

the Practical Farmer

Practical Farmers of Iowa Newsletter

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PLENTY TO CELEBRATE AT THE ANNUAL MEETING

Fred Kirschenmann says "I am not a scientist or a technician. I am a farmer and a philosopher. I am aware that in our industrial culture that makes me intellectually suspect and a bit of an oddball ... In my defense I want to note that philosophers and farmers have played an important role in human civilization. Farmers have helped us to stay alive, and philosophers have helped us to learn how to live."

These were the opening remarks from Kirschenmann's address at the Shivvers Lecture* in September, 2000. They paint an intriguing picture of the man who will deliver a keynote address entitled "Farmers—Who Needs Them?" at PFI's Annual Meeting in January, 2001. Dr. Fred Kirschenmann became director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable in July, 2000 following a nationwide search. At the time of his appointment, he managed the 3500-acre certified organic Kirschenmann Family Farms in south central North Dakota. Kirschenmann also helped found Farm Verified Organic,



Keynoter, Dr. Fred Kirschenmann, Director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture.

***Shivvers Lecture, for Iowa Beta Chapter, Gamma Sigma Delta, an agriculture honor society. For complete text, see www.leopold.iastate.edu.**

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Inc., a private certification agency, and the Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society.

Kirschmann's farming experience and PFI's long standing friendship with the Leopold Center he directs, make Fred a great choice for keynoter as PFI celebrates its 15th birthday. Fred says, "I really am looking forward to the PFI conference. By some estimates the states of Nebraska and Iowa will lose between one fifth and one third of their farmers within the next two years. PFI and the Leopold Center have each developed some strategies to help farmers stay in business over the past fifteen years. Now we have to figure out how to extend what we have learned and how to develop partnerships with many other segments of society to create a new agriculture that works for farmers, for the environment and for our urban and suburban neighbors. I want to explore some ideas for implementing that new agenda with the PFI membership."

Is it really PFI's 15th birthday?

We suppose it depends on where you start counting. But the truth is it was in the winter of 1984-1985 that Dick Thompson and Larry Kallem began discussing the need for a group to share information about farming methods that proved profitable and environ-

mentally sound. After a well attended series of lectures of "biological farming" workshops organized by ISU professor Robert Dahlgren, a small group joined together around Thompson and Kallem to form an organization they called Practical Farmers of Iowa. Since 1985 it has become widely known for its commitment to sustainable agriculture. We have plenty to celebrate.

You can fill in the details yourself starting Friday evening when PFI families are invited to gather at the Ames Gateway Holiday Inn for an evening of music, a fill-it-in yourselves timeline of PFI history and a trivia quiz. You can practice on the questions in the box on the next page.

Getting down to business

On Saturday, we'll get down to business. You can see the day at a glance on this page and a list of concurrent sessions on page 5. Details are still falling into place. As we go to press before Thanksgiving, we know better than to promise "no changes" between now and January 13. Stand by for alterations and additions, but if you want to get psyched, here's what we know about the concurrent sessions today.

Whether you were in the drought or the drench this summer, it was a great season for weeds. **Dr. Charles Mohler** joins us from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York to share his expertise in **Mechanical Weed Control**. In fact, Mohler will lead two separate sessions on the same topic, one directed to large scale row-crop producers and the other to smaller scale producers.

Mohler (he says we can call him Chuck) received his B.A. degree in biology from the University of Oregon and his Ph.D. from Cornell University in ecology and evolutionary biology. His early career focused on the quantitative study of forest composition and on population dynamics of succession. Since 1986 his research has been primarily on the ecology of agricultural weeds and ecological methods of weed management. He has focused this work on the effects of tillage, cultivation, and crop residue on the population dynamics of annual weeds. He has published this work in major international journals including *Weed Science*, *Weed Technology*, *Weed Research*, *Journal of Applied Ecology*, and *Ecological Applications*, as well as extension bulletins and meeting proceedings. He is a member of the British Ecological

Annual Winter Meeting At a Glance

Friday evening, January 12

7:30 P.M. Registration opens
Refreshments and dancing for all ages
Cash bar for adults
Music from The Pretty Good Band
The "What Don't We Know?" Show

Come celebrate PFI's 15th birthday and add your bit of history to this organization's remarkable timeline.

Saturday, January 13

7:00 A.M. Coffee available
7:30 Registration opens
8:30 Welcome-PFI President Colin Wilson
Sustainable Ag Achievement Award
9:30 Workshops round I
10:30 Keynote by Fred Kirschmann
11:30 The Future of PFI - membership meeting
noon Iowa Bounty Buffet
1:30 P.M. District meetings
2:15 Workshops round II
3:15 Producer posters and displays, refreshments
4:00 Workshops round III

Society, Ecological Society of America, European Weed Research Society, International Weed Science Society, Northeastern Weed Science Society, Torrey Botanical Society and Weed Science Society of America. He is currently an Associate Editor of the journal *Weed Science*. He is the co-author of a book, *Ecological Management of Agricultural Weeds*, that will be published in 2001 by Cambridge University Press.

Managing Pasture as Crop will be presented by PFI member **Steve Wallace** of Barenbrug, U.S.A. Steve writes, "For too long we have viewed pasture as 'non crop' land — the land we have to do something with because we can not plant a 'crop.' With a managed system, the pasture 'crop' can be your most profitable. I'll discuss selecting species, establishing, fertilizing, harvesting, and managing pasture. A more sustainable farming system can be achieved by adding a pasture 'crop' to your farm."

Last year it was standing room only for **Grazing Standing Crops**. So we invited **Terry Gompert** back for a second round in a larger room. If you missed him in 2000 or didn't quite catch the drift

Workshop information continues on page 5.

Sessions of Special Interest on Friday Afternoon

Gateway Holiday Inn will be the location for two special sessions on Friday afternoon, January 12. Please note that these sessions require separate registrations and fees. For details, use the contacts below.

Grass-Based Dairy in Iowa

1:30 to 5:30 P.M. Program will include a keynote speaker, presentations, and discussions with practicing grass-based dairy operators. For more information, call Ag Connect at (641) 333-4656.

Certification and Infrastructure for Organic Pork

1:00 to 4:30 P.M. Should organic feed be subject to the same identity preservation as human food? Should a certifier accept livestock that has eaten feed certified by a different organization? Are natural medicines only permitted if they are on the permitted materials list? This workshop brings together producers, processors, certifiers, and marketers. For details, call Rick Exner (PFI) at (515) 294-5486 or email dnexner@iastate.edu.

