tom Wahl of Red Fern Farm, an agroforestry farm and nursery he operates

near Wapello with his wife, Kathy Dice. Like many farmers, Tom did not report the damage to IDALS. "None of the damage was severe, just widespread," Tom says. "I noticed leaf margins curling on chestnuts, box elder and many other species of trees. The damage was restricted to just the margins of leaves, and just on some trees, while other trees of the same species remained undamaged just a few feet away. I don't think [the drift damage] resulted in any measurable losses this time – but I am also sure this is just the beginning of a problem that will become more serious as the planting of these new soybean varieties becomes more widespread."

In addition to dicamba, 2017 has been a bad year for drifting fungicides, insecticides and other herbicides. In June, a worried beginning vegetable farmer called the PFI office to ask about pesticide drift when she awoke to find spots on every plant on her property. She was about to begin her first year selling at the farmers market, and was tip-toeing into cut flowers. This was her young family's year to begin investing in the farm and trying the market, and she was worried everything was now unsaleable. She was right. Test results showed residue of fomesafen, glyphosate, atrazine, acetochlor and metalochlor from neighboring applications.

An organic vegetable farmer in southwest Iowa was hit with drift several times early in the season, beginning in April. He will lose his organic certification and have to wait three years to regain it. The resulting sales losses could easily top \$500,000.

While losses to extensive acres of soybeans grab the headlines, we must remember that vegetables are sold fresh to consumers, vegetable farmers and their workers are out in their fields working every day – and vegetables and specialty crops are high-value crops. Sales of diversified vegetables reach \$30,000 per acre, and some crops are even more valuable. As we use all the "tools in the toolbox" on our farms, remember the safety and livelihood of those around you – and that, together, we make a vibrant agricultural community in Iowa. ■



2018

REVIVAL

JAN 18-20

FEATURING:

JAMES REBANKS – a best-selling author and shepherd from the mountains of northern England

PRE-CONFERENCE SHORT COURSE – January 18-19

"Soils: Cultivating a Deeper Understanding" with featured speakers: Lee Burras, Alan Franzluebbers, Gwyn Beattie and Cindy Cambardella

MORE THAN 50 CONFERENCE SESSIONS, including:

- The Shepherd's Life: Soil, Sheep Dogs and Social Media with James Rebanks

- Field Preparation, Cultivation and Fertility with Michael Kilpatrick

- Solar-Powered Livestock with Mark Bader

- Pragmatic Approaches to Sustainability and Profitability with Whilden Hughes

- Cover Crops and Crop Rotations in Organic Systems Without Livestock with Mark Doudlah

- Carbonomics with Keith Berns

PRACTICAL FARMERS OF IOWA
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A PFI Strategic Plan Report Card

Measuring our progress over the last three years

by Sally Worley

Come January, we will have up-to-date marching orders in the form of a new strategic plan. Below are highlights of our progress on the current strategic plan that wraps up at the end of 2017. While we didn't meet all our goals, we came close on most – and they were very ambitious. Kudos to you all for the incredible amount of work we've accomplished together, and what we have achieved as a result!

GOAL #1: Practical Farmers Builds Community in Iowa and Beyond



"Being a farmer can be hard, and you need a thick skin. It is nice to have a group of fellow thick-skinners you can talk to at will."
– Jordan Clasen

GOAL #2: Farmers Are Stewards of Our Natural Resources



"I am more aware of how I am using the land and what I must do to build and maintain its quality."
– Kelly Clime

GOAL #3: Farmers, Farms and Food Systems Are Viable

"PFI has increased my farm's profitability by giving me access to ecological solutions that reduce costs by reducing the fossil fuel needs of my operation. In addition, the farmer-to-farmer learning has yielded information that has resulted in better production, both of which have improved my bottom line." – Seth Watkins

Our Target

How We Did

COMMUNITY
90% of members report an increased sense of community

82% of members report an increased sense of community through PFI, and **79%** feel they have people they can rely on

RELATIONSHIPS
80% of members report they have formed friendships, businesses or other relationships through Practical Farmers

72% of members say they have formed friendships, business relationships or other relationships through their association with PFI

ENGAGEMENT
90% of members report they participated in PFI programs

89% alone read our quarterly newsletter!

MEMBERSHIP
PFI membership tops 5,000

When this plan was implemented in 2014, membership was 2,500. Current membership is 3,011. **This represents a 20% increase in membership in three years.**

Our Target

How We Did

EXTERNAL INPUTS
50% of PFI farmers who use external inputs (such as pesticides and fertilizers) decrease their use

Note: 52% of farmers report not using any inputs.
Of the 48% who used inputs, 36% reported a decrease in use

COVER CROPS
50% of PFI farmers increase their use of cover crops

AMONG ALL FARMERS:
43% increased use of cover crops, and **63% report using** cover crops

AMONG CORN AND SOYBEAN FARMERS:
50% increased use of cover crops, and **73% report using** cover crops

THIRD CROPS
10% of PFI farmers add a third crop to their corn-soybean rotation

AMONG ALL FARMERS:
19% increased use of third crops, and **34% report planting** a third crop

AMONG CORN AND SOYBEAN FARMERS:
30% increased use of third crops, and **55% report planting** a third crop

STEWARDSHIP
70% of PFI farmers report that participating in PFI has helped them improve stewardship

72% of farmers report that Practical Farmers has helped them improve stewardship

Our Target

How We Did

PROFITABILITY
65% of PFI farmers and all Savings Incentive Program graduates improve profitability or efficiency

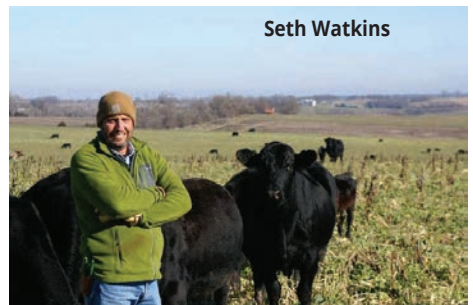
49% of PFI farmers improved profitability; we are still collecting data to inform the answer for SIP graduates

WORK-LIFE BALANCE
60% of members are more satisfied with work-life balance

31% of members reported being more satisfied with their work-life balance

TRANSITION PLANNING
40% of members report their association with PFI has helped them begin transition planning

35% of members reported PFI has helped them begin transition planning



Seth Watkins

To read more thoughts on how we performed on this strategic plan, please visit practicalfarmers.org/blog.

Learning From a Cover Crop Master

by Sally Hertz Gran

After visiting Gabe Brown's farm in North Dakota with Practical Farmers in 2015, I was thrilled at the chance to go on another bus trip to an extraordinary farm. PFI's trip to Dave Brandt's farm in Carroll, Ohio, in August was a great opportunity to see how Ohio farmers apply PFI values to a landscape with different soil, climate and markets.

Crop Rotation

Ohio soils are naturally higher in clay and lower in organic matter than Iowa soils, and continuous soybeans are common. Dave has increased the organic matter of his soils through extended rotations, planting cover crops and practicing no-till. The Brandts rely on limited synthetic nutrient inputs, deriving much of their fertility from cover crops. The three-year framework of this rotation (corn-cover-beans-small grains-cover) is applied throughout his entire farm.

Here is Dave's prescription for planting cover crops, which maximizes cover crop growth:

- **Year 1:** Plant an early cover crop of buckwheat and terminate a few weeks later at flowering. In late May, plant a corn crop, followed by a mixed cover crop of cereal rye and a couple of brassica species.
- **Year 2:** Drill soybeans in early June into the rye cover crop, followed by winter wheat.
- **Year 3:** Harvest winter wheat in mid-summer, then plant a diverse mix of cover crops to enrich the soil and fix nitrogen ahead of the corn crop.

In 1973, shortly after beginning his farming career, Dave's soil tested at .5 percent organic matter. Today, it measures as high as 8 percent – which is similar to that of prairie soil. For the Brandt family, investing in the soil has paid off. While many of his neighbors had to replant once or twice this spring after heavy rain events, Dave's soil and the crops fared well. After a 5.5-inch



rainfall event, he told our group that no water flowed through his drainage tiles.

Seed Selection

In order to cut costs, Dave plants untreated, non-GMO seed. Once a farmer has spent a few years building healthy soil biology, he said seed coatings no longer offer benefits. In fact, they can be detrimental to beneficial mycorrhizal fungi. "The lace you see between the roots are the 'cell phone' of my crops – how they communicate and get fed with nutrients they need," Dave said. He is concerned that neonicotinoids do not boost yields enough to cover the added expense, and can kill beneficial insects such as beetles and lightning bugs. He also takes advantage of recently developed short-season, high-yielding corn varieties that allow for a long cover cropping window. He has gone from using a 115-day corn to a 94-day variety that he harvests around Sept. 20, with reportedly no yield reduction – which he believes is due to improved genetics and soil health, as well as the timing of rainfall in current weather patterns.

