

the Practical Farmer

Practical Farmers of Iowa Newsletter

Vol. 15, #4
Winter 2001

ROBERT KARP BECOMES PFI'S FIRST EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As if a vibrant Annual Meeting and record-breaking membership wasn't enough good news for PFI, the board named Robert Karp to be PFI's first Executive Director at their February 8 meeting. (Read more about Robert Karp in his article on the next page.) In a letter to the membership soon thereafter, PFI President Colin Wilson wrote "...the board believes that Robert will do an excellent job. He is familiar with PFI's mission, history, staff, board, members, and partners in sustainable agriculture. Robert has already served as a capable and respected PFI employee for over three years. I am very impressed, not only by Robert's insights and perceptions, but also with his strategies for dealing with some of PFI's present challenges.... I know that you will want to join the board and staff in giving him your full support." Indeed!

Back in January, the search was still on for such a leader when over 350 people attended the Annual Meeting and Winter Workshops in Ames at the Gateway Holiday Inn Conference Center. Fred Kirschenmann gave the keynote address, called "Farmer's-Who Needs them?" (See p. 4.) Participants chose from over eighteen concurrent workshops and cob rolls. (Summaries



Robert Karp, already a PFI staff member, became the organization's first Executive Director in February.

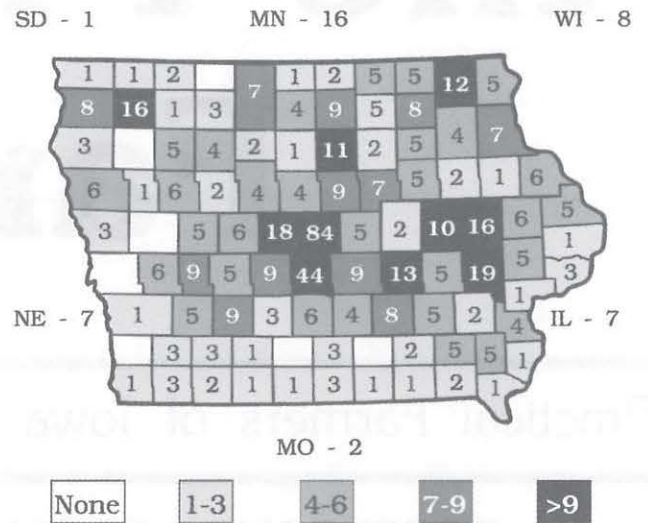
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available, p. 18.) The Iowa Bounty Buffet featuring items produced on PFI farms was complimented by Governor Vilsack as "The best meal I have eaten as Governor outside my own home." Three new board members, Tom Wahl, Robert Bahrenfuse, and Michael Nash got elected at the district meetings. (See board business, p. 10)

As ever, the Annual Meeting was a great opportunity for old friends to get together. There were plenty of new faces too. In fact there were over sixty new members who joined PFI in the course of registering for the meeting. These folks and a few more in the months since have put PFI membership at an all time high. (See graph p. 9.) As we go to press, the membership count is 671, even better than the graphic at right depicts. Indeed, our future looks bright this season. Stay tuned for more illuminations. ☺

PFI MEMBERSHIP – Feb, 2001



An Open Letter to PFI Members, Friends and Supporters

Robert Karp

I am honored and humbled to step into the role of PFI's Executive Director. PFI has such a rich legacy of leaders, almost all of who are still very active in the organization. Names like Thompson, Kallem, Frantzen, Rosmann, Madsen, Zacharakis-Jutz, Lubben, Exner, Huber and a hundred others all come quickly to mind and leave me feeling nothing short of awe at the responsibility I have taken on.

In truth, over the years, I have come to view PFI as a leadership organization as much as a farm organization. Each of you is a leader and our job has been to nurture that leadership on behalf of an agricultural ethic rooted in stewardship, community and common sense. I hope, in all humility, to continue and expand upon this fine tradition.

Not a farmer but...

Let me tell you a little about myself. I am not a farmer and I do not have a farm background. However farms were never far away from the small town in Wisconsin where I grew up. I took this agricultural backdrop for granted until our family moved to Arizona when I was ten years old and I suddenly felt like I was living on the moon!

My work experiences and interests have been quite varied. I have been a counselor, a publisher, a writer and a stage manager. I studied theater and creative writing in college. If you want to pigeon hole me you could perhaps think of me as a communicator, a communicator who would like nothing better than to tell the world about PFI!

I became passionate about agriculture early on. In college a friend took me to a Prairie Festival at the Rural Institute in Kansas where I had the pleasure of meeting Wes Jackson and Wendell Berry. There I felt the window dressing of pop America melt away and



Robert Karp in action. Rest assured, he's better at driving organizations than tractors.

something of the real America begin to shine into my life, lighting a fire that is still burning to this day.

Many years later, while living in Massachusetts, I became a member of one of the first Community Supported Agriculture projects (CSA's) in the United States. Through this experience that flame grew into a bonfire and I decided there must be a way to put my skills to work on behalf of a new agriculture.

Around this time, the opportunity arose for me to come to Iowa to work on a play I was writing about the crash of Flight 232 in Sioux City. From the moment I arrived in Iowa I knew I was home. I fell in love with the landscape and the people and the quiet integrity that permeated them both.

So I decided to stay and before long I moved to Ames and got involved in helping start Magic Beanstalk, one of the first CSA's in Iowa. And the rest is history. Through Magic Beanstalk I got involved with PFI, and with Gary Huber and Shelly Gradwell, started what is now the Food Systems Program of PFI. This has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

Thoughts on PFI's Future

Let me share just a few thoughts about the future of PFI. Basically, I think Fred Kirschenmann is right when he tells us we have a unique and urgent window of opportunity over the next few years in which to make a significant impact on farming in the United States. Never has the pressure been so great to get big or get out, yet never have so many – farmers and non-farmers alike – been so open to exploring new ways of taking agriculture into the future. Even policy makers are beginning to think differently.

New opportunities are emerging and breaking through the ice of the old ways of doing business, even while we are told the death bell tolls over the family farm. It is a precarious moment at best – both crisis and opportunity.

I believe PFI must act on this unique moment. We have laid the groundwork for this opportunity. We have spent fifteen years learning the nuts and bolts of what it will take to help farmers be profitable and successful using ecologically sound farming practices. From production systems to food systems, we have created a deep well of knowledge and expertise. We

I have come to view PFI as a leadership organization as much as a farm organization.

have also nurtured an amazing network of courageous and innovative member leaders across the state and region. I believe the world is asking us to share more widely and generously than ever before the wealth of wisdom, knowledge, passion and vision that live in our members, our staff and in our history.

I would like to make every Iowan aware of the incredible accomplishments of PFI and, even more importantly, of the incredible vision we have for the future of agriculture. I believe our membership could double or even triple in the coming years. I believe we could add several new program areas and expand on our existing program areas. In short, I believe PFI, working in close collaboration with our many partners, is poised to help bring about a major shift in agriculture in Iowa and the Midwest over the next five years. We should not strive for anything less.

Not growth for growth's sake

But the point is not to grow for growth's sake or simply to perpetuate ourselves as an organization. The point is that the world needs and is asking for something we have been carefully, modestly cultivating. We have wisdom and we have integrity and we have community and we have vision. Now is the time to multiply these qualities across Iowa a hundredfold. The yeast is bubbling; the bread is waiting to be made!

Finally, let me just say that to bring about the changes we would like to see happen in agriculture, PFI must be prepared to change, grow and evolve as an organization. Over the coming months I will be working with our board and staff and partner organizations to begin to form a clearer picture of just what our future might look like. If you have thoughts on how PFI can more fully serve our member leaders, and the values and vision we stand for, please don't hesitate to contact me. Now is the time to be thinking fresh and big and courageously. I welcome the opportunity to hear and learn from each of you in the months and years ahead.

Editor's note: You can respond to Robert at 515-233-3622. His email is rkarp@isunet.net

LEOPOLD CENTER DIRECTOR SHARES VISION FOR AGRICULTURE

Darcy Dougherty Maulsby

Editor's Note: This article summarizing Fred Kirschenmann's keynote address at the PFI Annual Meeting is reprinted with permission of *Farm News*, Ft. Dodge, where it originally appeared on February 2, 2001.

When a speaker titles his presentation "Farmers—Who Needs Them?," audiences tend to listen up. Especially when that speaker is Fred Kirschenmann, who became the new director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture this past July.

"People aren't really sure anymore that we need farmers," Kirschenmann recently told an audience gathered at Practical Farmers of Iowa's annual meeting. "If you follow the strict sense of market logic, it doesn't make sense for us to put our energies into the production of food and fiber, if people in other parts of the world can do it cheaper."

A federal government official once told Kirschenmann that if two or three people can produce food, or if robots can do it, who cares? "This is a fundamental issue we have to come to terms with," Kirschenmann said. "We need to realize, too, that people used to see agriculture as creating a public good. Now, they often associate agriculture with E.coli, listeria and dead zones in the Gulf of Mexico."

Society has reached the point where it needs to decide if it is important to retain family-sized farms in today's world. "I would argue these farms are critical," Kirschenmann said. "People often fail to recognize that farmers have always produced more than just food and fiber. They provide clean water, healthy soils and ecological stability, as well as vibrant, stable, rural communities. We need to create a new vision for agriculture. If we can't do this, we probably won't get very far."

Taking stock and examining options

The current situation in American agriculture is not promising, Kirschenmann acknowledged. The number of full-time prisoners in America outnumbers full-time farmers, he said. In addition, farmers older than age 65 outnumber farmers under 35 by three to one. In Iowa and Nebraska alone, one-fifth to one-



Fred Kirschenmann gestures at the PFI podium.

third of the remaining farmers will be out of business within two years, he added.

"Farmers are saying that it's just not fun to farm anymore. However, they are now saying, 'okay, if there's a different way to do this, I'm willing to listen.' They weren't saying that just a few months ago," Kirschenmann said.

Agriculture's problems aren't linked to exports and farm-gate prices alone, Kirschenmann noted. "Don't get sucked into the notion that if we just get better prices and more markets, everything will be okay. The problem is systemic, and the current system is a fail system for farmers. What is preventing farmers from having a sustainable life on the farm?"

The annual rate of decline in the farm population indicates the systemic nature of the problem, Kirschenmann said. "In the 1950s, the annual rate of decline was 3.8 percent, and in the 1960s it was 4.6 percent. During the boom years of the 1970s, it was 3.1 percent, but during the farm crisis of the 1980s, it was 2.7 percent. We're seeing fairly constant decline through both good and bad times."