PLEASE PRE-REGISTER BY DECEMBER 22, 2000 (please print)

Name Address

City State Zip Phone

Pre-registration Fee: \$10.00 per PFI household =

(Registration after Dec. 22 and at the door will be \$20.00)

Annual Membership Fee: \$25.00 per person or family =

(There will be a \$25 door charge for nonmembers and PFI memberships not current.)

Discounted Student Rate: \$10.00 conference attendance fee. PFI membership not required..... =

Please pay in advance for the Iowa Bounty noon buffet at the Gateway Holiday Inn (optional):

Adults

Children (5-12 years old except those going to camp)

Sat. Noon Buffet: x \$12.00 + x \$8.00 =

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO PFI – TOTAL AMOUNT DUE =

Check if interested in bringing a noncommercial ☐ Poster or ☐ Tabletop Display illustrating a sustainable agriculture idea or project.

Yes, I want to help with ☐ registration, ☐ child care, ☐ silent auction, workshop recorder (specify title _____), ☐ workshop host (specify title _____)

Send this form with your check to: Nan Bonfils, 2104 Agronomy Hall, ISU, Ames, IA. 50011. For more information call: (515) 294-8512. Motel Reservations (by Dec. 22): (515) 292-8600 or 1-800-Holiday. (Request PFI group rate.)



CELEBRATE PFI'S 15TH BIRTHDAY ON FRIDAY NIGHT

Join the party on
January 12, from 7:30 to 9:30 P.M.
at Gateway Holiday Inn. Design the PFI timeline.
Participate in the "What Don't We Know?" Show.
Hook up with old friends, make some new ones,
and have some fun on the dance floor. All ages
welcome. No cover charge. Cash bar.
See you there!

What Don't We Know? Plenty!

By all rights PFI has plenty to celebrate and we plan to do it in our own sustainable style. Even if you're not familiar with Michael Feldman's "What Do You Know? Show" broadcast on public radio, you'll catch on in a hurry. To warm you up for this audience participation trivia quiz, try these two.



1) From the category "Things You Should Have Learned At Field Days Had You Been Paying Attention" – identify the men in the photo above.
Hint: They all have the same first name.

2) From the category "Food Munching, Number Crunching" – tell which number is greater. Is it the number of All-Iowa meals brokered by PFI in 1999 or the number of current PFI members who (claim to) market poultry?

Answers on page 16.

Child Care & Youth Activities Registration

For details about child care and youth activities, see p. 8.

In each category list the name and age of children who you anticipate will need these services.

Child care – Ages 5 and under

To be cared for at Gateway Holiday Inn, \$12.00 per child (does not include lunch) payable on January 12 or 13.

Youth Activities – Ages 6 and up

Transportation will leave the hotel at 8:30 A.M. Bus returns to hotel by 5:00 P.M. \$15.00 per child (includes lunch) payable on January 12 or 13.

Workshop information continued from page 3.

because you were standing in the hallway, here's a second chance. He will share profitable experiences grazing corn, turnips, and other standing crops. Gompert writes "No matter what you call it, grazing forages instead of harvesting and hauling them saves dollars in the pocket. The advantages of grazing versus harvesting are quite obvious: 1) low or no harvesting costs; 2) mineral recycling at no cost; 3) potentially low or no harvesting quantity and/or quality lost, and 4) lower feeding costs." Terry Gompert is an Extension educator with the University of Nebraska.

Managing Organic Matter in Soils will be led by **Dr. Walter Goldstein**. Walter is research director at Michael Fields Agricultural Institute in East Troy, Wisconsin. He's done extensive on-farm research trials and research work on long-term plots to

better understand relationships between organic matter management, rotations, soil and root health, and crop production. Together with other soil scientists he has worked out an organic matter budgeting system for farmers. Presently he's implementing a nutrient management project (with groups of farmers in Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin) that uses the budgeter. You may recall Walter from last year's Annual Meeting when he presented information about open pollinated corn.

Composting – Reports on Two PFI Projects

will feature two endeavors being funded, in part, through PFI's own Sustainable Ag Projects grants. PFI member **Colin Greenan** will report on a Boone County family farm that successfully diverted 1.8 tons of food waste from a nearby summer camp to the farm's compost system. **Dave and Deb Hofmann**, also PFI members, are running an extensive

Saturday's Concurrent Sessions

Mechanical Weed Control – Dr. Charles Mohler, Cornell University

Managing Pasture as Crop – Steve Wallace, Barenbrug, U.S.A.

Grazing Standing Crops – Terry Gompert, University of Nebraska

Winter Farrowing – Mark Knuth, Vic and Cindy Madsen, Colin and Carla Wilson

Managing Organic Matter in Soils – Dr. Walter Goldstein, Michael Fields Agriculture Institute

Update on Organics – Dr. Kathleen Delate, ISU, and panel

Composting – Reports on Two PFI Projects
Dave and Deb Hofmann, Colin Greenan

Cuba From a Farmer's Viewpoint – Gary Guthrie, Francis Thicke, Susan Zacharakis-Jutz

Value-Added Success Stories – Mary Swalla Holmes, ISU, and producer panel

Institutional Marketing – Prospects for Local Foods in Restaurants, Hotels, and Institutions

– Gary Huber, Carol Hunt, and Tom Singer, Sedexho-Marriott

Local Connections: From Farms to School Cafeterias – Rick Hartmann, Dr. Cathy Strohbehn, ISU, and panel

COB ROLL: Supporting the New Agriculture – Tell Us What You Need to Succeed – Robert Karp, facilitator

COB ROLL: Marketing Your Non-perishable Farm Products – Donna Wisnousky, facilitator

COB ROLL: The Heart and Spirit of Sustainability – Miriam Brown, facilitator

COB ROLL: Agritourism, Local Farm and Community Entrepreneurship – Dr. Lorna Michael Butler, ISU, facilitator

COB ROLL: Conversation with the Keynote – Dr. Fred Kirschenmann, ISU, host

COB ROLL: "Insight Edition" – Your Show and Tell Time – Dick Thompson, facilitator

vermicomposting (worm farm) facility in Johnson County. You can read more about it in their article on page 15 and learn even more by sitting in on the workshop.