Enterprise Diversification

To make it possible for younger generations of family members to return to the farm, the Brandts started Walnut Creek Seeds, a cover crop seed cleaning and packaging business. They also do custom work with a high-

clearance seeder and a roller-crimper. Dave estimates that by crimping cereal rye ahead of soybeans, they have reduced herbicide use in that crop by up to 95 percent.

Cover Crops Grazed By Neighbors

The Brandt family does not have livestock, but connected us with two farmers who graze diverse cover crop mixes, purchased from Walnut Creek Seeds, as part of their extended crop rotations. Wolfinger Family Farms grazes 80 cattle on 50 acres of cover crops from late November through January. The mixes include: field pea, cow pea, sunn hemp, oats, pearl millet, radish, Ethiopian cabbage, sunflower, crimson clover, hairy vetch, barley and triticale. They graze 3 to 4 acres at a time by moving single high-tensile wire. As a result, they save 80-100 round bales of hay each winter. Berry Family Farm is a diversified livestock and crop farm. Thirty cattle graze a diverse summer annual mix that included sunn hemp, soybeans and cow peas. ■

Sally Hertz Gran is a beginning farmer raising certified organic corn, soybeans and small grains near Nevada.

Learn More

➔ Read a more in-depth version of Sally's reflections on our blog at practicalfarmers.org/blog/2017/11/10/sally-gran.



Members Reflect on Lessons Learned in Ohio

Trip inspires Iowa farmers to make changes

by Meghan Filbert

In early August, PFI members had the chance to visit the farm of Dave Brandt and see firsthand how cover crops can significantly improve soil health and fertility. For many participants, the visit to Dave's farm near Carroll, Ohio, was a dream come true – a chance to cross an item off their bucket list. For everyone, the trip was inspiring. Seeing what is possible with cover crops and extended rotations on the farms of Dave and his neighbors sparked curiosity about what is possible here in Iowa. Here, members share the lessons they brought home.

Multiple facets of diversity were discussed during the trip. Two points stuck with Nathan Koester, of Scales Mound, Illinois: "Firstly, the value of planting mixes rather than single species of cover crops, to compound benefits, and secondly, diversity in your farm business. The many entities on the Brandt farm encourage the next generation. We will be looking at opportunities to diversify our [dairy] farm as we move forward, both from a cover crop standpoint as well as business entities."

Margaret Smith, of Hampton, echoed Nathan. "What stood out to me is the importance of seed-cleaning facilities and seed supply for more diverse agriculture," she said. For Tom Wind, of Jamaica, Dave reinforced the concept of achieving an ideal carbon-to-nitrogen ratio of 24-to-1 through diversity of cover crops: "In my transition to organic, I will likely use more plant species than just alfalfa or clover, and I will look at the carbon-to-nitrogen ratio of the cover crops in the third and fourth year of my rotation."

Wendell Zimmerman, of Greenfield, wants to reduce his inputs and came back to Iowa with ideas on how to do that. "I wish to

grow my own nitrogen with spring peas," he said, "and use cover crops to mine phosphorus, potassium, calcium and other nutrients from the soil instead of using commercial fertilizers."

Dave's discussion of seed selection stuck with several participants. "The biggest lesson for us was the seed treatment," said Teresa Wendt, of Stanwood. "Once my pollinator habitat gets older and more habitat-laden, and the cover crops have time to work on the soil, we're definitely going to start experimenting with naked seed corn and beans."

"Dave mentioned that seed treatments hinder soil biological life near the seed," Tom said. "I will consider reducing or eliminating seed treatments, such as [neonicotinoids], in my conventional crops as my soil health improves."

For Jon Kruse, a beginning farmer from Monona, the trip yielded a trove of practical ideas for his farm, as well as an inspiring vision of what can be achieved through strategic use of cover crops. "For my first year growing cover crops, I'm going to plant rye at 50 pounds and radishes at 2 pounds per acre on 200 acres of bean



Opposite Page: Sally Hertz Gran stands by cattle in pastures at Berry Family Farm.

Above: (Back to front): Wendell Zimmerman, Margaret Smith, Leland Shelton, Landon Corlett and Jon Kruse (front-right)

ground, and some rye on corn ground," Jon said. "I'm excited to have learned that with cover crops, the Brandts are able to use less commercial fertilizer and at the same time produce a more nutrient-dense product," Jon said. "It is hard to believe what Dave Brandt and his family have achieved from changing their soil profile – their ability to absorb excessive amounts of water and stop fertilizer run off."

"What if someday the Mississippi River would run clear? As a farmer, this would be a great accomplishment." ■



Left: Teresa Wendt listens to Dave Brandt speak.

Right: Nathan and Jeff Koester look at soil from Dave's farm, as Margaret Smith listens.



The Surprising Potential of "Iowa Rice"

Farmers extoll the many uses and benefits of buckwheat

by Nick Ohde

Buckwheat (*Fagopyrum esculentum*) is in a class of plants known as the pseudocereals. People often lump buckwheat, amaranth and quinoa into the small grains category, but they're not actually small grains. In fact, they're not even in the grass family. Botanically and agronomically speaking, they are more like broadleaf plants.

When it comes to food though, we can think of buckwheat and other pseudocereals as grains. Like oats, we call the seeds groats, which we often crack or mill to make flour, much as we would with wheat. From the soba noodles of Japan to the kasha of Eastern Europe to the buckwheat crepes of France, the buckwheat plant is an important part of many cuisines around the world.

Joe Lynch, who owns and operates Onion Creek Farm just outside Ames with his partner, Lonna Nachtigal, loves buckwheat. But he thinks it needs a rebranding. He thinks we should call it "Iowa rice."

Farm Benefits

"It's reliable," Joe says. "I planted it as a cover crop with pretty much no soil moisture this year and it came up." Lonna adds that it "suppresses weeds like crazy" — especially when you plant it late in the year. Joe and Lonna plant buckwheat as a cover crop in mid- to late-summer after harvesting earlier-season crops like garlic. Buckwheat is very competitive and prevents late-season weeds from germinating, which keeps the seed bed cleaner from some weeds the following year. "And the bees love it," Lonna adds.

Jordan Clasen, of Grade A Gardens in Johnston, uses buckwheat in a similar way on his vegetable operation. "I like it as a cover crop because it germinates quickly, suppresses weeds and builds soil," he says. "I mow it before the seed matures and then let it break down for a couple weeks. Come early October, I will broadcast winter rye, and shallow-till to incorporate. I let



the rye establish and graze chickens on it all winter." When it's time to plant the following spring, he says the soil is easy to work.

Fred Kirschenmann lives in Ames, but runs the family farm in North Dakota. "Buckwheat fits well in the rotation as a warm-season broadleaf crop and a good nurse crop for planting alfalfa," he

"Buckwheat is used around the world and it's delicious. We're just not used to it." — JOE LYNCH

says. While markets for the crop have diminished in recent years, he hopes buckwheat will become a more important food crop in the United States.

Peter Kraus grew up on a vegetable farm — Canoe Creek Produce outside of Decorah. He says his parents, Kevin and Barbara, raise buckwheat as a cover crop for many of the same reasons other farmers have mentioned. "I have also read it is good at mining certain minerals out of the soil

that are unavailable to other plants," Peter says. Research has shown that buckwheat may be particularly good at making some unavailable forms of phosphorus more available by acidifying the root zone, thus helping to speed up the weathering process of organic phosphates.

Culinary Potential

Joe and Lonna run a guest house on their farm. One weekend they had a group of people arrive late at night, including a woman from Ukraine. When the woman woke up in the morning to see the blooming field of buckwheat, she burst into tears, Joe recounts. Buckwheat is a common crop there, and seeing a field of it in bloom reminded her of where she grew up.

"Buckwheat is used around the world and it's delicious," Joe says. "We're just not used to it at all." He says he likes to make buckwheat crepes, a common street food in Brittany, France. "They can be a little tricky to make, but they can be made completely out of buckwheat flour," Joe says, which is nice for people looking to reduce or eliminate gluten from their diets.



Opposite: Joe Lynch looks at some buckwheat ripening on his farm. **Above:** Buckwheat groats up close **Right:** Earl Hafner stands by the mill he uses to process grains at Early Morning Harvest.



Cornelia Flora of Ames agrees. "I love buckwheat pancakes. I have to avoid gluten, and buckwheat is gluten-free. I'd like to see a lot more buckwheat flour." Buckwheat contains no gluten because it is actually not related to wheat, in spite of its common name. For people with Celiac's disease, where gluten sparks a toxic reaction in the body, buckwheat can be a vital part of their diet. Because it lacks gluten, buckwheat doesn't work like bread flour, and thus is not used in the same way as wheat flour.

David Weisberger of Ames grew up in New York City in a neighborhood composed of many Eastern European immigrants. He says that kasha – toasted buckwheat groats – is a dish commonly eaten in that region. One popular application of kasha is the knish, a form of savory pastry that is stuffed with kasha, ground beef, potatoes and sauerkraut.