Discussing options with Iowans

How can this problem be solved? Kirschenmann offered a variety of suggestions, noting that the Leopold Center plans to bring people together to consider more possibilities for creating sustainable agriculture in Iowa.

"What if we paid farmers to grow green manure crops once every three years or so? This

would reduce the need for nitrogen and would benefit the soil," he said. "Wouldn't it be better to do this than to pay farmers in North Dakota to raise soybeans by offering a higher LDP for beans than for wheat?"

Kirschenmann emphasized that technology won't provide solutions to all the problems facing American agriculture. "Technology is great, but it's not a quick-fix solution to the ecological problems we have. Kirschenmann cited the example of an Asian farmer who introduced ducks into his rice paddies to eat insects, oxygenate the water and dramatically improve rice yields. "What's the ecological equivalent for Iowa?" Kirschenmann asked.

Workable solutions for agriculture can also come from the marketplace, Kirschenmann said, although competing against large retailers like Wal-Mart isn't the answer. "We know what works in the marketplace," he said. "Consumers want a connection with food producers. Community-supported agriculture (CSA) is a great example of this. Why do people like CSAs so well when they have the convenience of a grocery store right next door? There is still this magic between the producer and the consumer, and that's a marketable commodity. We need to make stores like Hy-Vee part of this, so they can offer differentiated products."

Kirschenmann said the Leopold Center will be taking these initiatives throughout Iowa in coming months to discuss them with a wide variety of people, including farmers. "We want to get people's input and find out if we're heading in the right direction," he said.

As the Leopold Center works to create a new vision for agriculture, Kirschenmann emphasized that Americans are living in a very interesting era. "We have big problems in agriculture, but we also have big opportunities. There has to be a new agriculture for the people of Iowa. If I were not optimistic about this, I wouldn't have taken the job at the Leopold Center. I believe we can do this."

Farmers will not bring about this change by themselves, however, Kirschenmann concluded. "How did the Berlin Wall come down? Did someone manage this? Not that I'm aware of. It was something whose time had come, and it self-organized. Keep this vision in mind with agriculture." ☺



Podium VIPs. Dave Lubben reflects on his years as PFI's president (top). (Center) Dick Thompson, right, presents the Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award to Dave Williams. Senator Tom Harkin recalls PFI's early years (bottom).



It's Friday night and What Don't We Know? -Plenty!
 L to R: Sue Jarnagin, Nan Bonfils, Vic Madsen, and Barney Bahrenfuse



Kim Willemson looks over items at the silent auction which raised over \$600 for PFI Summer Camp.

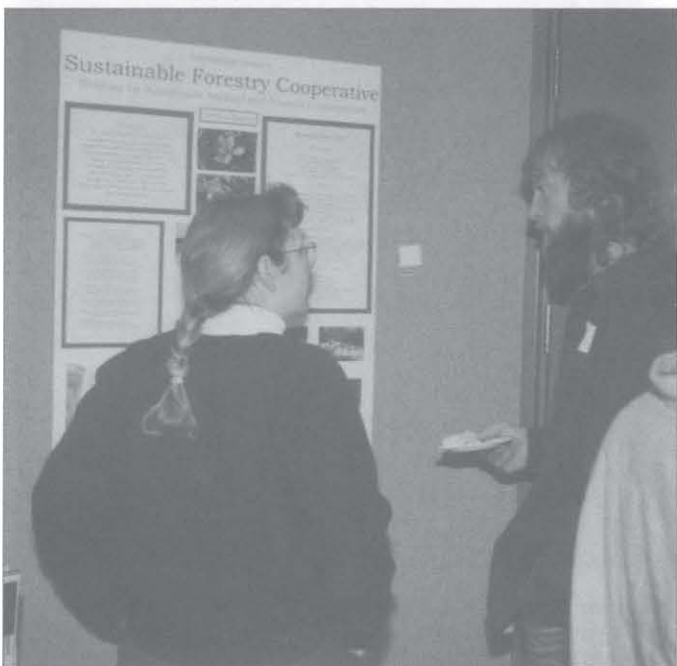
Annual Meeting Snaps



Terry Gompert shares more secrets on grazing standing-crops following his well-attended workshop.



Shelly Gradwell's probably trying to offer Rex Thompson a choice of dates for his kids to come to camp. It all depends on making up those snow days!



Laura Jackson catches up with Mike Natvig during the poster session.




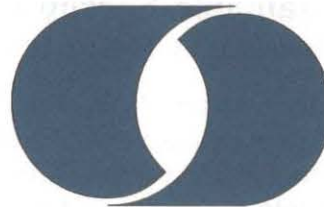
There's no charge for a tabletop display, but we'd like to thank the Humane Society of America for their generous gift.

Thanks Again to Annual Meeting Sponsors and Volunteers

The generosity of the organizations shown below helped defray many of the costs of our meeting. **Michael Nash** designed the graphics for the meeting program, name tags, signage and letterhead. **Barney Bahrenfuse** was sensational as our Friday night host. Special thanks also to the many volunteers who kept things running smoothly. These include the folks at the registration desk – **Colin Greenan, Rick Hartmann, Robert Karp, Shelly Gradwell**, under

the mindful eye of **Deb Cooper** who was registration manager. Other volunteers include the hosts at the concurrent sessions and the recorders who captured the content. (See p. 18.)

Congratulations once again to **Donna Bauer** who was named Volunteer of the Year. Over the years Donna's been such a key player in multiple PFI projects. We'd like to have her cloned. For this year's meeting she organized the silent auction which raised over \$600 for PFI summer camp. 



IOWA SOYBEAN PROMOTION BOARD

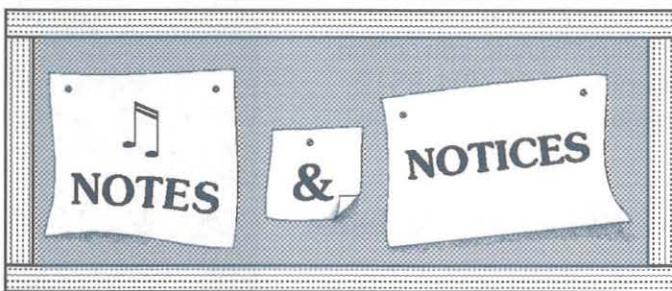
LEOPOLD CENTER

WFAN

Heartland Organic Marketing Cooperative 



IOWA ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL
"Together for the Earth we share"



♪ Summer Internship

Dave and Lin Zahrt are looking for help at their Reese Homestead Ltd., one mile north of Turin, IA. Work will be primarily in the realm of prairie management with seed harvesting and sales. Prospects include

the possibility of long-term work agreement and/or room and board included. Contact Dave at Country Homestead Bed and Breakfast, 22133 Larpentour Rd., Turin, IA 51059-8747 Phone 712- 353-6772 Email: david@country-homestead.com

♪ Farmer Seeks to Move Sustainable Farming Business to Central Iowa

I would like to rent and/or buy a portion of, plus rent a portion of a farm within an 80-mile radius of Ames, Iowa to establish a sustainable farm system. A good working set of cattle facilities is desired. I prefer a landowner willing to assist during a transition from

conventional farming to a sustainable system. Any situation will be considered!!

I currently farm 410 acres in west central Missouri, utilizing crop rotations of corn, soybeans, winter and summer annuals, legumes and mixed forages. Cattle are raised on stored feeds and a management intensive grazing system.

Contact James Lummus at RR3, Box 191, Concordia, Missouri; phone 660-463-2133 or email at jrlummus@almanet.net

♪ **Iowa SEED (Sustainable Energy for Economic Development) Meetings**

Come find out how you can benefit from renewable energy opportunities for rural Iowa. Iowa SEED (Sustainable Energy for Economic Development) is offering a series of meetings to discuss energy topics and how wind farming and biomass production will improve Iowa's rural economy. Meetings are scheduled for: Saturday, March 31, 10 am - The Wallace Foundation's Research Farm Learning Center, Lewis; Saturday, April 28, 10 am - Forest City High School, Forest City; Saturday, May 5, 10 am - Iowa Energy Center's Becon Center, Nevada. For complete information contact: Rich Dana at 319-685-4270, energyfarming@yahoo.com.

♪ **Frontier Herb Grower's Days**

Designed for professional and backyard growers, this array of workshops fall in April, August and September. The site is Frontier Organic Research Farm in Norway, IA. In addition, Frontier is offering a series of Grower's Crop Monographs. For more information call 800-729-5422 ext. 1373. The website is www.frontiercoop.com.

♪ **Audubon County Farmers Tell Their Stories Online**

In 1999, PFI member Helen Gunderson interviewed members of Audubon County Family Farms for the soundtrack of a video about the importance of local food systems. Helen has edited the comments into four segments with the interviewees (David Toussain, Charles Carpenter, Vic Madsen, and Mari Schultes) describing the changing attitudes toward farming and food; why they got involved in their

current approaches to farming; the specialty items they produce; and the benefits of direct marketing. Those tapes will soon be available on the PFI Website in the form of streaming media.

The full video will be available later this year through Helen. Helen is a photographer and videographer whose business name is *Gunder-friend Productions*. Thanks to Helen for making the tapes available.

♪ **Coming in June 2001: A PFI CAMP ODYSSEY**

PFI Camp is a youth and family camp for PFI members, their friends, and the general public. The 2001 version will be an epic camp of adventure and exploration of the past, present, and future of sustainable food and farming systems!

We will "travel through time" for hands-on experiences in: prehistoric Iowa agriculture and wilderness survival skills, plus Native American and pioneer farming with a camp out. Other fun PFI Camp activities will include: canoeing, team building, swimming, horseback riding, hiking, crafts, rappelling, campfire songs and stories, games, and our annual PFI family picnic at Nan and Don's Full Circle Farm!

PFI Campers voted to return to the YMCA camp near Boone again this year. Tentative camp dates are June 7-11*

*This may have to change due to snow day make-ups. Please email or call Shelly or Nan to let us know when your school is getting out. That's Shelly Gradwell at 641-483-4027, shellyg@iastate.edu or Nan Bonfils at 515-294-8512, nanb@iastate.edu Thanks!

♪ **PFI Camp Website**

Fourteen-year old Bryce Bauer, son of Ted and Donna Bauer, Audubon, received the first "Outstanding PFI Camper Award" to honor his commitment to making camp a success over the years. He has



Bryce Bauer cuts willows for streambank restoration at Camp 2000.

also worked on the silent auction camp fundraiser and written camp articles for the newsletter. "Last summer Bryce impressed the whole staff by helping to keep us all on time, knowing ahead of time what to do, and always being there just exactly when he was needed," says Shelly Gradwell, camp director .