Cuba seems to be a favored destination lately and plenty of sustainable ag folks have checked it out. Using very limited resources, Cubans are working to develop a viable system of localized agricultural production. After receiving so many positive comments in response to the Cuba article in the PFI summer newsletter, we decided to offer this workshop.

Gary Guthrie, Susan Zacharakis-Jutz, and Francis Thicke, all PFI members, will share images and ideas in **Cuba From a Farmer's Viewpoint**.

Institutional Marketing – Prospects for Local Foods in Restaurants, Hotels, and Institutions will be led by PFI's own **Gary Huber**.

Various efforts around Iowa are exploring ways to sell Iowa foods to institutional markets, such as conference centers, hotels, restaurants, and cafeterias in corporate offices. This workshop will describe how several of these efforts work, including key lessons learned and future prospects. **Carol Hunt**, who works on an Iowa City area project for the Johnson County Soil and Water Conservation District will also present. A third panelist is **Tom Singer**, who works for Sedexho-Marriott and is involved in a Farm Bureau effort to serve Iowa foods at its corporate headquarters in West Des Moines.

Value-Added Success Stories are always something to celebrate. A producer panel will share their experiences in starting retail ventures, finding capital, establishing brands, and developing markets. Several invitations to potential panel members await an RSVP. But we do know that you will hear from **Wendy Mickle, Kathy Larson, and Connie Lawrance**, three PFI members who have launched *Northern Prairie Chevre Company*. While goat cheese may not be what you want to make and market, these producers and others have stories worth listening to for the lessons you can transfer to your operation. **Mary Swalla Holmes**, a rural action coordinator with ISU Extension Value Added, will moderate by tying thoughts together with her list of resources for getting started with your value-added dream.

Local Connections – From Farms to School Cafeterias. This panel takes a look at a trend in farm to school initiatives where local producers and school

food service directors work together for mutual benefit. Panel members include area PFI members who have been involved in an experimental project this season, one connecting local farmers with the Nevada School District to provide locally grown food in the school's cafeteria. **Dr. Cathy Strohbehn**, ISU, and member of *Connecting Schools and Farms in Central Iowa Project*, will be available to discuss the research and planning necessary to get this project started. **Rick Hartmann** from PFI will talk about his role as informal broker between farmers and the school in the model that was used.

So, you're spring- and fall-farrowing pigs on pasture or in a hoop, and you sell pork for a premium to an organic or a "sustainable" label. Why push the system by trying to farrow in the wintertime? Because the people you want for customers like to eat twelve months out of the year. Your specialty market will stagnate without a dependable supply – and that means **Winter Farrowing**. How is that possible within your given production guidelines? Come interact with producers in three different winter farrowing systems; **Vic and Cindy Madsen**, Audubon, farrow in huts inside a barn; **Mark Knuth**, Cascade, has huts inside hoop houses; and **Colin and Carla Wilson**, Paullina, farrow in a deep-bedded Swedish-style unit.

Organic producers as well as conventional producers considering "going organic" will want to take note of **Update on Organics**. This panel will be lead by **Dr. Kathleen Delate**, ISU.



Try a Cob Roll

This is our second year for a new twist on the concurrent sessions, with some designated as Cob Rolls. You might recognize this name from a newsletter feature we used to have called "Rollin' the Cob." Here's a reminder about the nature of Rollin' the Cob. Ron Rosmann says that's when someone comes into the yard and a discussion gets going. While you're talking, maybe you've got one foot up on the bumper of the pickup, or you're tossing sticks for the dog. If there are a few corn cobs lying around, you may

absentmindedly toe them about during the conversation. That's "rollin' the cob."

The concurrent sessions called Cob Rolls are intended to capture the flavor of that backyard conversation Ron describes. There won't be any corn cobs at the Holiday Inn, but we know that there will be plenty of good talk. At a Cob Roll, the initial speaker will present a concept, or establish a proposition, or state an opinion, or set forth a problem. After that, the content is up to the participants; the speaker's role changes to that of facilitator.

Last year's cob rolls were a mixed success. We learned from that experience and we're rolling out six this year with far more confidence. We hope you'll try one.

Supporting the New Agriculture – Tell Us What You Need to Know to Succeed. Local food system efforts are starting to take off in Iowa but more understanding and support is needed if these efforts are going to realize their potential. This informal discussion will provide an opportunity for farmers and others involved in direct and community based marketing to talk about challenges, barriers, and what would help them be more successful. This information will be used to help build a series of spring workshops being organized by PFI, along with other co-sponsors. These workshops will focus on local food systems and are targeted to Cooperative Extension and USDA-NRCS staff, and a variety of other food system stakeholders. Your input will also be communicated to the Iowa Food Policy Council in order to inform policy recommendations made to the Governor. Please come and make sure the farmers' voices are heard! **Robert Karp** from the PFI staff is the facilitator.

Marketing Your Non-perishable Farm Products. We'll kick around a number of questions. How do we help one another market our non-perishable farm products? What's working for some individuals? Are there successful, small groups or strategies to learn from? How can we maximize success? What do you think of a PFI gift basket of assorted items from members? What would it take to make it happen? How about a website or link that directs browsers or shoppers to individual PFI farms? What's your idea? Come join in the brainstorming session led by PFI member **Donna Wisnowsky**.

Miram Brown, Executive Director of the Churches' Center for Land and People will facilitate

The Heart and Spirit of Sustainability. She writes, "Sustainability involves philosophy, politics, economics and stewardship – which basically means the spirit of our hearts. What do we love so much that we work to sustain it? What habits of the heart must we develop individually, as PFI, and as a society for the common good and the future? What people and activities give us heart? How can we bring the spirit and language of heart to our personal farming choices, public discussions, cooperative projects, and the larger food/agricultural system? Join the discussion. Celebrate fifteen years and plan for many more."