Joe uses buckwheat in a range of culinary capacities. He uses buckwheat flour in his cooking, and he loves the groats – though he notes they can have a tendency to stick together. While a sticky texture can be appealing in buckwheat porridge, when Joe wants to use the groats more like rice, he coats the them with an egg and lightly toasts the mixture until the groats no longer stick together. After that, he adds a few vegetables and some liquid – water or broth – covers and simmers for about 15 minutes until the buckwheat is tender and the liquid is absorbed.

Peter Kraus says he uses buckwheat a lot in his cooking, both the flour and the groats. "I get a lot of my buckwheat culinary inspiration from places where buckwheat plays significant roles in those place's crop rotations, and where the culinary tradition supports the farmers' decisions to support the soil through diverse crop rotations." That includes bread, baked goods, crepes, pancakes, porridges and grain salad. "When I use buckwheat as a grain, either as a porridge or a grain salad, I use it just as I would with cooked rye or wheat berries," Peter says. "Buckwheat takes a lot less time to cook, so it is good for when you're short on time to prepare something." (You can find Peter's recipe for buckwheat sourdough bread on our blog at practicalfarmers.org/blog).

Monetary Potential

Earl Hafner of Panora has capitalized on buckwheat perhaps more than any other farmer in Iowa. He and his son, Jeff, run Early Morning Harvest, where they mill and sell wheat, oats, corn, rye and buckwheat in various forms from whole grains to flour, and also sell honey, eggs, fruits and vegetables direct to consumers, restaurants and grocery stores.

Earl originally started growing buckwheat because it fits well into his crop rotation. "We're always looking for an additional cash crop after the wheat," he says. After wheat harvest in July, he hopes for a rain to provide some soil moisture for the buckwheat to germinate. "It traditionally

rains the third week of July," Earl says with a smile, "but this year, it was a little drier and we got delayed." Because buckwheat only takes 65 days from planting to harvest, that's enough time to plant by Aug. 1 and harvest by the average first frost in mid-October.

Dehulling is somewhat of a challenge for getting nice, intact buckwheat groats. Earl has an old impact dehuller that is primarily used for oats. However, he says it's "too severe" for buckwheat: The dehuller ends up cracking the groat in the process of removing the hull, so it doesn't really work for buckwheat.

Fortunately, for making flour, there's a different process. Earl first runs the buckwheat through a cleaner, then runs it through their mill with the hulls still on. Finally, he sieves off the hulls. After milling, he can do one of two things: he can run the buckwheat through a coarse screen to make a coarsely-ground buckwheat cereal, or he can grind it into buckwheat flour – which is the primary reason for milling buckwheat. Storing buckwheat requires a little more consideration, however. Earl says that because buckwheat contains more natural oil than other grains, it can turn rancid faster if it's not stored in a cool area.

It's not just the flour and groats that have value; the hulls also have many uses after being removed. Buckwheat hulls make a fine filling for pillows – in the past, Earl has given his hulls to a church organization that makes pillows to raise money for veterans. The Hafners also feed the hulls to cows, as Earl says they are high in minerals. Trappers also like the hulls – apparently they can mask human odors on traps.

Still another benefit of having buckwheat is the ability to make buckwheat honey. If you walk out into a buckwheat field, it's usually buzzing with bees. "We have people coming all the time for raw honey," Earl says, noting that people buy his honey for both eating and various medical uses, such as allergy suppression. "Some like the buckwheat honey, some do clover honey." He says the honeybees actually seem to prefer clover over buckwheat, but buckwheat honey has a distinctive flavor that many people love. ■



Field Day Photos

1.



1) ▶ Dave Brandt (center, blue overalls) discusses cover crops during the PFI tour he hosted on his farm near Carroll, Ohio. *(Photo courtesy of Sally Hertz Gran)*

2) ▶ Two young visitors explore the gardens at Opportunity Village during the Aug. 13 field day in Clear Lake.

3) ▶ Guests at the Aug. 13 field day participate in a hands-on activity to learn how Andrea Evelsizer, a broker with the food aggregator North Iowa Fresh, makes connections between farmers and buyers.

4) ▶ Guests at Kevin and Ranae Dietzel's Aug. 14 field day learn about the Dietzels' grass-based dairy operation near Jewell.

5) ▶ Tyson Allchin demonstrates how he inoculates wood chips with mushroom spawn during the field day he hosted on Aug. 8 near Columbus Junction.

2.



3.

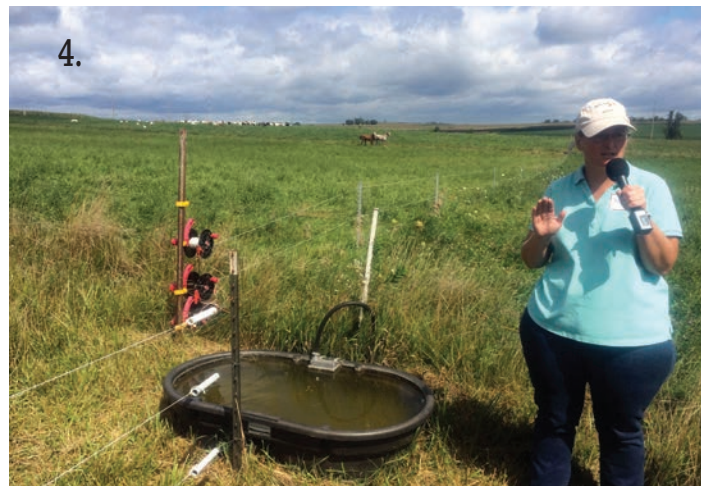


4.



5.





1) ▶ Connie Tjelmeland (left) and Kate Gilbert have a chance to chat at the Dietzels' field day.

2) ▶ Paul Ackley (left) speaks with Paul Jones in Russ Wischovers' pasture during the field day Russ hosted on Aug. 21 near Bedford.

3) ▶ Kiko goats at Frog Hollow Farm, near Walker, on Aug. 17. Owner Cheryl Hopkins told field day guests that Kiko goats, being less "improved" than some other types, can vary in color from pure white to black.

4) ▶ Cheryl Hopkins discusses the fencing and watering setup for her goats.

5) ▶ Ann Cromwell (left) and Mriganka De look at soil during the Aug. 29 field day hosted by Chris and Janenne Teachout near Shenandoah.

6) ▶ Some of Russ Wischover's heritage Murray Gray cattle graze on his farm.

7) ▶ Kim Alexander (left) and Darwin Pierce converse during the Teachout field day.

8) ▶ Close-up view of mushroom spawn scattered on woodchips, a mushroom production step Tyson Allchin showed during his field day.





Field Day Photos



1) Long-time PFI members Pat Mennenga and Gary Laydon learn about raising small grains from Earl Canfield on Sept. 7 near Dunkerton.

2) Guests at Jerry Peckumn's Aug. 31 field day near Jefferson learn from Mary Harris (right) about the benefits of a bee habitat plot – a patch of ground intentionally left bare.

3) A native parasitic wasp attempts to dig into a native bee nest in Jerry Peckumn's bee habitat plot.

4) A turkey and guinea fowl greet guests at Wendy Johnson and Johnny Rafkin's Aug. 3 field day near Charles City.

5) Ben Peckumn and Patti Naylor chat in the lunch line at the Peckumn family's field day.

6) Guests learn about the Rosmann family's new hoop building for farrowing hogs during their field day on Sept. 9 near Harlan.

7) PFI lifetime member Dewey Murken looks at flowers hanging to dry at Howell's Greenhouse and Floral on Sept. 23. Dried flowers are among the various enterprises host Fred Howell and his family specialize in.





1) ▶ Caleb Shinn, a lifetime member of Practical Farmers, looks at small-grains harvesting equipment with his son, Ethan, and daughter, Audrey, during the Canfield family field day.

2) ▶ Michael and Darla Eeten discuss soil-building during their Sept. 14 field day near Everly, which explored fruit and vegetable production, livestock on a small farm and more.

3) ▶ Vic Madsen (left) and Paul Mugge converse over pulled pork sandwiches, made from Rosmann family hogs.

4) ▶ Xavier Rosmann (left) and Dorian Jones Witte play with one of the Rosmann family's farm cats.

5) ▶ A big crowd turned out to learn about flower production from Fred Howell, who grows flowers on 5 acres. They were treated to a spectacular array of flowers of all colors blooming in the fields.

6) ▶ More than 100 people showed up at Rolling Meadows Farm near Bellevue on Sept. 16 to learn from Jamie Hostetler about regenerative grazing, grass-finishing cattle and his Red Devon cattle herd.



Farming for the Soil

Teachouts use cover crops to regenerate soil

by Stefan Gailans

Chris Teachout cares deeply for the soil. He tweets with the hashtag #farmforsoil; tinkers with various cover crops and crop rotations on his family's farm; and presented at the last Practical Farmers conference on advanced cover cropping techniques in a session titled "Cover Crops 201."

According to Practical Farmers' recent member survey, soil health is the second most important issue members want addressed. So it was quite fitting that Chris and Janenne Teachout hosted a field day in August on their farm near Shenandoah to share what they have learned about soil health and regeneration.