"Now he has written and designed a website for PFI Campers. The site has information on the 2001 Camp, photos and reports from past camps, camper quotes and much more. We applaud Bryce for his talent, creativity, and ingenuity for helping PFI Campers stay connected!" Link to PFI Camp through www.pfi.iastate.edu

James' Journal

Since last fall, James Frantzen, 12-year-old son of Tom and Irene Frantzen, Alta Vista, has been contributing a weekly column for the Organic Valley Co-op Website. *James' Journal*, as it's called, relates the daily doings on the farm and in the family. James ends his journal each week with a farm fact. The journal appears as part of the *Farm Friends Kids' Club* section of the site. Most visitors to the *Farm Friends Kids' Club* likely do not live on a farm, so James is helping introduce organic farming to a new audience and a new generation. Visit *James' Journal* at www.organicvalley.com/kids/jamesjournal.php.



James Frantzen writes a weekly column.

the farm. **Don Adams** and **Nan Bonfils**, with help from **Colin Greenan**, subsequently won the Governor's Environmental Award in waste management. This year the project continues with support from the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Center funds will be used for educational outreach. Last year's compost goes into raised beds for growing this year's camp vegetables. Campers will be helping in the gardens and at the compost site. ♻️

THE EDITOR MUSES

Nan Bonfils

Is it spring yet? I really like the month of March at the farm because it is usually nice enough to finally be outside without being fearfully cold, but too early to feel terrifically guilty about what you're not getting done. Actually the best thing I can say about this winter is that it's dragging on so long, this "Winter Newsletter" may not look too ridiculous when it reaches you after the equinox.

As I lay out this edition, its array of content brings to mind a nagging question I have about this marvelous publication. That is, how many purposes can it fulfill and how many audiences can it address before it collapses under its own ink? As our organization grows, doesn't the newsletter need to evolve too? Robert Karp is engaging staff in all kinds of overdue conversations about PFI communication and outreach. It's quite stirring. I welcome your thoughts on this matter.

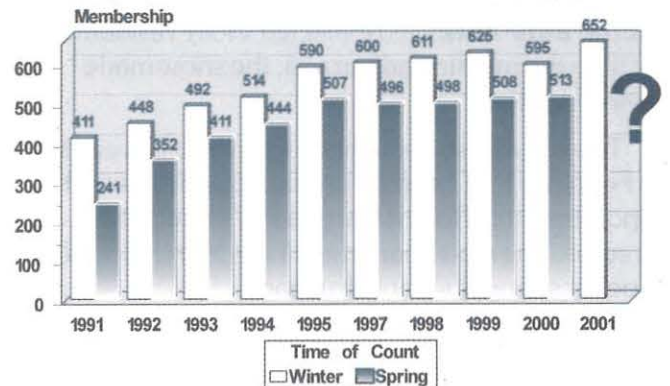
The membership graph below shows a recurring pattern of peak and plateaus in PFI membership. I am

Composting Update

Congratulations to two on-farm composting projects supported by PFI Sustainable Project funds in 2000. D & D Ranch in Swisher is a vermi-composting enterprise. **Deb and Dave Hofmann** used PFI's grant money to expand their educational programs for kids. Currently their bagged vermicompost, "Back to Earth," is being trialed in Earl May stores in Iowa City and Cedar Rapids. "We're pushing for them to go to the Des Moines stores also," adds Deb.

Full Circle Farm in Madrid diverted 1.8 tons of food waste from the local landfill by collecting it from the dining hall of a nearby camp and composting it on

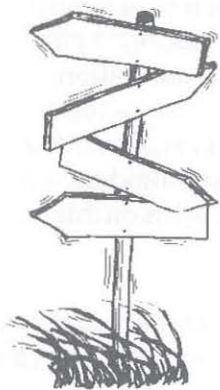
PFI Membership Over Time Before and After Renewal Deadlines



excited as anyone to acknowledge that as we go to press, our actual membership count is up to 671. However I know that there are at least 120 of you out there whose membership renewal is so long overdue that it is about to expire. (Yes, you're the folks who got your last chance reminder mailed March 5. This is your last newsletter.) When we clean sweep the roster on May first, what will the numbers look like?

Also of interest to all our members are preparations to enable you to access and update your own membership information on-line. A vital piece of the process will be knowing your own membership ID number. (Bet you didn't even know you had such a thing.) It appears on your mailing label this newsletter. The on-line system isn't up and running yet. Standby for action this spring.

Confused about your membership status? I'm the one to contact at 515-294-8512. My email is nanb@iastate.edu. If you have items for the spring newsletter, let me hear from you cause it comes around in a hurry. The deadline is April 20th. ☺



BOARD BUSINESS

The board met briefly, as part of the Annual Meeting, the evening of January 13, 2001 to welcome new district representatives elected earlier that day. They are **Michael Nash** for district 3 (Northeast); **Robert** (aka Barney) **Bahrenfuse** for district 4 (Southwest) and **Tom Wahl**

for district 5 (Southeast). You can read more about these new board members in the next newsletter.

Colin Wilson was re-elected President and **Susan Zacharakis-Jutz** was re-elected Vice President. By the time the meeting adjourned, the snow made driving frightful.

The board also convened, again in wild weather, on February 8. The main order of business was the appointment of Robert Karp as PFI's Executive Director. The next board meeting is March 23. We'll hope for sunny skies and dry roads.

Contacts for board members are listed on the back of every newsletter. ☺

STAY CONNECTED WITH STAFF

Everybody working for PFI has a private line these days. Here's the scoop.

PFI has two offices. Membership services and on-farm research operate out of 2104 Agronomy Hall, ISU, Ames, IA 50011. That's the address to use for **Nan Bonfils** or **Rick Exner**.

Dial Nan at 515-294-8512; nanb@iastate.edu
Rick Exner's phone is 515-294-5496;
dnexner@iastate.edu

The Food Systems Program office is located at 300 Main Street - Suite 1, Ames, Iowa, 50010. You will find **Gary Huber** and **Rick Hartmann** there. Gary's phone is 515-232-5649; ftf@isunet.net Call Rick Hartmann at 515-232-5661; rick@isunet.net

Robert Karp, Executive Director, has an office at the Main Street address above. You can reach him at 515-233-3622; rkarp@isunet.net

ALL'S WELL AT THE WOMEN'S WINTER GATHERING

Kate Hogg, Cedar Rapids

PFI women from across the state met at PrairieWoods in February for respite and reinvigoration. The Women's Winter Gathering's theme was wellness. LT and Ahilia Bhrmdat talked with us about staying physically well by eating well.

They manage a CSA, livestock and hens and are opening an on-farm restaurant this year. As health professionals, they believe they can best improve the health of their community by providing locally grown, vine-ripened food. To take full advantage of the healing properties of food, they explain, we should use the freshest food possible and lightly cook it. They recommend seasonal eating: our bodies re-energize with fresh food when available but then do not require the same nutrients the rest of the year. So we do not need tangerines from Spain in winter if we've eaten berries from Iowa in the summer. Vitamins and minerals from our food are the most readily usable. For example, the best way to get calcium is to use animal bones for broth, or to suck on them. Their talk



generated a lot of discussion and we all enjoyed the cabbage and pork saute they prepared.

We had great locally grown food throughout the gathering. Linda Nash and **GROWN Locally** provided most of our food: goat cheese, bison steaks, vegetables, coffee cakes, pies and more. Joanne Nelson, **As the Crow Flies**, provided eggs. And Carol Hunt brought a delicious black bean stew.

We had many opportunities to refresh our spirits and our minds. Telling stories and sharing experiences are the cornerstones of this gathering. We heard about Simone Alvarez's trip to Morocco to learn more about their cooking; Cyndy Hyde's battle with forty bee hives; and Karie Wiltshire's success pulling together a new CSA for Grinnell and getting landowners to use native prairie plants.

We heard about and honored the life and work of Beverly Everett. (Look for a tribute to Beverly in the last pages of this newsletter.)

And Doris Malkmus from University of Iowa's Women's Archives encouraged us to record these stories, print out our emails, write in a journal even once a year ... so that generations from now students of history can see the diversity and day to day work of our lives. You don't have to sort through materials before bringing them to the Archives. Doris's latest project is gathering information about women involved in sustainable agriculture, beginning in the 1970s and 1980s. Helen Gunderson offered to help record stories on video or tape and we may take some time to do that at upcoming PFI meetings. (See Notes

...we agreed the gathering should happen on the other side of the state next year. So, if you know of a good facility near you and have a few moments to spare over the winter, give Nan a call at 515-294-8512.

and Notices p. 8 for Helen's work with Audubon County Family Farms.)

Our conversation about books was mind stretching as well, ranging from children's books to Native American ethno-botany, from recipes for cooking food inside a car engine to race relations. An abridged list is on page 27 with details available from Shelly Gradwell at 641-483-4027, shellyg@iastate.edu.

Although we enjoyed the PrairieWoods facility, we agreed the gathering should happen on the other side of the state next year. So, if you know of a good facility near you and have a few moments to spare over the winter, give Nan Bonfils a call at 515-294-8512. (I have arranged the gathering twice now and can honestly say it is easy and fun to do.)

We agreed upon ideas for next year's topics. The first included how-tos for buying local and/or organic and/or fair-trade products (not just food). The second idea was having each person share a farm and/or cooking problem and its solution. 🐾

FOOD SYSTEMS PROGRAM REPORT

Gary Huber

An important area of work for PFI's Food Systems Program involves helping find food for all-Iowa meals. PFI's role is to serve as an informal broker, with our primary buying partner being the ISU Scheman Building in Ames, which hosts over 900 groups each year for meetings.

PFI's brokering work began with a Leopold Center request for local foods for a 1997 conference at Scheman. Because of our work with Magic Beanstalk

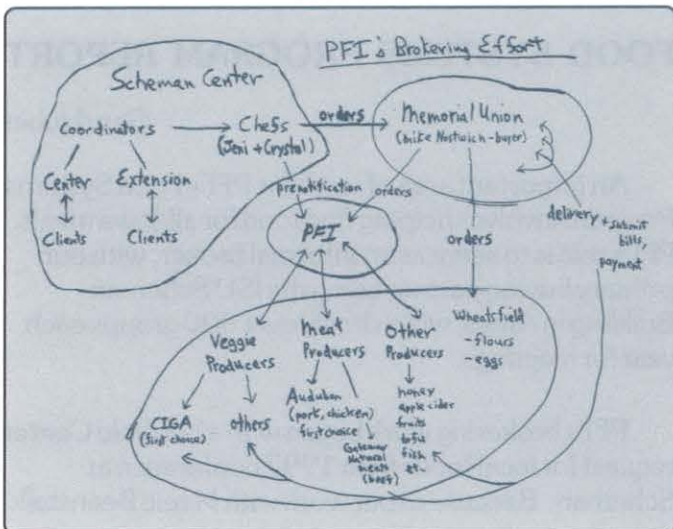
PFI's brokering efforts increased the number of meals from six in 1998 to thirty-seven in 1999... to fifty-four in 2000.