Agritourism, Local Farm and Community Entrepreneurship. Interest in agritourism in Iowa is growing. As the relationship between farmers and consumers strengthens, so too do the opportunities for increasingly diverse urban/rural connections. At the same time farmers are struggling to identify the right pieces of this social and economic puzzle, non-farm people are becoming increasingly distant from the land connections farms have afforded Iowans. On the other hand, there is a growing consumer and environmental interest group with a commitment to food, land and quality of life. In a state founded upon agriculture, agritourism opens up opportunities and challenges associated with building urban/rural relationships that can enhance roles for agriculture in the lives of future generations. **Dr. Lorna Michael Butler**, Wallace Endowed Chair of Sustainable Agriculture has stated "One of my goals is to find ways of encouraging non-farm people to understand and appreciate the changes in agriculture and food systems and what they mean for all of our futures." Come toss around your ideas, concerns, and hopes with Lorna and PFI members.

Conversations with the Keynoter is just exactly what it calls itself. Here's your chance to roll the cob with **Fred Kirschenmann** after his address. You're invited to reflect on his message, pose questions, respond, possibly disagree. When the cob roll was suggested to Fred he said, "I'd love to do this!"

And finally, PFI Executive Vice President, **Dick Thompson**, will host "**Insight Edition**" – **Your Show and Tell Time**. Dick wants to emphasize that it's YOUR session. "Come tell about what's working for you. Or, if things aren't working, let's do some problem solving. Here's what it isn't. It's not a gripe session. It's not the Dick Thompson lecture circuit. It's YOUR show and tell." Dick says he's just the facilitator. ☘

SUSTAINABLE AG ACHIEVEMENT AWARD TO DAVE WILLIAMS



With a dirt-under-the-nails kind of guy presiding at the keynoter's podium, it seemed highly appropriate to recognize an Iowa farmer for this year's Sustainable Ag Achievement Award. **Dave Williams** of Villisca is the one we picked. Dave rents a 780-acre live-stock and grain farm to his sons, Steve

and Bruce. The farm produces corn, soybeans, alfalfa and grass. The Williams maintain a 100 head cow-calf herd and 2500 hogs. Dave and his wife Corrine have been farming since 1955, after Dave graduated from Iowa State University with a B.S. in Animal Science two years earlier.

Dave's commitments to family farming, soil stewardship, and community activities distinguish him for this award. Dave helped to develop and carry out the vision for ISU's Armstrong Research farm and the Southwest Iowa Learning Center. Dave served as chairperson of the Wallace Foundation Board during its beginning years and he continues to serve as Page County's representative to that board. He also volunteers on the Board of Directors of the Iowa Environmental Council and on the Advisory Board to the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. He was on the search committee that brought Lorna Michael Butler to the Henry A. Wallace Sustainable Agriculture Chair at ISU. Dave is also a dedicated member of the Sierra Club and National Resources Defense Council.

This year's Sustainable Ag Achievement Award is one of many for Dave – from Izaak Walton League's 1991 award for "State of Iowa Outstanding Soil Conservationist" to the 1999 "Seventh Generation Award" from the Center for Rural Affairs. He was honored as recently as October, 2000 with the "Friends of Extension Award" from ISU Extension. There's no end in sight for Dave's distinguished service to sustainable agriculture. We're proud to claim him and honor him. 🍀

Board Elections – Districts 3 and 5

As part of the annual meeting there will be district meetings after lunch on Saturday, giving you a chance to meet your PFI neighbors and plan district events. Elections will be held for board members to serve in two districts – District 3 (Northeast), and District 5 (Southeast).

The search is underway for members to nominate. Contact Walt Ebert (319-276-4444 or wnebert@netins.net) in District 3 or Dan Chadima (319-363-9361 or gdchadima@aol.com) in District 5 if you are interested in serving. President Colin Wilson (712-448-2708) will also handle nomination suggestions for either district; nominations will be accepted from the floor as well.

SATURDAY CHILD CARE OPTIONS

For the wee ones five and younger

A suite will be set aside at the Gateway Holiday Inn to provide care for the wee ones. Professional day care providers will be in charge for the day with a younger support crew assisting. This sitter service is designed so that you, the parents, can participate fully in the conference activities. Still, parents should be prepared for interruptions in their day according to their child's needs. Likewise, parents are invited and encouraged to spend time in the child care room. The cost of the childcare service is \$12.00 per child. The fees go toward paying the staff and covering costs of snacks and art/play materials.

For school children ages six and above

We will once again contract with a local camp to provide a program for school age children. Participants will be picked up at the Holiday Inn at 8:30 on Saturday morning. They will enjoy a full, supervised day of indoor and outdoor activities including a hot lunch. Children will return to the hotel by 5:00 P.M. The cost of this service is \$15.00 per child, including transportation, lunch, and programs. Children must be at least six years old to participate; there is no upper age limit. This is the only child care program offered by PFI for school age children this year; there is no supervision available at the hotel.

Is your child old enough to be a full conference participant?

That's a family decision. Young family members who are involved in farm operations/enterprises and engaged in workshop topics are welcome to attend as conference participants. Families need to be clear that there is no separate or additional program designed for older children at the hotel. However, there is no upper age limit for participating in the camp option (see above).

What about swimming?

The pool at the Gateway Holiday Inn is open from 6:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. with NO lifeguard. Unfortunately ONLY REGISTERED OVERNIGHT GUESTS of the Holiday Inn may use the pool. Therefore, swimming will not be part of the program organized by PFI.

Let us know your plans

It helps to know what your intentions are for child care. So please fill out the paperwork on page 4. We won't take any money for child care till the day of the event. We know how plans can change! ☺

THE EDITOR MUSES AND ASKS FOR HELP

I seem to be in charge of the Annual Meeting, but really it's **your** event. While staff and board work extra hard this time of year to plan a worthwhile conference, many hands make lighter work. Here are **ten things you can do**, starting right now, to make this event a success.

1. First of all, **you can plan to be there!** And maybe this is the year to **bring along a neighbor**. If you need an extra flyer or another copy of this newsletter to do some convincing, I'll be happy to send them along.

2. You can help **publicize the special conference registration fee to students** in your community. This is a great way to pull in another generation of concerned citizens. We try to make it easy for students to attend by offering a discounted registration fee of \$10 with no obligation to join PFI. This student discount will apply to early registrations as well as

OVERNIGHT OPTIONS

The PFI discount on guest rooms at the Gateway Holiday Inn is only good for reservations received before December 22, 2000. Call (515) 292-8600 or 1-800-Holiday to reserve a room at the Gateway. If the Gateway doesn't suit you, check these out and you may save yourself a few dollars. All are within five miles of the Holiday Inn meeting site. The first one is just across the highway.