Over 100 people attended – and the event spurred nearly 20 to join Practical Farmers. "I want to remediate the soil biology," Chris told attendees. "And how do we do that? With plants." Cover crops and diversified crop rotations are chief among the plant-based tools available to farmers for keeping the soil in place and preventing it from leaking nutrients – both fundamental elements of a healthy soil.

The Teachouts raise corn, soybeans and small grains on their farm in southwest Iowa. For over 20 years, they've been pairing no-till practices and cover crops in their crop production strategy, motivated mainly by soil health. Their goal is to leave the land in better shape than they found it – and they want to inspire others to do the same. At the field day, Chris noted an exhibit honoring Henry A. Wallace at the rest area near Adair on I-80 that he finds especially influential. The exhibit portrays the documented change in the depth of topsoil over time from 1850 to 2000. "In 1850, it shows we had on average 14.5 inches of topsoil in the Upper Midwest when the prairies were first broken," Chris said. "The last year in the display, the year 2000, shows we're down to 5 inches of topsoil on average. Is that the legacy we're leaving?"

"Planting Green"

Our first stop during the field day was a no-till soybean field. Chris used a cereal rye cover crop on only part of this field to provide contrast and demonstrate the positive effects when pairing no-till and cover crops together. In May, he "planted green" by seeding the soybeans into a living cover crop and terminating the cover

later once the soybeans reached the third trifoliate stage. "I look at the cereal rye almost like a nurse crop for the soybeans, much like oats traditionally have been used with alfalfa," Chris said. Planting green results in abundant cover crop residue between the soybean rows, which prevents runoff and stymies weed seed germination. Chris appreciates this mulch because in the hot summer months, the soil is kept cooler and retains moisture better than where no cover crop was seeded – which, in turn, helps maintain the vital soil biological activity.

Chris has also observed soybean roots "nodulating" and growing sideways into the interrows to access this nutrient-dense litter of cover crop residue – something not normally seen in soybeans, he added.



He used a seeding rate for the cereal rye of 40-45 pounds per acre last fall. "You can chase the corn combine with a drill or use an air-seeder paired with a vertical tillage tool," Chris said. "Basically, use whatever you have in order to seed the cover." He added: "Custom-seeding cover crops in the fall during harvest season sounds like a fine business opportunity for a young person looking to get involved in agriculture."

Interseeding Into Corn

In recent years, Chris has gained attention for seeding cover crops into corn in June at the V3 or V4 stage. In his session at PFI's annual conference in January 2017, Chris showed several photos of corn just before harvest in October with viney, green cowpea climbing the mature, golden corn stalks. Cowpea (also known as black-eyed pea) is a tropical, warm-season legume species with moderate shade tolerance that can lend itself to this "interseeding" technique. The practice of intercropping or co-seeding corn and cowpea has historically been researched in Australia, Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Past studies have found that corn grain yield and cowpea biomass production are affected by plant density, planting pattern and cultivar. At their field day, Chris showed us several strips of corn interseeded with legumes like cowpea, sunn hemp, pigeon pea and fava bean. He seeded these cover crops with an old International planter that's slightly offset so it plants directly in between the already-established corn rows as he drives through the field.

The corn was planted at a population of 32,000 seeds per acre, and was just short of knee-high when he interseeded the legume cover crops. Chris has found luck using the cowpea variety "Iron and Clay," which seems to exhibit the most shade tolerance. Sure

Left: Jill Clapperton discusses soil health from a soil pit on the Teachout farm.

Opposite: Chris Teachout speaks from a soil pit on his farm, surrounded by onlookers, about the benefits of a diverse, summer-seeded cover crop mix during the field day he and his wife, Janenne, hosted in August.



enough, at the field day on Aug. 29, the cowpeas were 18 inches tall and climbing up the corn stalks. "The cowpea vines will feed through the combine during harvest just fine," he told us. "And the cowpeas will stay green and regrow until a killing frost."

One of the keys to success for this technique is choosing an herbicide program carefully. "We try to stick with lower herbicide rates," Chris said. "We'll apply Acuron as a pre-emerge at two-thirds the normal rate, and then come back with just glyphosate at V3 before we interseed the legume." In the previous year's soybeans, Chris said he'll only apply some early-season residuals and then glyphosate before the canopy closes. To prevent any potential chemical carry-over problems, he doesn't apply any mid-season residuals.

Research in India has found wheat yields improved when following corn that was intercropped with cowpea. Chris is looking for the interseeded legume to add diversity to the farm. He mused on a range of possible benefits: Maybe the cowpea will improve soybean yields the following year, or will share nutrients with the companion corn – some nitrogen fixed from the atmosphere, or phosphorus unlocked from the soil. Maybe the legume residue's low carbon-to-nitrogen ratio will help soil microbes break down all the carbon-rich

"I want to remediate the soil biology. And how do we do that? With plants."

– CHRIS TEACHOUT

corn residue. Farmers with livestock may get some fall forage value out of a successfully established interseeded legume cover crop.

Dr. Clapperton Returns

The Teachouts invited Dr. Jill Clapperton, internationally renowned promoter of soil health, to the field day. A farmer and researcher from Canada and Montana, Jill's first introduction to PFI was the annual conference in January 2015, where she expanded on the virtues of plant diversity for soil health in croplands. She told those at the field day that, since that conference, she points other farmers she works with in the western U.S. to Practical Farmers of Iowa: "I direct them to the PFI website in order to learn about doing good on-farm trials. When attempting to test soil health practices on your farm, it is very important to use well-designed experiments in order to properly test those practices."

Throughout the field day, Jill engaged in several discussions and shared many words of wisdom and inspiration. One such discussion began when PFI member

Epiphany Ramos wondered how the no-till-plus-cover-crops approach to soil health could be applied to an organic cropping system. "Our economic and agronomic reason for tillage in organic systems is weed control," Epiphany said. Acknowledging that not disturbing the soil is often espoused as a central tenet to soil health, Epiphany wondered if it's possible to balance tillage and soil-building in lieu of chemicals in organic systems. "Use whatever you can to do right by the soil, given your system's constraints," Jill said, drawing on her own experiences working with organic vegetable farmers who use tillage. "It's all about 'what can I do in my own system?' Cover crops and rotation can help regenerate soils in systems with tillage and systems that don't use tillage. Use plants to deal with problems."

Regardless of the cropping system one employs, Jill enjoined all the farmers in attendance to: "Iowa is blessed with great soils. Take care of it, regenerate it!" ■

Learn More

➔ Watch a video and see photos from this field day at practicalfarmers.org/blog and search for "Teachout soil regeneration."

Son Builds on His Parents' Solid Foundation

Transferring a grass-based Minnesota dairy

by Teresa Opheim

PFI members Bonnie and Vance Haugen are descended from generations of farmers, but their passion for rotational grazing led them to strike out on their own – and create a path for their son to follow.

Vance grew up on a northern Minnesota subsistence farm; Bonnie on a farm in southeast Minnesota near the Iowa border. When Vance's career as an ag educator brought them to western Wisconsin in the early 1990s, "rotational grazing was starting to take off, and I was quite enamored with it," Vance says. "We always wanted to farm; it just took us awhile to figure out how we were going to accomplish it. I didn't care if we had cattle, swine, goats, sheep – I just wanted to be involved in agriculture. For cash flow, dairy seemed to make the most sense."

Their search for land brought them to a degraded corn and soybean farm at a hilltop near Canton, Minnesota.

"The first day we came down this driveway was a bleak winter day," Bonnie says. "In my mind, a good farm should have plenty of trees and this one didn't. In any case, we ended up putting in a bid on these 230 acres, which were owned by FHA at that time. The buildings are centrally located, but it was the price of the farm that got us here. We signed the papers on July 15, 1993."

The farm also met one of their long-term goals: being close to parents. The farm is 9 miles from the farm Bonnie's parents call home. The Haugens called 14 different banks for a loan to buy what they now call Springside Farm. "Only four would let us come and talk to them and hear our story, and only two listened very seriously," Bonnie says.

"When we went to those four banks, we had a three-year investment proposal, our history, what we had for equity – which wasn't a whole lot, but we did have something – and what our plans were.

"We had three things that were unheard of, which is why banks didn't want to work with us: We were forming a partnership with an unrelated couple; we were going to be a grazing dairy; and that dairy was going to be seasonal. They didn't have any experience with that. Finally, my hometown banker said he was willing to carry the land as long as my dad co-signed for it, which he did. The bank at



Above: Vance and Bonnie Haugen with their dogs on their Minnesota farm. **Opposite: (Left)** Vance by some pasture grass on his farm. **(Right)** Vance and Bonnie 20 years ago.

Prairie du Chien, where Vance had gotten to know farmers through his work with Extension, said they knew enough about grazing to say 'yes, we will back you.'"

"Banks are much more familiar with grazing systems today," Vance adds. "That's progress! I still have our original business plan, which certainly was pie in the sky but better than nothing. Now there is so much good information that people can really feel confident when they develop their grazing plans. And the bankers feel a lot more comfortable with that."