CSA growers, we were asked to help find the food. Then later that year after we helped with a similar meal for a local food systems conference, we asked Scheman's food service director about their using local foods on a regular basis. The response was an enthusiastic yes for three reasons: 1) the high quality of local foods; 2) the marketing advantage for Scheman; and 3) the link between local foods and ISU's mission.

From these simple beginnings we helped Scheman find food for six conferences during 1998. ISU paid farmers directly for their foods.

These experiences were positive, but outside normal ISU procedures. So in late 1998 we met with ISU staff to discuss a system for making these meals a regular feature for conferences at Scheman. Although they were willing to pay farmers individually and take multiple deliveries, they needed one contact for placing orders. At this point we needed to 1) create a menu with set prices, 2) secure support from Scheman event planners, and 3) develop a network of farmers supplying local foods.

We undertook three sets of activities to meet these needs. The first involved several meetings with a group of vegetable farmers. These farmers identified when fruits and vegetables would likely be available and what they needed to be paid for these products.



From: Mike Nostwich <nostwich@memunion.admin.iastate.edu>
 To: Gary Huber <gfh@isunet.net>
 Cc: ROSS@memunion.admin.iastate.edu <ROSS@memunion.admin.iastate.edu>; DAVIS@memunion.admin.iastate.edu <DAVIS@memunion.admin.iastate.edu>; KREBS@memunion.admin.iastate.edu <KREBS@memunion.admin.iastate.edu>
 Date: Thursday, August 19, 1999 11:58 AM
 Subject: New meal

Gary...
 For the National Governors Association meeting on Thursday 8/26 at Scheman we need:

60 lbs. of beef roast
 27 whole chickens
 210 potatoes uniform size if possible
 20 lbs of zucchini
 20 lbs of carrots
 15 lbs of mesculan mix salad greens
 20 cucumbers
 25 tomatoes

Please have all delivered to the Memorial Union by Wednesday. I will need the chicken earlier if it is frozen, it needs to be cut up. I will be gone Friday thru Sunday, if you have any questions at that time talk to Jenni or Crystal, or Teresa Krebs.
 Mike

This information helped to develop a seasonal menu for Scheman and set prices for these meals. The policy was set to spread orders among the growers. We also established an email system for placing orders.

A second set of activities involved locating other products, such as meats, poultry, milk, and cheese. Because there were no local farmers with meats and poultry available for sale to institutions, we recruited farmers with connections to PFI from other locations in Iowa. Additionally, we looked for sources of other products, such as cheeses and fish, to help round out options for these meals.

A third set of activities involved working with Scheman staff on critical topics. Using data they supplied, we estimated how much of the various foods we could anticipate using to help farmers balance supply with demand. We helped develop the seasonal menu as a marketing tool to sell the meals to Scheman clients. We helped set menu prices that kept everyone in the black. And we worked with Scheman on procedures that included: 1) a "heads up" call so we had ample time to fill the orders; 2) email orders from a purchasing agent (see sample above), which we then forwarded to the farmers; 3) direct deliveries / billings by the farmers; 4) direct payments to farmers by ISU. The schematic on this page was developed initially to help understand this more formal system.

This system increased the number of events from six in 1998 to thirty-seven in 1999, with the total number of people served growing from 360 to 6,690. Nineteen of the 1999 events were at the ISU Scheman and Memorial Union facilities. The others were at other central Iowa locations, and these happened because of the awareness generated by the ISU meals.

We used forty-three farmers and nine processors to supply the 1999 meals. These processors are small Iowa businesses like meat lockers and cheese manufacturers. Farmers and processors were paid a total of \$13,655, in addition to the \$2,886 paid to Niman Ranch for a Christmas ham sale we helped promote. PFI's brokering efforts paid a total of \$16,541 to local Iowa producers/processors.

After the 1999 season we evaluated our efforts and made adjustments for 2000. The overriding change was a fee system that helped to pay for the brokering service. This system had three income sources – the farmers, the conference center, and the clients. We asked the farmers to join PFI, to pay a \$10 annual supply network fee, and to remit to PFI 5% of total sales made through PFI at the end of the year. From Scheman we requested a \$100 annual fee. And for clients, 60¢ was added to the cost of each meal to be paid to PFI by Scheman at the end of the season. An explanation for the extra per meal cost to clients was noted at the bottom of the Scheman menu.

The result was that we had a growers' network of 23 farmer involved during the 2000 season (see photo below). Four of these farmers had pork, beef and chicken for sale and another 16 sold fruits and vegetables. There was also one egg producer, one goat cheese processor, and one tofu processor. These farmers accounted for 70% of the sales we helped facilitate in 2000, with the remainder coming from outside the network when members of the network were unable to supply the product.

The adjacent table compares the results from 1999 and 2000. It shows that the number of meals went up, as did the number of events and number of locations serving these meals. Although the data

1999 and 2000 PFI BROKERING EFFORTS

	1999	2000
Meals	37	54
Events	29	47
Locations	8	17
Diners	6960	5638
Farmers	43	46
Paid to farmers/ processors	\$13,655	\$14,829
Niman Ranch Christmas ham	\$2886	\$1263
Total paid to farmers/processors	\$16,581	\$16,092

show that the number of people served these meals went down, the 1999 figures included 2,000 people who were served local foods by Scheman during a week-long National Motorcoach Association event. Without this 1999 event, the number of people served would have increased by 14% in 2000.

We are currently in the process of planning for the 2001 season. The work done so far on this brokering service has had many benefits. Although these efforts involve a modest amount of commerce, the larger benefits have been educational. People attending these events have experiences so tangible they immediately recognize the importance of knowing who produced the food on their plate. In addition, farmers are learning what it takes to sell their produce to food service establishments.

As we look to the future there are several key issues. A critical one is supply - we simply do not have an abundance of farmers raising fruits and vegetables in the quantities necessary to become a regular, steady supplier for food service establishments. Even with our all-Iowa meals the supply is not sufficient, especially with fresh fruits and vegetables, to handle increased growth.



Some, but not all, of PFI's local food systems growers.

A second issue is structural in nature. This project is not a typical activity for a non-profit, educational group. Significant growth of this effort would require managing the food brokerage as a business.

A third issue is the labor-intensity of these all-Iowa meals relative to the amount of product moved. The challenge is to create an adequate income flow to make the effort sustainable. Increasing fees and/or increasing the number of meals or people served would make this possible. However, under the current system one weekly meal, perhaps two, is the most we can serve.

Current plans for addressing these issues involve the development of a privately owned brokerage to eventually take over supplying the all-Iowa meals. Another option might be the creation of a for-profit subsidiary of Practical Farmers of Iowa. Both of these options will be investigated as we move forward. If you have any questions or suggestions, please don't hesitate to call Gary Huber at 515-232-5649. 🐾

THE SMALL FARM PROJECT

Rick Hartmann

As announced in the Fall 2000 *Practical Farmer*, PFI recently received funding to work on a small farm profitability project. The Small Farm Project is in fact what we are calling it. The name is a shortened version of the North Central Initiative for Small Farm Profitability. This is a four-state, seven-institution farm-to-fork effort designed to improve the profitability and competitiveness of small and mid-sized farms in Iowa and the Midwest. The project brings together farmers, scientists, marketers, extension personnel, technicians, and economists attempting to identify, adapt, and apply practical, science-based, market-driven strategies that work. The initiative is funded by a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The initiative is centered on 5 major activities: farmer clusters; analysis of successful farms; case studies of strategies that work; research on high value markets; and dissemination/education. PFI has a role in research, case studies, and activation of producer, or farmer, clusters. The key component of the project will be formation of farmer clusters. Initially, at least 20 producer clusters will be formed across Iowa, Missouri, Wisconsin, and Nebraska. They include 5 to

9 in Iowa under the direction of PFI and two swine related clusters selected by ISU Extension.

Clusters of farmers will plan and apply innovative, profitable strategies with assistance from local resource providers such as extension educators. They will receive technical, marketing, economic and other support from PFI and other members of the initiative. Producer clusters in Iowa were sought through announcements in leading farm publications, newspapers, farmer networks, University Extension, and an announcement at the PFI annual meeting. The deadline to apply to be a PFI cluster was Feb. 15th. As of that date, PFI received over 20 completed applications. This represents only a fraction of the interest among all Iowa farmers who inquired about the initiative.

In late February a diverse selection committee convened to review the applications. Instead of firmly choosing 5 clusters to work with on this project, we identified 9 to meet with. Over the coming weeks we will work with the 9 groups so they clearly know what we can offer them, and they can clearly tell us what they need. After this process we can designate which ones will actually become Small Farm Project producer clusters. The 9 groups under consideration are:

- (1) Southeast Iowa Nut Growers - focus on production and marketing of high-value tree crops
- (2) Kalona Organic Dairy - 20-30 Amish dairy farmers willing to go organic if they have an outlet for organic milk or processed dairy products
- (3) Maquoketa Valley Producers - to develop locally produced foods for subscription orders from area businesses and agencies, i.e., industries and schools
- (4) Grown Locally - key idea is to establish, maintain, and expand local institutional markets for locally grown produce in their geographic area

There were other groups that had interesting and viable value-added projects worth helping and we are exploring ways to assist them outside this project.

- (5) Hinkletown Community Cluster - actively seeking innovative methods of land use to develop niche markets for agricultural products such as ginseng, goldenseal, and slippery elm bark
- (6) I-80 Market Center - focusing on a permanent market and education center located on I-80 at Exit 86
- (7) Western Iowa Small Farm Collaborative Marketing Group - an umbrella organization with the intent that all could market their products better by providing a variety of local foods to the community, farm to plate groups, or institutional buyers wanting beef, pork, and poultry
- (8) Villages of Van Buren Viticulture - producers want to establish a viticulture industry in Van Buren County
- (9) Chariton Valley Beef Direct Marketing Group - a sub-committee of Chariton Valley Beef whose purpose is to study local direct sales to the restaurant market.