Baymont Inn (formerly the Budgetel)
515-296-2500 or 800-428-3438

Americinn Motel 515-233-1005
or 800-634-3444

Best Western Starlite 515-232-9260
or 800-903-0009

Comfort Inn 515-232-0689
or 800-228-5150

Hampton Inn 515-239-9999
or 800-426-7866

Heartland Inn 515-233-6060
or 800-334-3277

Howard Johnson Express Inn
515-232-8363 or 800-798-8363

ISU Memorial Union 515-292-1111

Ramada Inn 515-232-3410
or 800-922-7384

Super 8 Motel 515-232-6510
or 800-800-8000

University Inn 515-232-0280
or 800-422-5250

Silent Auction to Support Summer Camp

Donna Bauer will organize this year's silent auction. If you have an item to donate, you should let Donna know. She's available by phone 712-563-4084; the same number is a fax; by email it's tdbauer@juno.com. Money raised by the auction goes to the scholarship fund for PFI Summer Camp.

... you save money by taking care of registration before December 22.

walk-ins. Last year we had students from ISU and Dordt College take us up on the offer. Who can you invite?

3. You can **register promptly**. Yes, January seems a long way off with many holiday festivities closer on the horizon. But you save money by taking care of registration before **December 22**. (You also save the staff and office volunteers heaps of frustration.) Thanks!

4. And while you have your checkbook out, **consider an additional donation** for the event. The Annual Meeting is designed to pay for itself, but with ever increasing costs at the hotel, it's always a tight squeeze on the registration dollars. We keep registration fees low to encourage attendance, then spend a lot of time on the phone soliciting gifts from sponsors. For example, we need sponsors to cover cost of

- birthday cake on Friday evening
- Saturday morning coffee break
- Saturday afternoon cider break
- lunch for VIPs
- toy rental for the child care suite
- staff for the child care suite
- audio visual equipment rental

If you are inclined toward such a gift, call me for details. You can designate exactly how you want your dollars spent. We will acknowledge your gift, if you choose, on the printed program and at the hotel. You can also choose to keep your gift anonymous.

5. **Volunteer to work at registration.** We need people to handle registrations on Friday evening and early on Saturday morning. The job involves being a greeter, sometimes collecting money, and doing a little paper work. Participants who have pre-registered will still check in at the information desk to pick up their conference program and get a name tag. So, it's going to be a very busy place. Child care registration will be handled at the same tables. You need a cool head and a big smile for this job!

6. **Help with child care.** I need people to assist with organizing waivers and permission slips. It would be great to have someone round up the camp kids on Saturday and put them on the bus. In addition, you may volunteer to spend some time in the toddler room. If you have an older child who is at loose ends about how to get involved with the conference, helping with toddler care could be an excellent choice.

7. Volunteer to be a **workshop host**. For each concurrent session, we need one designated person, besides the moderator, to keep things running smoothly. This person would be the "gopher" if there's a problem during the session and "clock watcher" to assure a prompt start and a timely wrap-up. If you look over the list of workshops and see something you definitely want to attend, volunteering to be the host guarantees your place.

8. Volunteer to be a **reporter**. Recorders need to take notes and write a brief summary of the workshop content. I'll edit your writing for the winter newsletter that gets put together in January. Your report gives everyone a history of the event and will be especially helpful to those who cannot attend. Again, if there's a workshop you're particularly keen to get in on, this job is for you.

9. **Donate an item to the silent auction.** Based on the interest shown last year, we've reserved more table space for items to auction in 2001. Donna Bauer (bless her heart) has volunteered to organize the auction and you should contact her about items you'd like to donate at 712-563-4084; tdbauer@juno.com. Donna may also need help **monitoring the silent auction** bidding sheets throughout the day on January 13.

10. **"Grab me!"** No matter how much planning we do, there are bound to be last minute snafus and unexpected demands. When you get to the meeting, walk right up to me and say, "I'm here to help. Put me to work."

Thank you for getting involved. Your help is welcome. You can use the form on page 3 to enlist or call me at 515-294-8512 to offer your gift or services. For email it's nanb@iastate.edu. Thanks. See you at the party!

Nan Bonfils

LEARN HOLISTIC LIVESTOCK HEALTH CARE

Rick Exner

Johnson County livestock farmer Susan Zacharakis-Jutz has received a SARE Producer Grant for an education project that will benefit other Iowa producers. Her project objectives are to provide farmers the opportunity to learn herbal and homeopathic animal health care methods, to evaluate them in their own operations, and to be prepared to teach other producers. These methods use naturally-derived materials and are permitted in organic and other "natural" specialty markets. However, every livestock producer is potentially a beneficiary of holistic animal health practices. A problem with holistic veterinary services is that they can exceed \$1,000 per day.

Randy Kidd D.V.M., Ph.D. has agreed to donate his services for this project in order that more farmers may learn to use holistic animal health care methods. PFI members may recall Dr. Kidd from his workshops at the last two winter conferences in Ames. Through this project, Kidd will place the essential skills in the hands of a number of producers, and those producers will be in a position to teach additional farmers or to sell their services. (See Randy's sidebar.)

Randy Kidd will hold two 1½-day workshops approximately six months apart. In between the workshops, participants will evaluate practices on their own farms and will stay in touch with each other and with Dr. Kidd. In return for the free coaching, participants will pay their own mileage and other travel costs, contribute to the cost of meeting refreshments, and will buy a workshop notebook of instructional materials. Participants will also purchase any homeopathic and herbal preparations they use in their own operations. 🐾

INVITATION TO LIVESTOCK PRODUCERS

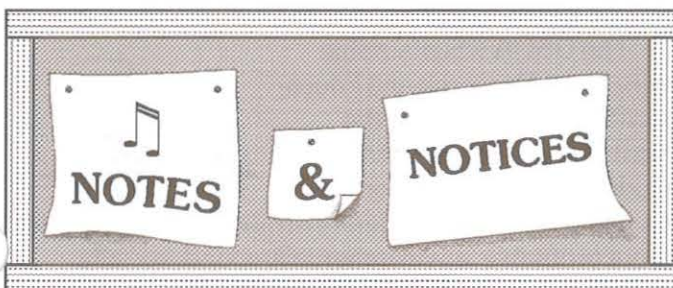
Dr. Randy Kidd, McClouth, Kansas

Hello again AND exciting news! Remember me? I'm the holistic veterinarian from Kansas who uses the kid's bathtub toy to demonstrate a model for sustainable livestock health care. The exciting news: Thanks to PFI's help, we now have a SARE grant to begin teaching the basics of herbal and homeopathic medicine to Iowa livestock producers. I see the classroom portion of this project entailing two fun-filled and learning-intensive workshops, given in two separate weekend sessions. Each weekend workshop will be approximately 12-16 hours total. More interestingly, though, will be the hands-on use of the herbs and homeopathic medicines participants will be administering at home . . . under my guidance.