The Haugens were not familiar with successful non-related partnerships, but they were willing to give it a try for their grazing dairy. "We formed a 50-50 partnership with another couple. We pulled a trailer house onto the property, and we lived there. The other couple lived in this house. We ended up buying them out after two-and-a-half years. One of the best pieces of advice we got from a lawyer: If you are going to get into a partnership, know how you are going to get out. Have those agreements done ahead of time. We had agreed that if anyone was going to buy the other out, they would have four years to do it. We came out of the experience with a fair and favorable deal."

Tips From the Haugens

Planning for Partnership

Make sure you have a well-defined exit strategy if you go into partnership with others

Consider an LLC

Bonnie and Vance put the business in an LLC, which would make it easier to transfer more shares to their farming son

Setting Up Your Will

In their wills, their farming son has seven years to purchase the farm at a set price; proceeds go equally to all their children



"I envision Olaf will take over the farm and it still will be a grass-fed dairy, but maybe it will be grass-fed beef or something else We've set up a nice foundation for him, but he is running it now."

— VANCE HAUGEN

Transferring Labor and Management

The Haugens transformed the corn-soybean farm into one of mixed forages, and for 20 years, Bonnie worked hard running the grazing dairy farm and raising their three children. "The farm was Bonnie's show," Vance says. "I helped when I could, but my long daily commute [three hours round-trip] made me a very part-time farmer." Inga, Olaf and Thor all left the farm for college – and all came back and did stints working on the farm.

It is Olaf – the middle child – who ended up staying, after a brief career with John Deere touring the country with their forage equipment. In 2010, Olaf called his mother and asked "would you rent the farm to me?"

"I didn't know if I was ready to let go of it so fast, but I said, 'I'll entertain something here,'" Bonnie recalls. "Inga was back then, but things were not working out well with our farming together. And I was getting tired."

Olaf came home, and he and Bonnie started share-milking. There was a six-month training period, but Olaf "quickly decided to take the bull by the horns," Bonnie says. "He said he didn't want me to second-guess him all the time and have to come to me to get every question answered. Once I was confident with him,

I said that was fine. He already had the basics – he'd grown up here."

Today, Bonnie hasn't milked in five years; Vance hasn't in two. They no longer move cattle or put out feed. Vance is winding up his career as an Extension agent; Bonnie now works with the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program and both help with their nearby grandchildren. They have turned over the farm's management decisions to Olaf as well. "If there are major changes – a new piece of equipment, putting a feed pad in a different spot – we have informal discussions," Vance says. "He doesn't ask us what seed he's going to plant, what fertilization, whether he will be seasonal or milk through the winter. There are things I would like to see done differently. But if Olaf is okay with it, I just zip my lips."

Vance is fine with the level of information Olaf shares; Bonnie would like to hear more. "He informs us about things that really matter. But there are a lot of other things I don't need to know but would like to know," Bonnie says. "Olaf just doesn't have time. He has a lot of balls in the air, and ours is the largest but not the only enterprise he's managing." (Those balls include a trucking business, some cash-rented land, custom haying, baling and wrapping, a beef herd – and now, a third child on the way.)

As of spring 2017, the Haugens have shifted from share-milking to an LLC that includes the cattle and some machinery. Olaf owns 50 percent, Vance and Bonnie 50 percent of the LLC. "The LLC also provides a nice vehicle for transferring more shares to Olaf, which we may do at some point," Bonnie says.

Vance and Bonnie continue to own the land and have set up wills that include a transfer plan they say "might accelerate or change." Olaf will have the first shot at buying the farm and can continue to rent the farm for seven years before purchasing "to give him a breather to figure things out." The price has been set: the lesser of \$2,000 an acre or an independent appraisal. Proceeds from the land sale are divided equally between the three children. Inga gets second shot at purchasing the land, then the third child, Thor, and lastly, the grandchildren. Inga has first option on the 160 acres of northern Minnesota land Vance and Bonnie own with his mother, and Thor gets first option on 30 other acres Vance and Bonnie own.

Bonnie and Vance have shared their estate plans with their children, a different path than his parents, who refuse to talk about finances and farm succession, even on the land the two couples co-own. "We've tried to be open with our children, sharing copies of the will so they know what's in it," Vance says. "If any of them want to take a look at our Schedule F or balance sheets, they can."

Even though the Haugens have gone a long way down the succession and retirement planning path, many questions remain: Says Vance: "Are we going to try and age in place? Look for a different house? I envision Olaf will take over the farm and it still will be a grass-fed dairy, but maybe it will be grass-fed beef or something else. I'll be retired Jan. 31, 2018, and know Olaf doesn't want a lot of help on the farm. We set up a nice foundation for him, but he is running it now." ■

Learn More

➔ Bonnie and Vance Haugen will present on farm succession at PFI's annual conference on Jan. 20. They will be joined by Rachel Dahl, an estate planning attorney at Hellmuth & Johnson.

A Worthy Farm Bill Program at Risk

Beginning farmer funding may be cut in 2018

by Steve Carlson

First authorized in the 2002 farm bill and eventually funded in 2008, the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) was created to fund organizations that provide education, outreach and technical assistance for beginning farmers. Practical Farmers of Iowa received a grant for a three-year period, which helped fund the start-up of our now nationally recognized Savings Incentive Program.

The 2014 Farm Bill reauthorized the program with mandatory funding through 2018, but the funding is now at risk of being cut from the 2018 bill. With that in mind, Practical Farmers wants to highlight a few of the many beginning farmers who have benefited from the program – and to ask our members to advocate for beginning farmer funding in the 2018 farm bill.

BFRDP and PFI

As a member-led organization, Practical Farmers strives to offer programming focused on topics requested by our members. With this guidance, we realized the importance of programming exclusively for beginning farmers, and funding from the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program helped us turn this feedback into reality. Not only did BFRDP funds help launch the Savings Incentive Program for beginning farmers and the Labor4Learning program for aspiring farmers, it has been used for field days, farminars, workshops and outreach helping hundreds of farmers get their start in agriculture.

The Savings Incentive Program was launched in 2010 to help beginning farmers save money for a farm purchase, build a network of peers and mentors, and establish strong businesses with business plan support. The two-year program has since served 127 beginning farmers. Labor4Learning began in 2013 to connect aspiring farmers seeking paid on-farm training with experienced farmers looking for eager employees. Throughout the program's five years, 34 aspiring farmers have found employment and additional training on how to run a farm business.

Along with these formal programs, Practical Farmers has organized hundreds of farminars, workshops, field days, retreats and other events with the help of funding

from the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program.

PFI has applied for BFRDP funding for the period of 2018 through 2020. Our application is in partnership with the Center for Rural Affairs, Healthy Harvest of North Iowa and Northeast Iowa Food and Farm Coalition. This funding, if we receive it, will be vital to continuing our beginning farmer focus.

Funding in Jeopardy – and What You Can Do

Funding for BFRDP is now in question for the 2018 farm bill. While recipients of funding from this application cycle would be secure, future funding of BFRDP may be cut. Practical Farmers will advocate to preserve this important program – and we encourage you to do the same. Beginning farmers – and the vital support

the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program provides them – should be a priority for all Iowans. **Please take a moment to call or email your representatives in Congress, and ask them to support permanent funding for beginning farmers in the next farm bill.** If you or farmers you know have benefitted from BFRDP funding through PFI's work, sharing a personal story can be the most effective way to influence your legislators.

Here are some portraits of beginning Iowa farmers BFRDP funding helped support.

Emily Fagan

Emily Fagan teamed up with her cousin, Hannah Breckbill, this year to farm together under Hannah's already-established farm, Humble Hands Harvest in northeast Iowa. The farm is finishing its first year on a new location where Emily and Hannah have been busy installing fencing, building a greenhouse, establishing a well and electricity, and getting to know their soil while continuing to grow a diversity of fruits and vegetables. They market through a Community Supported Agriculture program that serves Decorah, Iowa and Rochester, Minnesota; sell at the Decorah farmers' market; and provide for wholesale accounts and restaurants.

Prior to joining Humble Hands Harvest, Emily spent the 2016 growing season working for Erik Sessions at Patchwork Green Farm in Decorah. There she participated in the Labor4Learning program



"SIP and Labor4Learning have been the best. They gave me a person . . . I can rely on for information and who can relate to what I'm doing."

– EMILY FAGAN



Opposite: Emily Fagan speaks to guests at Erik Sessions' field day in 2016. **Above: (Left):** Lori and Matthew Wiese and three of their four children attended Kevin and Ranae Dietzels' field day on Aug. 14. **(Right):** Dawn Anderson stands with one of her Boer goats.



and was introduced to Practical Farmers of Iowa. This year Emily was admitted into the Savings Incentive Program and paired with Rob Faux of Genuine Faux Farm as her mentor. "SIP and Labor4Learning have been the best," Emily says. "They gave me a person to ask questions of, a person I can rely on for information and who can relate to what I'm doing."