Stay tuned to the newsletter for updates on the progress of the producer clusters. There were other groups that had interesting and viable value-added projects worth helping and we are exploring other ways to assist them. The process has allowed us to begin cataloguing the needs of these types of farming projects and we would like your continued input in that area. If you know of other groups that would like some assistance, please contact us at 515-232-5661.

IOWA CAFE: A SERIES OF WORKSHOPS ON COMMUNITY, AGRICULTURE, AND FOOD ENTERPRISES

Robert Karp

The Iowa CAFE workshops will not be like any training you have ever been to before! Iowa CAFE, a series of five one-day workshops, takes place this May and June. The purpose is to train a critical cross-section of agriculture professionals, community leaders, and other food and ag industry stakeholders on community food systems and the emerging "new agriculture."

... workshops will include a lively balance of discussion, planning and information sharing, with a good dose of fun and humor.

Evoking the relaxed mood of a traditional Iowa cafe, the workshops will include a lively balance of discussion, planning and information sharing, with a good dose of fun and humor. A delicious all-Iowa lunch featuring locally grown foods will also be offered. Participants will leave these workshops with:

Greater knowledge of the trends that have shaped, are shaping and could shape the future of agriculture;

An understanding of the multi-layered reality of food production, distribution and consumption in their region;

Awareness of the depth and breadth of community food and agriculture projects taking place the nation, in Iowa, and in their specific region;

An action plan to support and participate in these efforts in the context of their own job and/or community;

An in depth training manual filled with knowledge, resources and helpful tips.

Grab your calendar - here are the dates

May TBA - Lewis at the Wallace Foundation for Rural Research and Development

June 13 - Iowa City at Montgomery Hall, Johnson County Fairgrounds, 4265 Oak Crest Hill Rd. SE

June 14 - Storm Lake at Stevens Forum Building, Buena Vista University

June 20 - Fayette at Upper Iowa University

June 21 - Ankeny at Des Moines Area Community College

Each workshop is a stand alone event. The workshops are being organized by Practical Farmers of Iowa in conjunction with Iowa State University Extension, the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. For more information on the workshops or to register, contact Robert Karp at 515-233-3622 or by email at rkarp@isunet.net



It was ugly outside, but indoors the talk was about growing things and marketing them.

ON-FARM RESEARCH MEETING ICED

Rick Exner

If the ice that came down February 8-9 has melted by the time you read this, just consider yourself fortunate. Despite some of the nastiest weather of the winter, more than a third of PFI cooperators did make it to Ames for the spring planning meeting.

There were even a few new faces, both on the farming side and among the ISU folks who made their way across town to join the meeting. Welcome to Dieter Geest and Amy Miller; also to Jean-Luc Jannink, the new small grains breeder at ISU. Fred Kirschenmann, Director of the Leopold Center was able to stop by twice to visit, and Nancy Grundens-Schuck, of the Ag Ed Department, brought simple tricks for effective field days. Speaking of field days, the calendar for 2001 is taking shape. If you just can't wait for the mail, keep an eye on the PFI Website for the dates of this summer's field events.

There are also new opportunities for PFI members to become cooperators on specific topics. If you finish pigs in hoopouses and want to work on optimizing rations and/or the microbiology of the system, we'd like to hear from you.

In addition, ARS-ISU corn breeder Kendall Lamkey has a new set of adapted varieties based on open-pollinated technology. PFI will tie you in with Kendall if you'd like to try these genetics in an on-farm trial. You'll find details in the next article. 🌽

SAVE CORN SEED? TRY NEW ISU VARIETIES

Kendall Lamkey, USDA-ARS corn breeder at ISU

The following corn populations are available in quantities sufficient for on-farm testing in replicated plots. The populations were developed by the USDA-ARS/ISU maize breeding program located on the Iowa State University Campus (<http://corn2.agron.iastate.edu>).

Later germplasm (would work well in the area south of US Hwy 20)

BSSS(R)C14 x BSCB1(R)C14 – a population hybrid

BS10(R)C13 x BS11(R)C13 – a population hybrid

BS31(R)C1 – open pollinated “synthetic” population

BS11(S2)C5 – open pollinated “synthetic” population

Earlier germplasm

BS21(R)C7 x BS22(R)C7 – a population hybrid

BS21(R)C7 – open pollinated “synthetic” population

BS22(R)C7 – open pollinated “synthetic” population

The germplasm labeled population hybrid are crosses between two open-pollinated varieties. Generally, the population hybrids that have been tested have better yield and standability than the synthetics. Seed of the population hybrids needs to be produced anew each year, like any hybrid. However, it should be relatively easy to do this on the farm.

The other four populations are synthetics that have been improved for yield and standability. BS31(R)C1 and BS11(S2)C5 yielded well last year, although BS31(R)C1 is a little late. BS21(R)C7 and BS22(R)C7 may not yield well, but they are the best I have access to right now for northern Iowa.

I envision a three- or four-entry on-farm test with six replications. One of the entries should be a commercial hybrid of your choice, one could be an open-pollinated variety like Nokomis Gold and the others



could be chosen from the list above. This experiment could occupy two to three acres, depending on the field and equipment size.

If you are interested, contact **Kendall Lamkey** at krlamkey@iastate.edu or 515-294-7826. You can also contact Rick Exner at PFI, 515-294-5486, dnexner@iastate.edu. 🐷

QUALITY PORK TOUR FOLLOWS THE PIGS

Rick Exner

The storms let up for a few days in February, and 15 producers, Extension staff, and assorted others logged up to 750 miles in two days of learning about alternative pork. One objective of the tour was to look at parts of the system that are usually out of sight – like the inside of the pig.

On the Tom and Irene Frantzen farm, veterinarian Dennis Riley demonstrated how an on-farm post mortem can help identify health problems in the herd. The liver scars he showed tour participants were left by roundworms (ascarids) as they migrated through the body of the pig. Tom also demonstrated his Temple Grandin-style handling system for sorting and loading.

The Frantzen pigs joined those of several other organic producers on a semi headed for Sioux Preme Packing Company in Sioux Center. Before giving pursuit, tour participants enjoyed a Sunday dinner featuring pork chops from the Fresh Air Pork Circle.



“Here we come!” Pigs, out for a Sunday stroll through the Grandin-style facility at Frantzens’.

One objective of the tour was to look at parts of the system that are usually out of sight – like the inside of the pig.

Then it was off to Sioux Center for an early morning rendezvous with the pigs at Sioux Preme.

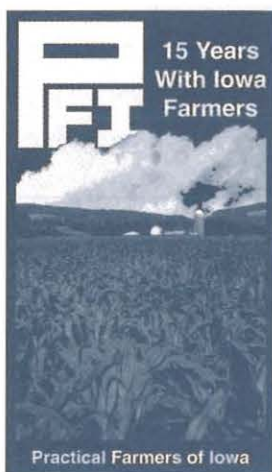
Vice President Gary Malenke took the group through the Sioux Preme plant, and veterinarian Fred Sick showed lungs and livers from several of the animals, some exhibiting various health problems. Tom Frantzen had shipped two different genetics to the plant and was mesmerized by the carcasses as they passed by on the processing line.

After the tour, the group had a wide-ranging conversation with Gary Malenke. Gary showed three sample loins of different color and eating quality, and Extension swine specialist Dave Stender helped explain the connection between meat quality and animal stress. Clearly everyone has a stake in minimizing the stress to meat animals during shipping and handling. Identity preservation is another challenge, and it too carries benefits for everyone from producer to processor to consumer.

Midsized processors like Sioux Preme, midsize livestock producers, and the companies that are marketing specialty meat products have a stake in each other’s success as well. The quality pork tour stimulated the kind of communication that can benefit all parties. 🐷



In Sioux Center, Dr. Fred Sick showed what stories the liver and lungs can tell.



Designed by
Michael Nash for PFI.

WINTER WORKSHOP SUMMARIES AVAILABLE – JUST ASK!

The most common complaint about the PFI Annual Meeting is that there are too many good concurrent sessions from which to choose. People just haven't figured out how to be in two – or three – places at once. Actually, one could take that complaint as a compliment. Either way, we do understand

that not everyone can get to every session that sounds good. And some PFI members don't make it to the meeting at all.

So each year we ask volunteers to write summaries of the workshops. These reports are as close as we get to assembling proceedings of the event. They serve as a chronicle for the archives and permit other folks to at least read about what they missed.

Normally we print all the summaries in the winter issue of the newsletter. But in the interest of economy, we are taking a new approach. We have printed the reports and a copy is available to anyone who wants to get one. We'll send you as many as you want, by email or the U.S. post – your choice. All you have to do is ask.

The person to ask is **Nan at 515-294-8512; nanb@iastate.edu**. Choose from the titles below. Workshops are listed in alphabetical order by title along with the name of the reporter. Thanks to all these fine volunteers!

Agritourism, Local Farm and Community
Entrepreneurship
reported by Jan Libbey, Kanawha

Conversations with the Keynoter
reported by Jeff Zacharakis-Jutz, Solon

Cuba from a Farmer's Viewpoint
reported by Katie Monsen, Ames

Grazing Standing Crops
reported by Diane Benjamin, Whiting

Institutional Marketing – Prospects for Local
Foods in Restaurants, Hotels, and Institutions
reported by Nina Biensen, State Center

Managing Organic Matter
reported by Amy Miller, West Des Moines

Managing Pasture as Crop
reported by Chris Goedhart, Sioux Center

Mechanical Weed Control in High Value Crops –
Tools and Techniques
reported by Merlin Pfannkuch, Ames

Optimizing Mechanical Weed Control in Row
Crops – Principles and Practices
reported by Jeff Zacharakis-Jutz, Solon

Value-Added Success Stories
reported by Nina Biensen, State Center

Winter Farrowing
reported by Nina Biensen, State Center

Editor's note: We regret that we do not have reports on the following workshops: Composting; Heart and Spirit of Sustainability; Insight Edition – Your Show and Tell Time; Local Connections – From Farms to School Cafeterias; Marketing Your Non-perishable Farm Products; Supporting the New Agriculture – Tell Us What You Need to Succeed; Update on Organics. ☺



Coming in June 2001: A PFI CAMP ODYSSEY

A youth and family camp for PFI members, their friends, and the general public.

The 2001 version will feature: prehistoric Iowa agriculture and wilderness survival skills, plus Native American and pioneer farming with a camp out. Other fun activities will include: canoeing, team building, swimming, horseback riding, hiking, crafts, rappelling, campfire songs and stories, games, and our annual PFI family picnic.