I will be attending the Annual Meeting on January 13 where interested folks can get together to figure out the best dates, places and general organization of the workshop sessions. All we need now is a handful of enthusiastic PFIers and friends and we're on our way.



See you at the meeting. (I'm the kinda tall, ugly one with the grey/white beard.) In the meantime, reach me at 785-863-3425, or Randykidd@ruralnet1.com



♪ Rosmann Farm Wins Regional Soil Conservation Award

Congratulations to Ron and Maria Rosmann of Harlan. In September their farm was selected, along with eight others, by the Iowa Farm Bureau for their extensive efforts in protecting water and soil quality. This couple has incorporated contour planting, terraces, buffer strips, grassed waterways, field borders, and filter strips into their farm. For another Rosmann award, see p. 29.

♪ **Women's Winter Gathering Set for February 17 and 18, 2001**

This year's Women's Winter Gathering, February 17 and 18, will focus on food-health connections. The program will feature L. T. and Ahilia Bhramdat, organic farmers from the Des Moines area. Trained as cardiopulmonary practitioner and registered nurse, respectively, the Bhramdats believe they can best improve the health of their community by providing locally grown food. "Medication stimulates, depresses or inhibits; vine ripe fruits and vegetables heal the body," their brochure announces.

At their Leisure Time Gardens, Inc., CSA members receive nutritional information and weekly cooking demonstrations. The Bhramdats also raise poultry and goats. They will share their philosophy and a few recipes with participants on Saturday, February 17.

We will meet again at PrairieWoods in Cedar Rapids. Participants last year loved the natural setting, the comfortable quarters, and the commitment the Franciscan Sisters make to protect and restore the environment. We are rounding out the schedule, and welcome your suggestions or offerings!

For more information contact Kate Hogg at 319-247-0223 or rkhhogg@aol.com or 2750 Otis Rd. SE, Cedar Rapids 52403.

♪ **Growing Your Small Market Farm**

This may be just the course for you. Starting January 20, 2001, you'll have the opportunity to write your own business plan, receive technical advice and assistance, develop your own farm marketing materials and network with other small producers in Iowa. For more information, see the article by Penny Brown on page 15.

♪ **Beginning Market Gardeners**

Or maybe this is the course for you. The three-day school will be held January 18, 19, and 20 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The class costs \$200 and is open to anyone interested in starting their own small-scale fresh produce business.

The Wisconsin School for Beginning Market Gardeners gives students a realistic picture of what it

takes to run a successful small-scale produce operation. Topics covered include capital, management, labor, and other resources, plus soil fertility, plant health and pest management.

The course is taught by a team of three experienced growers and University of Wisconsin faculty. For more information, please contact John Hendrickson, Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems at jhendric@facstaff.wisc.edu or 608-265-3704.

♪ **Rural Ministry Conference 2001**

"Patchwork of Faith and Rural Culture" is the theme for the 20th Rural Ministry Conference to be held in Dubuque, March 11-13, 2001. For more information, call 319-589-0273. Email ruralmin@mwci.net.

♪ **Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference 2001**

The 12th annual UMOFC will be held March 16 and 17, 2001 at the University of Wisconsin, LaCrosse. The theme for this year's conference is "Organic Vision: Food for Community, Hope for the Future." To receive a conference flyer, call the UMOFC voice mail line at 715-772-6819 or email lizrose@mwt.net or write UMOFC, P.O. Box 339, Spring Valley, WI 54767. Leave your complete mailing address.

PFI will have a display in the exhibit hall. If you know that you are going to attend this conference and you'd like to volunteer at the PFI booth during one of the breaks, contact Nan at the PFI office.

♪ **North Central SARE Producer Grants Information**

The USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program in the North Central Region invites producers to apply for competitive grants to research, demonstrate or educate others about profitable, environmentally sound, socially responsible agricultural systems. This year marks the 10th cycle of producer grants in our region. Applications will be available beginning February 1, 2001.



Applications will be due March 30, 2001. Call 402-472-7081, fax 402-472-0280 or send email to ncrsare@unl.edu for an application. You can also find the application at www.sare.org/ncrsare.

🎵 **Agricultural Exchange with Thai Students Seeks Host Families**

The Agriculture Study Abroad office at Iowa State University is looking for farm families interested in hosting an international exchange student from an agricultural university in Thailand. The students are interested in gaining hands-on experience in mid-west culture and agriculture by living with a family and helping on their farm. Families would welcome the students into their homes for up to two months between April and September, 2001. Families interested in hosting agriculture students from other countries should also apply. More information is available upon request from Sara Aus, 18 Curtiss Hall, Ames, IA, 50010. Call 515-294-8447 or email saraaus@iastate.edu.

🎵 **PFI Landowner Seeks Farmer**

I'm inheriting a 120-acre century family farm in NE Crawford County, and looking for person(s) interested in farming it sustainably. There's a limited amount of land (not certified organic) available for 2001 crop year. The big 1926 house is in good shape, other buildings are in average condition. I'm open to very favorable arrangements for the right party. Contact Merlin Pfannkuch, 1424 Kellogg Ave., Ames, IA 50010-5447. Phone 515-232-3319; merlinp@pcpartner.net.

🎵 **Two IDALS Producer Directories - Do You Want to be Listed?**

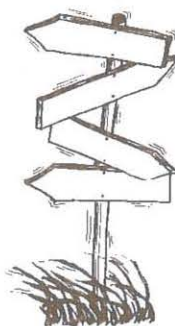
"Iowa Farm Fresh" is published by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship. There is no charge for producers or growers to be listed in the directory with separate sections for farmers' markets, strawberry producers, fruit and vegetable growers, honey producers, and Christmas tree producers. Producers who wish to be listed should contact IDAL's Agricultural Diversification Bureau, 515-281-5402 or email barb.lovitt@idals.state.is.us.