Since joining Practical Farmers last year, Emily has taken advantage of the annual conference and beginning farmer retreat, as well as several field days. "At Jon Yagla's field day, it was cool to see what he's doing with such a small amount of space," Emily says. "The focus on his financials and how he makes it work – it was neat to hear about how he's thought about it and incorporated it, because that's something I think about."

Matthew and Lori Wiese

Matthew and Lori Wiese are finishing their third year running Heirloom Farm near Earlham, where they raise heirloom produce and heritage meat chickens and laying hens. They market through a CSA and on-farm sales. Just before launching their own farm, Matthew approached Rick and Stacy Hartmann of Small Potatoes Farm, because Matthew thought the scale of Small Potatoes' CSA would be a good fit for his family to mimic. Rick got them a PFI membership and hired Matthew as part of the Labor4Learning program for the 2014 season.

Matthew says the family's next farm goal is adding beef cattle to their operation, and they're now enrolled in the Savings Incentive Program to help accomplish that. Dave and Meg Schmidt of Troublesome Creek Cattle near Exira serve as the Wieses' mentors. They, too, went through SIP and now have an established farm raising grass-fed beef, outdoor pork and grass-fed lamb. After their first year in the program, the Wieses and Schmidts have met on each others' farms to discuss what the Wiese family should consider when taking on their new enterprise.

"With the many opportunities PFI offers to meet other members, it's easy to find answers to questions on any aspect of farming." – DAWN ANDERSON

The Schmidts have helped them think about their infrastructure needs: the number and size of paddocks, type of watering system, temporary versus permanent fencing, and how all this fits with the breed and number of animals they can handle on their land. Matthew and Lori have decided on a breed that will fit their system, and plan to use their SIP savings match to pay for the initial breeding stock.

Since joining PFI in 2013, Matthew says the family hasn't missed a single annual conference and they have attended two or

three field days each year. Similar to the year prior to starting their CSA, this year they have focused on researching their anticipated cattle operation. In September, the Wieses attended a field day at Rolling Meadows Farm, hosted by Jamie Hostetler near Bellevue. Matthew says the event gave him some ideas of traits to look for in his breeding stock. "I've learned from PFI to take things slow, not to go too fast and to get a good quality product," Matthew says, "and then I can expand."

Dawn Anderson

Ten years ago, Dawn Anderson got into the goat business with two Boer goats and no experience. Since then she's grown her herd to 28 goats, with over 40 during kidding season. In 2012, she enrolled in the Savings Incentive Program, which she doesn't hesitate to credit with making her a better farmer: "I learned so much in two years! I feel like I'm light-years ahead of where I would have been on my own."

Dawn was paired with Mike and Cheryl Hopkins of Frog Hollow Farm as mentors, a relationship she maintains today. The Hopkins also raise Boer goats and were able to provide plenty of insight for Dawn as she set up her business. After completing the program, Dawn used her \$4,800 savings and match to purchase a truck and trailer. Not only does the equipment increase her efficiency by allowing her to purchase feed in bulk, which saves time and money, she was able to purchase and transport new breeding stock from a farm in Pennsylvania. With the genetics from this stock, Dawn says her herd has improved and she now receives almost double the income from each goat she sells.

Though she remains a livestock farmer, she appreciates the diversity of interests in Practical Farmers' membership. Expanding or diversifying her farm is always in the back of her mind, and she takes advantage of field days and conference sessions to learn about new enterprises. "With the many opportunities PFI offers to meet other members, it's easy to find answers to questions from any aspect of farming," Dawn says. "I feel that with any idea I want to pursue, I can find help with PFI members and staff." ■



Harvest Hands

by Clark Porter

A cursory examination of the word “harvest” reveals that it comes from an Old English term for the season of autumn. Perhaps in those days, since most everyone farmed or saw food grown on the land, the season was indistinguishable from the activity. It’s different today.

Most of the population in my part of Iowa is thinking about colorful leaves, football and weekends by the Mississippi bluffs. Meanwhile, farmers are spending nights under the shop lights, preparing for the checkered flag of moisture content to wave in front of their eyes.

For farmers, harvest is not simply a season, and it certainly isn’t a noun. This is a time when farmers gather. When the term was first coined, the gathering was done by hand; it was farmers’ hands that did it. I’d like to suggest that farmers’ hands still do it. Sophisticated as it may be, a combine is no more than an extension of a farmer’s hands – and there is something special about a farmer’s hands.

I first noticed this when I was a kid working as a farmhand (the job title says it all). During moments when the work stopped, I used to watch the hands of a man named Harold Robertson, one of the most honorable and kind men I have ever known. Harold would reach down, clutch a clod of soil, cradle it in his calloused hands and slowly press it through his fingers. He would be silent as he did this, almost as if he were performing a sacrament, marveling at the soil he tilled his entire life.

Like a potter, a farmer occupies a unique niche between the chaotic mass of raw material and the finished product we need. Expanses of land and sheds full of iron don’t produce bushels of crops. Farmers’ hands do it. Perhaps we should stop thinking about all the acres out there and start considering all the hands. It is these hands – repairing machinery, feeding livestock, hauling seed bags, steering combines – that are transforming soil into food.

Harvest plays a heavy role in myth, song and prayer. For thousands of years, people’s lives have been inextricably intertwined with the seasons. Perhaps too, harvest resonates at a far deeper level. We are always cultivating our lives, always gathering what has been sown, always wondering what our efforts will yield – until we, too, are on the threshing floor.

Centuries ago, Jewish mystics told an allegory about the creation of the world. In the story, God contracted to make room for creation and then filled the void with pure light contained in 10 vessels. Unfortunately, the vessels shattered and holy light scattered like snowflakes in the wind, mixing with the dust of the world and leaving traces of divinity



everywhere. As the story goes, Adam was supposed to gather the light but he failed. It is now up to people who have been born since to work and sweat, to gather strewn traces of divinity and make the world whole once again. It strikes me that this is really harvesting, and only we, with our hearts and hands, can do it. ■

Clark Porter grows corn, soybeans and occasionally oats on his family’s farm near Reinbeck. He is a former teacher and non-profit administrator. A PFI member since 2012, Clark is an advocate for healthy soil and clean water.

He and his wife, Sharon, a Spanish teacher, have two grown sons. In his spare time, Clark enjoys kayaking, hiking and camping throughout Iowa and Minnesota.

Benefits of PFI Membership

As a member of Practical Farmers of Iowa, you are part of an incredible community of innovative farmers, enlightened consumers and forward-thinking agricultural and environmental professionals who freely share their knowledge. Your membership also offers a host of other benefits!

1 Automatic (FREE) subscription to "the Practical Farmer"

– our quarterly magazine filled with informative articles highlighting the knowledge of our farmer members, and the diversity of agriculture in Iowa

2 Access to our members-only email discussion groups, where you can pose questions, share information, learn from members – and enjoy the fellowship this community provides

3 The opportunity to participate in our on-farm research Cooperators' Program, where you can research topics that matter to you while receiving support from PFI to design and execute your on-farm research project

4 Steep discounts to our annual conference each January

5 Eligibility for special PFI programs, such as our Savings Incentive Program and Labor4Learning program

6 Opportunities to find new markets for your products. As a member, you're eligible to be listed on our Local Foods webpage, and in our cover crops and small grains business directories. There are also the connections you make with other members – members love supporting other members!

7 Access to events that range from field days to farminars, retreats to workshops on topics requested by our members. Most PFI events are free

8 Numerous opportunities to network with fellow farmers and supporters of a vibrant, diverse agricultural system



Do you know someone who could benefit from PFI?

Share this with them, or purchase a gift membership.

You'll be giving them an invaluable gift – participation in a group working for a future where diverse farms work with nature for mutual benefits, and communities are alive with healthy food and strong connections between farmers and non-farmers.

New Faces in the PFI Office: Henry Corbin and Ellie Conrad

Henry Corbin



In late March, I walked into the PFI office desperately seeking an internship. I had heard the name Practical Farmers of Iowa the week before from Beth Larabee, a lifetime member of PFI – and one of my instructors at Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) in Ankeny (Beth teaches about alternative and sustainable agriculture). I stood outside the PFI office door for a good 10 minutes thinking, “What company will want to hire an intern on short notice?”

It turns out Practical Farmers of Iowa: Two weeks later, in early April, I had a job. I started as an office support intern. In October, I joined the ranks of staff, and now work as a part-time multimedia assistant helping with PFI’s video work. My journey here has been both fun and educational.

I was born and raised in Nevada, Iowa, and grew up being active in 4-H Grant Guys and Gals and Nevada FFA. Growing up in the middle of town, I didn’t have much interaction with agriculture. But I grew up next-door to my grandparents, and heard many stories of my grandpa growing up on a Montezuma farm. My interest in agriculture peaked when I joined FFA in high school with Mr. Cooper, the Nevada ag teacher. I started taking agriculture classes, and in the summers would restore tractors to show at the county and state fairs.