Location: YMCA camp near Boone

Tentative dates: are June 7-11 – subject to snow day make-ups. Please let Shelly know when your school is getting out 641-483-4027, shellyg@iastate.edu

PFI 2000 ON-FARM TRIAL RESULTS - I

(Editor's note: This issue begins coverage of PFI's on-farm research from 2000. If you attended a field day and didn't make it to the January annual meeting, this is your opportunity for some follow-up on the trials you saw in the field last year. Maybe you have already purchased your seed for 2001, but here are some variety/hybrid comparisons that may be new information for you. If you grow vegetables, read how Angela Tedesco foils cucumber beetles with planting methods. And as the pastures green up, take a look at Matt and Diana Stewart's evaluation of strategies to supplement grazing for dairy cows.)

Cucumber Beetles vs. Tedesco

Angela Tedesco's Turtle Farm, near Granger, feeds CSA members in the Des Moines area. She produces abundant vegetable crops – and usually a good crop of cucumber beetles. Angela writes: "This cucumber beetle trial was an attempt to increase survivability and therefore production of cucurbits that often succumb from being eaten at emergence or from disease spread by the beetles feeding on the plant. Cucumber beetles did not appear for this planting at emergence, so most of the mortality appeared to be from disease. Part of the initial

This cucumber beetle trial was an attempt to increase survivability and therefore production of cucurbits.

plan was to use an attractant to divert the beetles from the plants. Keeping a stock of the attractant (bitter melon) for use in traps became impractical, and attempting to grow it within the plots did not work this year.

Reading Numbers, Knowing Terms

When you see the outcome of a PFI trial, you also see a statistical indication of the strength of the difference observed. The following information should help you to understand the reports of the trials contained in this report. The symbol "*" shows that there was a "statistically significant" difference between treatments; that is, one that likely did not occur just by chance. We require ourselves to be 95% sure before we declare a significant difference. If instead of a "*" there is a "N.S.," you know the difference was "not significant" at the 95 percent confidence level.

Comparing Two Practices Many on-farm trials are of a straightforward "A versus B" type. These trials, which are easy to design and analyze, correspond to the typical experimental question "Is alternative 'B' better than, worse than, or the same as my customary practice 'A'?" This approach can be used to evaluate individual practices or whole systems of practices.

There is a handy "yardstick" called the "LSD," or "least significant difference," that can be used in a trial with only two practices or treatments. If the difference between the two treatments is greater

than the LSD, then the difference is significant. You will see in the tables that when the difference between two practices is, for example, 5 bushels (or minus 5 bushels, depending on the arithmetic), and the LSD is only, say, 3 bushels, then there is a "*" indicating a significant difference.

Multiple Treatment Trials The LSD doesn't work well in trials with more than two treatments. In those cases, letters are added to show whether treatments are statistically different from each other. (We usually use a statistical test called a multiple range grouping.) The highest yield or weed count in a trial will have a letter "a" beside it. A number with a "b" next to it is significantly different from one with an "a," but neither is statistically different from a result bearing an "ab." A third treatment might produce a number with a "c" (or it might not), and so on.

Economics Average 1999 statewide prices for inputs were assumed in calculating the economics of these trials. Average fixed and variable costs and time requirements were also used. These can vary greatly from farm to farm, of course. The calculations use 1999 prices of \$1.65 per bushel for corn, \$4.55 for soybeans, and \$1.10 for oats. Labor was charged at \$9.00 per hour.



Field day discussion at Turtle Farm at Granger.

The greatest benefit of the covers came in the first week of harvest, when the covers probably provided an early-season greenhouse effect.

Therefore this trial became a comparison of growing methods of two varieties of summer squash." Table 1 and Figure 1 show the results of the experiment.

Three methods of planting were compared: direct seeding into the garden; direct seeding under row covers, and planting in the greenhouse (followed by transplanting to the garden two weeks later). Two squash varieties, Seneca and Costata, were included. As Angela writes: "The variety Seneca is considered susceptible to cucumber beetle, and the variety Costata is considered

Table 1. Tedesco Cucumber Beetle Management Trial

TOTAL PRODUCTION					
VARIETY	DIRECT-SEEDED	DIRECT, COVERED	TRANS-PLANTED		
SENECA	8.25	29.00	3.75	(SQUASH PER PLOT, TOTAL FOR SEASON)	
COSTATA	23.50	30.75	18.25		
SURVIVING ON 6/24					
VARIETY	DIRECT-SEEDED	DIRECT, COVERED	TRANS-PLANTED		
SENECA	5.75	8.50	6.25	(SQUASH PLANTS PER PLOT)	
COSTATA	7.50	8.75	8.75		
WEEKLY HARVESTS					
SOURCE OF SIGNIFICANCE	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5
PLANTING TREATMENT	**	**	**	N.S.	N.S.
VARIETY	N.S.	N.S.	*	**	**

* SIGNIFICANT AT 95% CONFIDENCE LEVEL. ** SIGNIFICANT AT 99% CONFIDENCE.

Tedesco Cucumber Beetle Trial

Variety and Planting Method

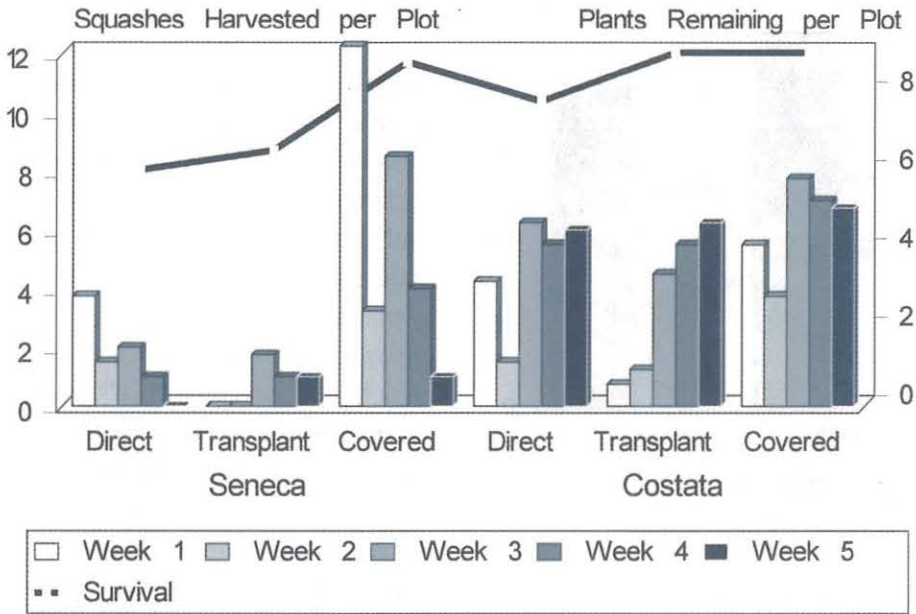


Fig. 1. Weekly squash production and plant survival at five weeks.

somewhat resistant to cucumber beetle.” But “Costata is not considered as prolific a producer as Seneca.” The figure shows that, while Costata was a better overall producer, Seneca excelled where it was protected by row covers. The greatest benefit of the covers came in the first week of harvest, when the covers probably provided an early-season greenhouse effect.

The table confirms that the method of planting significantly affected the size of the crop for the first three weeks of harvest. After the third week, however, it was variety that most strongly determined the harvest. “Since survival was better in the ‘Costata’ than the ‘Seneca’, production was better in the ‘Costata’ than the ‘Seneca.’ This is confirmed by the fact that the weekly production was not different in the early weeks, before ‘Seneca’ lack of survival became more pronounced.”

“I do successive plantings,” writes Angela. “Regardless of the method or variety, all squash had died by approximately 5 weeks after production began, giving a good idea of when to start more successions of squash. In a different year when the cucumber beetles are present at planting, I suspect that (transplanting from the greenhouse) would have fared better.”

Varieties and Planting Trials

What is the value of the Bt gene when it is used in the corn plant to resist corn borer? That is one of the questions in the minds of Dordt College Agricultural Stewardship Center staff who have conducted the same variety comparison for the last four years. This trial uses a standard hybrid, NK-4640, it’s Bt cousin NK-4640Bt, and a hybrid from Viking, a local seed company. Table 2 shows 2000 results of this trial, and Figure 2 illustrates yields and seed costs over four years. All three hybrids were planted at the same population rate.

For the past three years, the Viking hybrid has been the cheapest seed and has yielded most, averaging \$28.48 per acre more profitable. But

What is the value of the Bt gene when it is used in the corn plant to resist corn borer?

what about 1997, the last year that the state saw significant corn borer pressure? If you assume the Bt hybrid’s apparent yield advantage was real, it would have been \$23.70 more profitable than the Viking number that year. So, how many years will be like 1997? If you



Economics are part of most Dordt experiments. Here the topic is management intensive grazing of milkers.

Dordt College Hybrid Comparison

Local Hybrid, Bt Hybrid, and Non-Bt Isoline

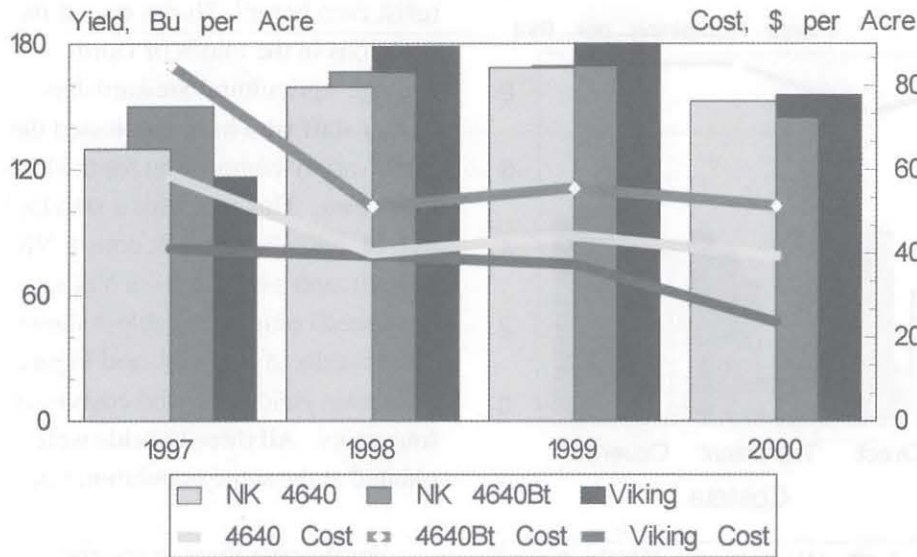


Figure 2. Four years of the three-hybrid comparison by the Dordt College Agriculture Stewardship Center.

knew that, you would know how much to pay for the Bt technology.