Also from IDALS, the "Iowa Family Farm Meats Directory" lists farmers who sell meat and meat

products directly to consumers. It also provides a listing of lockers and processors. There's a section summarizing the basics of meat and poultry slaughter, processing, labeling and marketing. To be included in the next update, contact IDAL's Office of Renewable Fuels at 515-281-6936. But don't delay. The 2001 edition goes to press soon.

These directories and others produced by IDALS are available on the department's homepage, www.state.ia.us/agriculture 🐾

BOARD BUSINESS



The board met on September 12, 2000. Discussion centered on: budget forecasting; update of PFI work areas (on-farm research, food systems, members services); executive director search; reviewing the ISU Foundation endowment; and plans for the Annual

Meeting. The next board meeting is December 7, 2000. The voting status of associate members is on that agenda. 🐾

FOOD SYSTEMS PROGRAM UPDATE

Robert Karp

A Project Ends, A Name is Changed, A Program is Born

Three years ago PFI received a grant from USDA for a project we called the "Field to Family Community Food Project," or "Field to Family Project" for short. The purpose of this Central Iowa project was to explore and demonstrate ways to increase local food production and to address hunger and nutrition issues among low income families. It was an unusual combination and an ambitious project, which has had some great successes. In fact, just recently the USDA sent a consultant to Ames to learn more about our project because we are considered one of their most successful efforts.

Our goal for the Field to Family Project, however, was never to limit its activity to Central Iowa. We

always saw ourselves reaching out to work on food systems issues across the state, much as PFI's on-farm research works statewide. This goal of having a statewide focus has begun to come to realization through several grants that have a broader focus:

- a "Share the Learning" grant from the Vision 2020 project at ISU (described in the Spring 1999 newsletter);
- a USDA SARE Professional Development Program grant (described in the Spring 2000 newsletter);
- a USDA Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program grant (described in the Summer 2000 newsletter);
- a multi-state USDA grant focusing on small farm profitability (described below).

Our work in Central Iowa continues but it is now complemented by a stronger focus across the state. In light of our successes, the PFI board and staff recently decided to make PFI's Field to Family Project into a full-fledged "program area," namely the **PFI Food Systems Program**. And thus we are dropping the name "Field to Family Project," though we are not dropping our attractive logo!

We realize some of you liked the name Field to Family and so did we. But quite honestly it confused many people. Many reporters mislabeled us as the Field to Farm project. (Other versions included: Friends to Family, Farm and Table...and so on!) And many people also thought we were an organization separate from Practical Farmers of Iowa, rather than a project of PFI



We realize some of you liked the name Field to Family and so did we. But quite honestly it confused many people.

Furthermore, our original USDA grant ended this fall and it seemed like the right time to make a change. Best of all, the change signifies the recognition by the PFI board of the important role food systems work can play in helping sustainable agriculture thrive.

Anyone wanting more information on our current work or wanting to make suggestions for future efforts, please contact our downtown Ames office at 515-232-5649.

New Small Farm Project Begins

PFI learned this fall that a grant proposal to USDA was approved for a project titled the North Central Initiative for Small Farm Profitability (NCISFP). The NCISFP project is a four-state effort with partners in Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, and Wisconsin. This three-year project will focus on farming practices and value-added processing, marketing and distribution of farm products.

The initiative will develop working relationships among farmers and scientists through the development of community-based producer clusters. These clusters will help identify and apply innovative strategies to enhance the success of small and mid-sized farms, especially those involved in finding and servicing markets for high-value farm products.

PFI will be hiring a part-time program associate to work with producer clusters that are involved in finding and accessing markets for high-value products. PFI staff will also develop four case studies of innovative initiatives that tie small farm profits to marketing high value crop or livestock products. Another component will involve on-farm research on sustainable swine production systems.

For more information contact Gary Huber at PFI's Food Systems Program office in Ames 515-232-5649 or ftf@isunet.net.

GROWING YOUR SMALL FARM MARKET- A BUSINESS PLANNING COURSE

Penny Brown, Clive

Business planning for your farm – important, but how do you go about writing one? Where can you get the kind of help you need for your farm situation?

Starting in January 2001, a new business-planning program for small producers will begin in Des Moines. The John Pappajohn Entrepreneurial Center, Drake Agricultural Law Center and the Drake School of Accounting have developed "Growing Your Small Market Farm." For one year, you will have the opportunity to write your own business plan, receive technical advice and assistance, develop your own farm marketing materials and network with other small producers in Iowa.

This program will use a new curriculum called *Tilling the Soil of Opportunity* that was developed at the University of Nebraska especially for small producers. The course will be supplemented with guest speakers, hands-on opportunities, and assistance from law and accounting students.

It begins January 20, 2001, and the class will meet from 8:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m. The price is \$395 and you are encouraged to bring your farm partner or spouse. Materials that you will receive while in class: *The Legal Guide for Direct Farm Marketing*; *Tilling the Soil of Opportunity* Guide; a Business Workbook; Resource Guide; and a directory of local farm business support and resources.

The Iowa Agricultural Development Authority, the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation and the Natural Resource Conservation Service have made this program possible. It has been endorsed by Practical Farmers of Iowa, Iowa Network for Community Agriculture, Iowa State University Extension, The Leopold Center for

Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa Food Policy Council and the Greater Des Moines Chefs' Association.

If you wish more information or to receive a brochure, contact Penny Brown at 515-278-2934 or BrownPennyL@cs.com.

VERMICOMPOSTING EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN

Deb Hofmann, Swisher

D & D Ranch launched a vermicomposting educational campaign this fall with support, in part, from a PFI grant. D & D Ranch is a permitted vermicomposting facility (worm farm) located in northern Johnson County, Iowa. D & D Ranch has specialized in red worm vermiculture as an alternative agricultural venture since 1997. Red worm feedstock used at D & D Ranch consists of pulped commercial food waste diverted from area landfills and livestock manures. The worm's excrement, which is referred to as worm castings or vermicompost is an excellent soil conditioner. When applied to the soil, vermicompost adds organic matter that supports a tremendous diversity of microbial life. It also improves soil structure, porosity, aeration, and water retention capabilities, reduces fertilizer requirements, and reduces the potential for soil erosion.