I learned a lot during those summers – and came to realize I didn’t just like agriculture, I liked its people. I met people from all walks of life who were brought together by their love of and interest in agriculture. I started my education at DMACC in the partnership program with Iowa State University, and graduated with my associates degree in agribusiness from DMACC this past summer. I am currently at ISU in the College of Agricultural Studies. I am a member of the Nevada Historical Society and am a docent at Evergreen Lane, our farm village. ■

Elaina Conrad

Elie is currently a third-year student at Iowa State University, studying global resource systems, agriculture and society, and Spanish. She grew up outside Mount Pleasant in southeast Iowa, and spent most of her childhood out in the woods – hiking, kayaking and taking pictures.



Participating in the Global Youth Institute in high school brought global agriculture to her attention, and since then, her studies have focused on the intersection of agriculture, international development and communications. In her free time, Ellie enjoys dancing, art and running. She joined the staff in September as an unpaid intern assisting with writing and multimedia work. ■

Experienced Farmers: Help Train the Next Generation

Are you an experienced farmer who could use some extra help on your farm? As a trainer farm in the Labor4Learning program, PFI will help connect you with an aspiring farmer who is motivated to learn about your farm business. It’s a win-win situation: You get an eager employee, and an aspiring farmer gets an on-farm job.

What’s involved? In addition to hiring a beginning farmer in Practical Farmers of Iowa’s network, we ask that

Labor4Learning trainers develop a set of learning outcomes with the trainee and cover those topics throughout the term of employment. PFI provides a monthly payment to compensate you for the additional time spent training, which is expected to be no more than one or two hours per week.

Farms of all sizes, enterprises, production practices and regions in Iowa are encouraged to apply. To be eligible to serve as a trainer, farmers must live or farm

in Iowa and be Practical Farmers of Iowa members.

Applications are evaluated in February by a committee of PFI members to ensure trainers have adequate experience farming and managing employees. For more information, visit the Labor4Learning page at practicalfarmers.org.

Questions? Want to Become a Trainer? Contact Steve Carlson, (515) 232-5661 or steve@practicalfarmers.org. ■

Register Now for Beginning Farmer Retreat, Dec. 1-2

Registration is now open for the tenth Annual beginning farmer retreat organized by Practical Farmers of Iowa. This year, we will gather Dec. 1-2 at the Wesley Woods Retreat Center in Indianola, Iowa. The event starts in the afternoon on Dec. 1 and runs through the following afternoon.

In addition to networking with other farmers, attendees will make progress

on goal setting and creating action plans for achieving them. Programming will be offered for both aspiring farmers and beginning farmers, with experts and peers facilitating the sessions and assisting with work time.

Attendance is limited, so register now at practicalfarmers.org/beginning-farmer-retreat. ■



Left to right: Matt Lansing, Ryan Marcus, Jenny Quiner and Jon Yagla have a chance to network with one another during the 2017 beginning farmer retreat in February.

Fall Farminars Start Nov. 14

As farmers transition into the winter season, PFI's farmer-to-farmer education transitions from field days to farminars. These online presentations are held every Tuesday night from 7-8:30 p.m. from mid-November through February. The farminar series is split into a fall and a winter series. **The fall farminar series begins on Tuesday, Nov. 14, and runs weekly through Dec. 19.** These free, farmer-led webinars cover topics in all enterprises and are geared toward all skill levels. This fall, learn about:

NOV. 14 – "Farm Transfer Planning for the Next Generation"

– Jim and LeAnn Van Der Pol, Pastures A' Plenty Farm, Kerkoven, Minnesota; Rachel Dahl, Hellmuth & Johnson Law Firm, Minneapolis

NOV. 21 – "Achieving Profitability With Fruits and Vegetables"

– Natasha Hegmann, Turkey River Farm, Elkport; Ryan Pesch, Lida Farm, Pelican Rapids, Minnesota

NOV. 28 – "Three Experiences With Roller-Crimping Cover Crops"

– Billy Sammons, Churdan; Scott Shriver, Jefferson; Francis Thicke, Fairfield

DEC. 5 – "Grow Flowers That Sell: Top 10 Sellers at Brightflower Farm"

– Jeanie McKewan, Brightflower Farm, Stockton, Illinois

DEC. 12 – "Integrating Livestock and Cover Crops for Profit in Kansas"

– John Stigge, Washington, Kansas



Francis Thicke (left) and Billy Sammons discuss a roller-crimper at a 2016 PFI field day.

DEC. 19 – "Integrating Livestock and Cover Crops for Profit in Nebraska"

– Mary Drewnowski, University of Nebraska Lincoln; a Nebraska farmer TBD

Farminars are interactive presentations offered each autumn and winter on topics requested by our members. The series is free and easy to access: Tune in anywhere you have an internet connection and listen as a farmer or business expert presents over a slideshow, and ask questions in real-time using a chatbox.

To participate in a farminar, visit practicalfarmers.org/farminars and click the 'Join In' button. All farminars are recorded and archived on our website for later viewing. ■

Congratulations to Greg Padget!

On Sept. 30, Greg Van Den Berghe married Travis Padget, in Newton. They had a hand-made celebration of food prepared from their vegetables, bees and eggs. Future plans include starting the adoption process to grow their family. You will see a name change as Greg chose to take his husband's last name, and is now Greg Padget – but he remains PFI's dedicated beginning farmer program manager.



Greg and Travis Padget (Photo by Jen Golay)

30 Years of On-Farm Research

2017 marks the 30th anniversary of PFI's Cooperators' Program. In 1987, a small group of PFI farmers concerned about rising input costs gathered and decided to do something entirely novel: They would each conduct research on their own farms to test alternative production methods that might lessen the need for costly inputs – and they would share their results with each other.

Since then, the program has evolved to explore a broad range of farming questions – but the underlying spirit of curiosity and commitment to freely sharing results with others remain enduring hallmarks of the program.

This year, 50 PFI farmers are conducting 72 on-farm trials on topics that range from rolling cover crops ahead of soybeans to using an oat cover crop in garlic; feeding pelleted small grains to hogs to variety trials of summer lettuce and hybrid cereal rye. Learn more about what they are researching at practicalfarmers.org/blog/2017/08/02/practical-farmers-researching-2017. ■

Upcoming "Map of My Kingdom" Shows

"Map of My Kingdom," the PFI-commissioned play about farm transfer, continues to travel across the Midwest and beyond, illuminating the tough questions involved in farmland transitions and helping farm families start the critical conversations needed to plan for their farm's future.

The play, written by Iowa Poet Laureate Mary Swander, will visit cities in Indiana, Ohio and Iowa between now and January:

NOV. 15 – Greenfield, IN – University of Indiana Extension; details to be announced

NOV. 16 – West Lafayette, IN – Purdue University; details to be announced

NOV. 19 – Deshler, OH – St. John Lutheran Church; details to be announced

JAN. 25 – Des Moines, IA – Des Moines Sheraton, Land Investment Expo. People's Company, 2:30 p.m.

To book a performance of "Map of My Kingdom," or to order a copy of the play on DVD, visit www.maryswander.com. ■

New Members & Upcoming Events

Welcome, New Members!

District 1-Northwest

- Aaron Alons, Button Tater Farms, Sanborn
- Sam Bennett, Bennett Farms, Galva
- Lance Bruch, Emmetsburg
- Gary and Garrett Dose, Danbury
- Michael and Debbie Jensen, Moonshadow Farm, Castana
- Jay and Lynna Miller, Manilla
- Duane Myer, Mallard
- Rodney and Shannan Potts, Potts Organic Farm, Lytton
- Bert Reinders, Orange City
- Gene Ver Steeg, Sonnycrest Inc., Inwood
- Frank Weber, Mapleton
- Jerry Wendt, Le Mars

District 2-North Central

- Claire Andreasen, Ames
- Ramesh B. Balayar, Ames
- Andy Balvanz, Eldora
- Albulena Basha, Ames
- Megan Blair, Ames
- Stephen Carlson, Madrid
- Matthew and Jess Christensen, Scranton
- Jim Cisco, Webster City
- Mriganka De, Ames

- Lydia English, Ames
- Bryan and Michaelaelyn Golay, Clarksville
- Home State Bank, Gerry Stein, Jefferson
- Erwin and Yoshiko Johnson, Charles City
- David Kennis, Ames
- Lance Bell, LHB Farms Inc., Weldon
- Lynn Betts, Johnston
- Dave and Debra Boot, Pella
- Vernon Boot, Pella
- Jay Boot, Lightening Creek Farms, Inc., Pella
- Tom Bruning, Twin Pines Farm Ltd, Treynor
- Will Cannon, Newton
- Chris Davolt, Centerville
- Marvin Freed, NRCS, Sidney
- Orlando Gil, Harlan
- John Goetz, Irwin
- Theo Gunther, Des Moines
- Luke Harris, Albia
- David and Pat Hogan, Waukee
- Andrew Jackson, Hastings
- Jim Johnson, Mount Ayr
- Brian Kessel, Lamoni
- Emily Kolbe and Ben Cooprieder, Des Moines
- Harris Kuiper, Kuiper's Oak View Inc., Russell
- Larsen Ag, Joel Petersen, Exira
- Anthony and Jim McDonald, Johnston
- Randy Miller, Ankeny