Here's a taboo topic for the coffee shop – open-pollinated corn. Bring it up and be prepared for your neighbor's lecture on how "some people" want to go back to plowing with horses. Yes, but look at those technology fees on the new varieties and hybrids. And the way the input industry is integrating gives rise to concerns that crop production may be going to a contracting scenario in which producers only "use" seeds, whose ownership is retained by the company. As usual, PFI forges into the gray area between paranoia and lethargy to investigate alternatives.

Hence the trials of open-pollinated seed. In this effort, cooperators are aided by Walter

Table 2. Multiple-Treatment Variety and Planting Trials

COOPERATOR	CROP	PREVIOUS CROP	YIELD SIGNIFICANCE	TREATMENT "A"				
				DESCRIPTION	YIELD (bu. or T)	STAT.	TRT COSTS	\$ BENEFIT
BURNS	CORN		*	MC103-1 HYBRID	107.1	b		
SPECHT	CORN	HAY	*	NC+2839 HIGH PROTEIN	164.1	a		
DORDT COLLEGE	CORN	OATS	*	NK-4640	152.5	b	\$39.33	\$12.00
NEELY KINYON	OP CORN	SOYBEANS	*	18,000 SEEDS/ACRE	77.2	b	\$1.13	(\$12.12)

Goldstein, of the Michael Fields Agriculture Institute, and Kendall Lamkey, an ARS-USDA corn breeder stationed at Ames.

David Burns, of Gold Country Seed, in Lawler, compared a number of hybrids to two open-pollinated varieties – *Nokomis Gold* from Walter Goldstein, and *IA-S11* from Kendall Lamkey. As Table 2 shows, the yields of two hybrids were well above those of the two “OP’s,” with IA-S11 yielding better than Nokomis. Lodging was a big factor; David reported 20 percent downed corn for S11 and 40 percent for Nokomis. On



At the Neely-Kinyon field day, USDA-ARS corn breeder Kendall Lamkey discusses ISU inbred lines of corn which have potential use as “synthetic” open-pollinated varieties.

(Corn varieties, continued on page 25.)

Lodging was a big factor. . . On the other hand, oil content of the open pollinated varieties was higher than that of the hybrids.

Multiple Treatment Variety and Planting Trials

TREATMENT “B”					TREATMENT “C”					OVERALL COMMENTS
DESCRIPTION	YIELD (bu. or T)	STAT.	TRT COSTS	\$ BENEFIT	DESCRIPTION	YIELD (bu. or T)	STAT.	TRT COSTS	\$ BENEFIT	
NOKOMIS OP	53.8	d			IA-S11 OP	66.5	c			LODGING WAS 20% FOR IA-S11, 40% FOR NOKOMIS GOLD
					9894 HYBRID	119.8	a			ALSO HIGHER OIL, LOWER STARCH THAN HYBRIDS
NOKOMIS OP	131.6	b			IA-S11 OP	107.1	c			PLANTING DATE? LODGING?
NK-4640Bt	145.0	b	\$51.33	\$0.00	Viking-4921	155.5	a	\$23.58	\$36.81	GREATER PROFIT FOR LOCAL HYBRID DESPITE 2% GREATER MOISTURE
26,000 SEEDS/ACRE	85.1	a	\$1.63	\$12.62	34,000 SEEDS/ACRE	73.7	b	\$2.13	-\$13.12	ISU VARIETY PRICED AT CLEANING+CORN MARKET PRICE. LODGING INCREASED W. POPULATION

Grazing Plus - What?

Matt and Diana Stewart, Oelwein

What is the most profitable way to supplement the rations of milking cows that are being rotationally grazed? There is little consensus among those who graze. Our trial this year was devised to shed some light on this question.

What is the most profitable way to supplement the rations of milking cows that are being rotationally grazed?

We split our herd into two groups in April. They were similar in age and stage of lactation. Group #1 was fed no supplemental protein or forage (hay or silage) from April 20th through September. Group #1 received 4 lbs ground corn for six weeks in the spring and 14 lbs thereafter. Salt and minerals were offered free choice.

Group #2 was fed to produce a higher level of production. They received more grain, from 14 lbs to 30 lbs, as the summer progressed. This grain was a 14% protein mix that included some soybean meal and cottonseed. Free choice hay was offered starting July 20th. It was also our intention to use insecticide to control flies and to bring this group into the barns, as needed, to avoid heat stress, but neither flies nor heat stress were problems this year.

Income over feed cost were remarkable similar for the two groups over the 150 days of the trial (Fig. 3).

Our trial was inconclusive as to whether the lower or higher input method of supplementing lactating dairy cows on pasture was more profitable on a per-cow basis. However, it is important to realize that there is less risk in a system that requires less daily expense to obtain the same net profit.

Too often, as total cash flow increases in higher input systems of farming, producers assume that



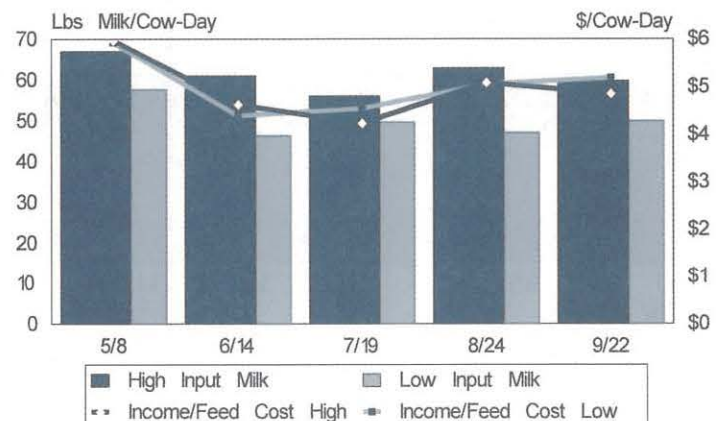
Matt describes the research at the Sept. field day.

greater gross production translates into greater profits. This perception leads to greater capital expenditures to maintain the higher input systems. The reality is that higher input systems have lower percent profit margins that are lowered even further by the cost of the capital expenditures.

“... producers assume that greater gross production translates into greater profits. This perception leads to greater capital expenditures to maintain the higher input systems.”

High vs. Low Supplement

Both Groups Rotationally Grazed



Stewart, 2000 grazing season.

Fig. 3. Production and income/feed cost for the two groups.

(Corn varieties, continued from page 23.)

the other hand, oil content of the open pollinated varieties was higher than that of the hybrids.

In contrast, Dan Specht, McGregor, found Nokomis yield to be intermediate between that of S11 and an NC+ high-protein hybrid. Dan observed no lodging, but his stands were reduced by soil crusting in the spring. Specht hand-harvested the plots, which were mostly only two rows wide. As a result, yields of IA-S11, which is a shorter plant than the others, were probably reduced by shading from neighboring varieties.

Of course, the big advantage of open-pollinated corn is that you can save and replant the seed. But for how long? Dan Specht compared seed grown in 1999 to seed from the 1997 season. The untreated seed had been

stored in a grain wagon covered by a tarp. Dan points out that stands were poor in both treatments of the trial due to spring conditions and planter settings. The stand variability probably contributed to the high LSD of 13.2 bushels per acre. Compared to that, the 7.7 bushel yield difference was not statistically significant. More years and trial locations will be needed to answer the storage question, but these results are encouraging.

The Neely Kinyon Research Farm, Greenfield, also carried out a trial with open pollinated corn, comparing three populations of IA-S11 (Table 2). They calculated the seed cost as the market price for corn plus cleaning and handling expenses. With cheap seed corn, there is no reason to hold back on the seed. Or is there? At 26,000 seeds per acre, the open-pollinated variety yielded significantly better than *both* corn at 18,000 seeds *and* corn at 34,000 seeds per acre. 🍷



FOOTPRINTS OF A GRASS FARMER Huts for Indoor-Outdoor Farrowing

Tom Frantzen, Alta Vista

For three years I have worked on facilities for farrowing without using farrowing crates. This column contains the current status of my experiences with this practice. When I refer to huts I mean the plywood "boxes" with sloped roofs. They are similar to the Henry County Illinois hut. I built 21 of these and farrowed in a hoop building in February of 1998. The last time that I farrowed in a hoophouse with the huts was in November of 1999. I have abandoned the concept of hoophouse farrowing during the winter months. In northeast Iowa this practice is too risky compared to using the same hut inside of a heated room. The first lesson is that their current design is not winter proof. The sow cannot keep the pigs warm enough in severe weather. The second lesson is that the hut can act like a little refrigerator. If placed on frozen soil or a frozen bedding pack, it will stay cold.

I have used the original hut and three modifications of that design extensively, both indoors and out on the

pasture. Design improvements have come at a nice pace.

Many features of the original hut have remained throughout the three years. The length and width is still 80 inches. The height is 48 inches. The door is 24 inches wide and is in the right hand corner. The basic frame is unchanged although small improvements have been made. Each hut has a rear access door and a 2x6" oak top ridge plate. This allows the hut to be easily moved with a loader. The plywood is attached with hex headed screws and the door has secure locks for both open and closed positions. Each door has a guard to prevent the little pigs from leaving the hut for a week or so. The current door guard design is very successful. It is a 2x10 with a plastic 6-inch pipe cut in half as a cover. This is *INSET* 2 inches from the frame 2x6. The inset design may be the crucial aspect that keeps pigs inside.

I have abandoned . . . hoophouse farrowing during the winter months. In northeast Iowa this practice is too risky compared to using the same hut inside of a heated room.

With the front access I can move the hut directly against the wall and skip the rear walkway.

The changes from the first hut design have improved the durability and reduced the cost of production. The corner reinforcements have continually improved. The current (fall of 2000) design uses two 2x8 corner blocks nailed in with their surfaces flush to the top of the frame. This is simple and prevents the corner from holding debris and retaining moisture. While other small changes can be noted, the most significant difference in the current models is in the roof. All roofs now have a removable front cover. This is important when the hut goes indoors. In fact the first series of huts with the front roof removed may be the most satisfactory style for indoor use. The roof removed gives excellent access, plenty of light and makes for easy cleaning.