District 3-Northeast

- Toby Cain, Decorah
- Allen and Nancy Dlouhy, Bear Creek Acres, Edgewood
- Tim Merfeld, Central City
- Loran Steinlage, West Union
- Mark Westbrook, Cedar Falls

District 4-Southwest

- Derek Arends, West Des Moines
- James Asmus, Manilla
- Merlin Bell, Leon
- Lance Bell, LHB Farms Inc., Weldon
- Lynn Betts, Johnston
- Dave and Debra Boot, Pella
- Vernon Boot, Pella
- Jay Boot, Lightening Creek Farms, Inc., Pella
- Tom Bruning, Twin Pines Farm Ltd, Treynor
- Will Cannon, Newton
- Chris Davolt, Centerville
- Marvin Freed, NRCS, Sidney
- Orlando Gil, Harlan
- John Goetz, Irwin
- Theo Gunther, Des Moines
- Luke Harris, Albia
- David and Pat Hogan, Waukee
- Andrew Jackson, Hastings
- Jim Johnson, Mount Ayr
- Brian Kessel, Lamoni
- Emily Kolbe and Ben Cooprieder, Des Moines
- Harris Kuiper, Kuiper's Oak View Inc., Russell
- Larsen Ag, Joel Petersen, Exira
- Anthony and Jim McDonald, Johnston
- Randy Miller, Ankeny

- Tom Moser, Garden Grove
- Henry Nisley, Seymour
- Mark Nissen, Nissen Farm, Audubon
- Erin Ogle, Bedford
- Ben Roed, Bedford
- Norman Rozendaal, N & C Rozendaal Farms Inc., Monroe
- Raymond Simmons, Missouri Valley
- Nathan Snead, Norwalk
- Rob Vos, Pella
- Laura and Arvin Vos, Fox Lane, Inc., Pella
- Blaine Westemeyer, Des Moines

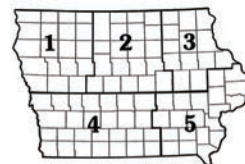
District 5-Southeast

- Amie Bandy, Oxford
- Gene DeBruin, Oskaloosa
- Tim Dotterer, Bloomfield
- Jon Fields, Wyoming
- Catharine Found, Iowa City
- Mark Franje, Franje Farms Inc., New Sharon
- Terry Harris, Eddyville
- Dale Hessing, Dale Hessing Inc., Oskaloosa
- Neil and Phillip Kirkhart, Cantril
- Jeff Lauber, Columbus Junction
- Paul Loucks, Blakesburg
- Jody and Laurie Martens, Bellevue
- Craig and Joy Miller, Riverside

- Ian Olson, J & G Olson Farms, Mount Pleasant
- Matt and Deanne Parrott, Parrott Family Farms Partnership, Danville
- Mark Robertson, Anamosa
- Darrell Steele, Washington
- Joe Stoddard, Kinross
- Chad Treloar, Urban Greens, Iowa City
- Steve and Betty Urmie, Stockton
- Keith Van Waardhuizen, Van Waardhuizen Inc., Oskaloosa
- Seth Van Zante, Fremont
- Simon Yoder, Peerless View Farms, Kalona

District 6-Out of State

- Dave Besch, Bethesda, MD
- Nathan Burk, Arkansas City, KS
- Anne Burnmeister, Westport, CT
- Mary Busby, Prairie Village, KS
- Catalyst NNG, Jos Zamzow, Meridian, ID
- Crop Insurance Solutions, John Schreiter, Milford, NE
- Leroy Haverly, Nebraska City, NE
- Bill Hoffman, Production Resources, Inc., York, NE
- Whilden Hughes, Hughes Farms, Janesville, WI



- James Koziolk, Wells, MN
- Gary Lesoing, Hickman, NE
- Greg and Stacy Lickteig, Omaha, NE
- Jonathon and Carolyn Olson, Olson Organics, Cottonwood, MN
- Kinsey Olson Sovem, Marysville, OH
- Dean Richards, St. Charles, MN
- Matt Roby, Tucson, AZ
- Dean Schroeder, Renville, MN
- Luke Skinner, Jamesport, MO
- Ryan Stockwell, Medford, WI
- Louis and Sharon Themes, Hooper, NE
- Thousand Hills, Matt Maier, Becker, MN
- Dean Weichmann, Johnson Creek, WI

UPCOMING EVENTS ~ MID-NOVEMBER | DECEMBER | JANUARY

NOVEMBER

Nov. 17 - Cover Crop Field Day | Brandon, MN

Join the Land Stewardship Project at the John Ledermann farm to see cover crops being successfully integrated into corn, bean and wheat production. John will discuss why he plants cover crops, the impacts he's seen on his soil, the economics of planting covers, timing and planting methods. This event is free and open to the public. To learn more, visit: landstewardshipproject.org/events/item/1087

Nov. 19-20 - Iowa Organic Conference | Iowa City

This conference features roundtable discussions and an organic luncheon, as well as information from keynote speaker Jeff Moyer. Workshop tracks include crop production, livestock production, local foods, policy and beginning farmers. To learn more, visit: sustainability.uiowa.edu/2017-iowa-organic-conference

Nov. 29-30 - 2017 Green Lands Blue Waters Conference | Madison, WI

The theme of this year's conference, is "Continuous Living Cover: Bridging the Gaps with Livestock." The conference will explore how livestock can support and sustain cover crops, perennial grains, agroforestry systems, perennial forages and bioenergy crops by converting perennial grasses and cover crops to high-quality human food, closing nutrient cycles and stimulating soil biology. To learn more, visit: cias.wisc.edu/glbw2017

Nov. 29-30 - Perennial Farm Gathering | Madison, WI

Join farmers, scientists and others with a general interest in perennial crops and pastured livestock to learn what's working well and what needs more work. This fifth annual event is being held this year in partnership with the Green Lands Blue Waters Conference. To learn more, visit: savannainstitute.org/perennial-farm-gathering.html

Nov. 29-30 - Integrated Crop Management Conference | Ames

Attend workshops on the latest in crop production technology. Experts from Iowa and surrounding states will provide research updates and results in soil fertility, soil and water management, crop production and pest management. To learn more, visit: aep.iastate.edu/icm/homepage.html

DECEMBER

Dec. 1 - Small Grains: Production Tips & Opportunities in Southern Illinois | Ava, IL

Getting started with small grains can be intimidating. What equipment do you need, and where will you sell the grain once you've grown it? At this Southern Illinois Farming Alliance field day, Matthew Currier will talk about transitioning the family farm to organic grain crops, what equipment and implements he's worked with, and tips about growing different grains and varieties. Scratch Brewery will discuss how they plan to incorporate local grains in their brewing process and for milling flours for baked goods. To learn more, visit: fwsoil.org/field-days.html

Dec. 7 - Midwest CSA Conference | Wisconsin Dells, WI

Join the Community Supported Agriculture movement in the Midwest for two days of shared learning, practical workshops and lively discussions. Hands-on workshops will give CSA farmers time to reflect and plan for the future. To learn more, visit: midwestcsa.com

Dec. 16 - Seed Savers' Winter on the Farm | Decorah

Enjoy winter on the farm with horse-drawn sleigh rides, heirloom potato-tasting, hot chocolate and cookies, and more. To learn more, visit: seedsavers.org/winteronthefarm

JANUARY

Jan. 11 - Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training | Indiana

Fruit and vegetable growers and others interested in learning about produce safety, the Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule, Good Agricultural Practices, and co-management of natural resources and food safety should make plans to attend. To learn more, visit: extension.iastate.edu/article/produce-safety-alliance-grower-trainings-scheduled-fall-2017-winter-2018

For more events, visit practicalfarmers.org



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☐ Farm or Household – \$60

☐ Organization – \$110

☐ Lifetime Member* – \$1,000

* See details at <http://bit.ly/PFI-lifetime>

< I am joining or renewing as:

- ☐ An Aspiring Farmer ☐ A Farmer or Grower ☐ Non-Farmer

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I would like to make a one-time, tax-deductible donation to PFI in the amount of:

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Practical Farmers of Iowa is a 501(c)3 organization. Your gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Thank You!

MEMBER INFORMATION

Contact Name(s)*: _____

Farm or Organization Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____ County: _____

Phone 1: _____ Phone 2: _____

Email 1: _____ Email 2: _____

*** For Farm or Household membership, please list names of all persons included. For Organization membership, please list one or two contact persons.**

EMAIL DISCUSSION GROUP SIGN-UP

When you join our email discussion groups, you can network, build community and exchange ideas from anywhere, at any time. **Sign up for as many groups as you'd like (be sure to include your email address above)!**

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PAYMENT

Membership level \$ _____ per year, for _____ year(s) = \$ _____

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