Some huts (December, 1999) have all of the roof sloping to the rear. When the roof all slopes to the rear, the front sill is 48 inches high. If the roof is sloped two ways, the front sill is 36 inches high. Huts with reverse sloped roofs use less plywood during construction. One of the reasons for the "reverse sloped roof" is to allow young pigs room when the hut is placed on sharply sloped ground in the pasture. There is research from the 1920's that shows improvements in pigs saved when the hut is placed on sloped ground if the pigs can gravitate to the rear of the hut and get away from the sow. So far I have not had an opportunity to try this. It is very

important to have a rear access door. This gives ventilation on hot days and provides for easy movement. The first reverse-sloped huts did not have a rear vent door, and I altered them this fall.

Probably the most significant development is to provide for all front access. At first when the huts went indoors I had to have a 8-inch gap between the back of the hut and the wall. This allowed me to open the rear door and process pigs. With the front access I can move the hut directly against the wall and skip the rear walkway. This gives another 16 inches of room in the building. That may not sound like much but it really does make a huge difference. This provides for another hut for each ten huts in a building.

This January I built 100-watt electric hoovers in the front corner of 10 huts. I am so impressed with the performance of the hoovers that I will soon have this feature in all indoor huts. With the roof open the hut is cooler. The covered hoover attracts the pigs into this warm corner, away from the sow. Death loss is down. I do not have figures but I know that it is better.

The covered hoover attracts the pigs into this warm corner, away from the sow.

For photos and plans of various Illinois-style huts on PFI farms, go to the PFI Website, at www.pfi.iastate.edu/OFR/Practices_and_Research.htm, and choose E-Huts.



Roof lid showing pins that hold rear vent door closed.



The hut can be lifted and moved by its oak roof beam.



The Forage Leader, Newsletter of the American Forage and Grassland Council

Rick Exner

If you graze in Iowa, you may feel a little lonesome, like a patch of grass in a sea of row crops. Of course, you're not really alone. There is the Iowa Forage and Grassland Council, which sponsors pasture walks and an annual conference. The grazing movement is a little like the sustainable agriculture community, but it differs in one important respect. There is a single parent organization, the American Forage and Grassland Council, that amplifies and extends the activities of the state councils. One of the products of the AFGC is the quarterly newsletter, *The Forage Leader*.

This newsprint publication is not fancy, but it does things that probably only a national organization could accomplish. A good portion of the newsletter consists of editorials and columns, and the writing is above average. Some people might subscribe just to read what Missouri grazier Jim Gerrish has to say each issue. There is even a legislative columnist. The latest *Forage Leader* contains a spread on the upcoming national annual meeting. There are also brief reports from individual state councils.

If you are gung-ho on grazing, you will enjoy *The Forage Leader*. You probably won't even mind the many articles written for pastures more southern than ours. You can get the newsletter by joining AFGC directly (\$30 individual, \$5 student) or you can join the Iowa Forage and Grasslands Council (\$25), which includes a subscription to *The Forage Leader*.

AFGC, P.O. Box 891, Georgetown, Texas, 78627. 800-944-2342, or www.afgc.org. IFGC, 900 Des Moines Street, Des Moines IA 50311. 800-383-1682. 🐾

2001 Women's Winter Gathering Recommended Reading List

Editor's note: Here's an abridged list of what some PFI women are reading. Curious about who's reading what? Call Shelly Gradwell at 641-483-4027. What I want to know is, "Where do they find the time?"

Favorite books

Chez Panisse Cookbooks by Alice Waters

A Sand County Almanac by Aldo Leopold

Prodigal Summer by Barbara Kingsolver

The Man Who Ate Everything by Jeffrey Steingart

In the Time of the Butterflies by Julia Alvarez

Growing Herbs and Vegetables
by Terry and Mark Silber

Native American Ethnobotany by Daniel E. Moerman

Sisters of the Earth - Women's Prose and Poetry about Nature by Lorraine Anderson

Epitaph for a Peach--Four Seasons on My Family Farm by David Mas Masumoto

The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying

Walking Towards Bethlehem by Clyde Edgerton

All God's Dangers--The Life of Nate Shaw
by Theodore Rosengarten

Children's books

Oxcart Man, *Lucy's Summer*, and *Old Home Day*
- all by Donald Hall

Mem Fox's books

Olga de Polga by Michael Bond

Save My Rainforest

Magazines

The Sun

Saveur Magazine

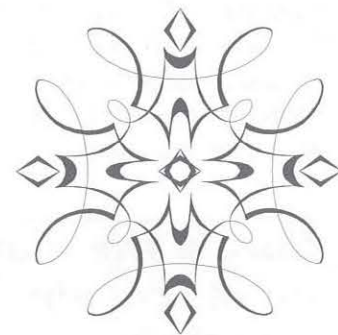
Stockman Grass Farmer

Acres U.S.A.

Growing for Market

Unte Reader

Mother Earth News





BITS OF SUSTENANCE

The Bits of Sustenance pages are a place where PFI members can share their writing – stories, poems, letters, book reviews, experiences. Hopefully, Bits of Sustenance will give every reader something to ponder.

THINK LOCAL AND SHARE THE SURPLUS

Nan Bonfils

On Christmas morning, as I crammed a sixteen pound turkey and a ten pound ham into my father-in-law's oven, NPR broadcast the annual report for Second Harvest. "Three point three million Americans will be hungry today, a third of them children.....three percent of families using food pantries have at least one working adult..." I had a strong desire to call the dozen households converging for our midday pot luck to tell them I'd be making a detour to the local food pantries. Surely the clan could get by on the cousins' cheesy potato casserole and a parade of pies. But it was Christmas – even the food pantries in my area would be closed.

I knew this very well having spent time at all three as part of a PFI sustainable grants project. In this project I had proposed to (a) learn as much as I could about how food distribution centers operate in Boone County and (b) move as much fresh produce to their clients as possible. The drought of summer 2000 put quite a crimp in the second goal as I had very little surplus to share. On with the learning!

The **Salvation Army Church**, ten miles north of our farm, provides food for about thirty people on a steady basis. Deb Bratcher is the coordinator there. "Our people are always happy to get fresh food. I'm sure it just tastes better to them; I'm not sure they see a nutritional superiority. But fresh food is rare. So they love it." Some favorite items there are corn, eggs, and

Surely the clan could get by on the cousins' cheesy potato casserole and a parade of pies.

tomatoes. Lack of refrigeration seriously limits the amount that can be held for distribution.

Deb's interested in starting food preservation classes and has ample kitchen space in which to try. She sees a change in the demographics of food pantry users with a trend toward more seniors and very young mothers coming her way.

Joyce O'Toole has worked at the **Red Oak Community Action Project** in Boone for fifteen years. Her organization works on food distribution as well as fuel, utility and rent assistance plus other family development issues. The facility has no kitchen and a tiny pantry. The clients there "appreciate fresh food for the most part, but only conventional stuff like tomatoes, potatoes, cucumbers, and green beans." She relies on one farmer who's been donating twelve dozen eggs a week for four years! Though I was unable to supply her with any vegetables of my own this year, Joyce was ecstatic over a garbage bag full of clean grocery sacks.

Joyce describes the typical client as "...a single mom, employed but caught between pay checks or waiting for food stamps." Joyce voiced concern about the needy but proud seniors she doesn't see coming in.

The **Greater Love Ministries**, eight miles south of our farm, is sponsored by a consortium of churches. Everyone who works there is a volunteer, including the co-directors Mabel and Donna. They are proud to feed a steady flow of hungry but also "proud to say we're not enabling." Out of fifty-seven families served in one year, thirty-three used the food service only once. When I asked about the need for fresh food, they showed me a refrigerator designated for produce and sighed, "We just don't get much." I know just where to take my surplus in 2001.

In fact, I know three places and what would be most welcome at each. And I know that, veggies aside, I'll be welcome with plastic bags and egg cartons. I know three places where I can walk in empty handed and do good work just by loading shelves or sorting stock. I know four amazing women dedicated to selfless work.

Check out the distribution of surplus food in your community and imagine how you might become involved. Who are the leaders? Who is served and what are their needs? How might you participate?

...the presence of the genuinely hungry is one of the most disturbing incongruities of our whacked out food system.

For me, the presence of the genuinely hungry is one of the most disturbing incongruities of our whacked out food system. Can I help shape an alternative in the community where I live, farm and eat? I have three seasons of growing ahead. What will next Christmas dinner look like? 🐣

“She referred to herself as a professional volunteer.”

Beverly George Everett, farmer, substitute teacher, speaker, writer, and professional volunteer, was born on January 28, 1926 in Janesville, Iowa. Everett graduated from Iowa State College in 1947. She married Lawrence Everett and moved to New Sharon, Iowa where they farmed a 300-acre spread and raised five children. Everett took various post graduate courses and obtained a teacher certificate.

Beverly Everett was inducted into the Iowa Women’s Hall of Fame in 1983. In 1984 she was awarded a honorary doctorate through Iowa Wesleyan College.

A TRIBUTE TO BEVERLY EVERETT

submitted by Doris Malkmus, Iowa City

Editor’s note: Beverly Everett, an active PFI member in district 5, died unexpectedly this winter. This abridged tribute comes from text written by Katy Hansen.

Practical Farmers of Iowa lost a friend and advocate on January 24, 2001. Beverly Beth George Everett spent a lifetime in organizations advocating equity for women and inclusion of women in every aspect of decision-making. She

worked from her home in rural Iowa but traveled worldwide, joining groups, giving speeches, and personally delivering the message that women take responsibilities commensurate with their abilities.

Through her writings and speeches she became known for emphasizing the importance of women’s roles in agriculture. Her collection at the Iowa Women’s Archives measures 10 linear feet and gives “insight into Iowa farm life and various organizations dealing with farmers.”

“She was one of the best speakers I have ever heard and one of the keenest intellects I have ever known,” says Betty Wells, Iowa State University Extension. “She was particularly adept at serving in the role of wrap-up speaker at the end of a conference, speaking extemporaneously, reflecting and synthesizing the highlights of what had transpired earlier.” Everett gave between 10 to 20 speeches a year. “She was also unassuming and accessible,” says Wells. “She referred to herself as a professional volunteer.” 🐣



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Name _____
Address _____
City _____
County _____
State _____
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Phone # (_____) _____

This is a _____ new membership
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Do you derive a significant part of your income directly from farming in Iowa?
_____ yes _____ no

Individual or family membership: \$25 for one year, \$75 for three years plus a PFI cap.
Please enclose check or money order payable to “Practical Farmers of Iowa” and mail to:

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2035 190th St.
Boone, IA 50036-7423**

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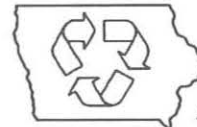
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