As part of the Vermicomposting Educational Campaign four 5th grade classrooms from four surrounding counties toured D & D Ranch in October. During the tour fifth graders were introduced to the vermicomposting process practiced at D & D Ranch. They listened attentively and heard about the important role that earthworms play in a healthy soil food web. Students returned to their classrooms with complete vermicomposting kits ready to practice the process themselves. The curriculum uses over 150 worm-related activities to develop problem-solving and critical-thinking skills. It also integrates science, math, language arts, biology, solid waste issues, ecology, and the environment in such a way that draws children into the learning process.

We developed a traveling vermicomposting display as part of the campaign, available for loan to schools, libraries, and extension offices. You will be able to view this display and hear more details of this

...write your own business plan, receive technical advice and assistance, develop your own farm marketing materials and network with other small producers in Iowa.

project at the PFI Annual Meeting, January 13. Hope to see you there.

Editor's Note: Dave and Deb Hofmann, D & D Ranch, got help with their project through PFI's Sustainable Projects Grants. More information and an application is on the next page. 🐾

FARM FIELD DAYS WRAP-UP

Rick Exner

Thunder threatened a couple of June field days, but all in all the weather cooperated right through our September and October farm visits. More than two dozen farms hosted field days, and more than one thousand people came to see and learn. Congratulations to the cooperators. Now stay tuned for their research discoveries at the Winter Workshops.

Twenty-eight other PFI members helped out with a friendly phone call to some of the (*hundreds of!*) non-members who like to come to our field days. These 28 are among the nearly 140 members who've offered to occasionally lend a hand with PFI communications. Special thanks! This summer's phone callers were:

<u>Members</u>	<u>District</u>	<u>County</u>
Ralph and Shirley Alshouse	4	Wayne
Barney Bahrenfuse	4	Jasper
Leo and Diane Benjamin	1	Monona
Steve and Joanne Berntson	1	O'Brien
Tim and Catherine Broer	2	Hardin
David Burns	3	Chickasaw
Dan Chadima	5	Johnson
Lee and Sheila Clemon	1	Monona
Keith Cuvelier	2	Butler
Dorothy Lamberti and Jerry Depew	1	Pocahontas
Ed Flaherty	5	Johnson
Tom and Irene Frantzen	3	Chickasaw
Eric and Ann Franzenburg	3	Benton
Rex and Kathleen Gogerty	2	Hardin

Greg Guenther	4	Polk
Kathryn and Robert Hogg	3	Linn
Carol Hunt	5	Johnson
James Illg	2	Humboldt
Laura Krouse	3	Linn
Charles Larson	2	Boone
Steve and Gloria Leazer	5	Cedar
Nancy Bevin and Dennis Peterson	2	Story
Jim and Beulah Schelle	1	Sac
Wayne and Stephanie Simmons	4	Guthrie
Frederick Steinbron	3	Buchanan
Mike and Jill Tidman	4	Polk
Ken and Karen Wise	1	Sac
Harold and Pat Wright	2	Story 🐾

UPS may still be delivering on December 24, but it will be too late to pre-register for the Annual Meeting. Too late for discounted rooms at the Gateway Holiday Inn as well. Meeting registration fees double after December 22, so do yourself a favor and sign up early. The registration form is on page 3. Happy holidays from everyone on the PFI staff and board. See you in January.

Here are the answers to the "What Don't We Know?" practice quiz. 1) Left to right, that's Fred Blackmer, Fred Kirschenmann, and Fred Magdoff. The photo was taken in 1998. 2) All Iowa meals - 37; Poultry -49.

SUSTAINABLE PROJECTS 2001

PROPOSAL FORM

PRACTICAL FARMERS OF IOWA

Sustainable Projects is designed to help citizens of Iowa carry out activities that focus on PFI's mission – to promote farming systems that are profitable, ecologically sound, and good for families and communities. Sustainable agriculture has been described as preserving the soil and water resources as well as the people involved in agriculture. What could a Sustainable Project be? Maybe you want to undertake an on-farm trial like those used by the farmer cooperators in PFI. Maybe you would like to create a specific program for the local school or FFA that teaches about the relationship of farming to the environment. Perhaps you are part of a group that needs some support to have an educational booth at the county fair. Maybe you could use some funding to bring your community leaders together on a related issue. Recent successful projects have included farm tours for urban farmers' market customers, composting food waste collected from a summer camp, and vermi-composting. Be creative!

Proposals for up to several hundred dollars will be accepted. (PFI cooperators, for example, receive up to \$400 for an on-farm trial.) It is legitimate to include in the proposal payment for your own time. Itemize labor and other costs in the budget you submit; show exactly how PFI funds will be used. Equipment purchases will *not* be funded; however, equipment leasing may be used in proposals to defray equipment costs. Proposals that show multiple sources for funding are well received.

In return for funding your Sustainable Project, we ask that you agree to share both the results and the process that you went through in carrying out the project. That will help us to build on past experience and share the successes of the program. At the very least, we expect you to share your project with a poster or display at the PFI annual meeting and an article in the newsletter. We also expect you to credit PFI in any press releases or publicity about your project.

Projects will be chosen by the PFI board. Criteria include compatibility of the project with PFI's mission; merit and importance of goal; adequacy of proposed method to stated goal; capability of applicant to accomplish the project; budget realities; potential to educate others as a result of the project. Proposals for 2001 are due by Feb. 1. Decisions will be announced in March. Project reimbursement will be made upon receipt of a final report.

Please return this proposal form to: Nan Bonfils, Practical Farmers of Iowa, 2104 Agronomy Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011. You can also file an application online at www.pfi.iastate.edu.

Name of Project _____

Name Submitting _____

Mailing Address _____

Zip Code _____ Telephone _____

Email _____

(OVER, PLEASE)

Please print or type. Use additional paper if needed but do not exceed three pages total (including budget).

You must include an itemized budget.

Please describe the problem that this project will address and why there is a need for the project.

Please describe what you will do in the planned project. Be specific.

How will you communicate to the public about the project? Reminder – we expect you to share your project with a poster or display at the 2002 PFI Annual Meeting and through an article in the newsletter.

What is the amount of money you need to carry out the proposed project? Please itemize. Show your contribution and any other funding sources.

2000 Summer Field Days Out and About - II



From grazing to an ultrasound fetal calf exam at the Stewart field day, Oelwein.



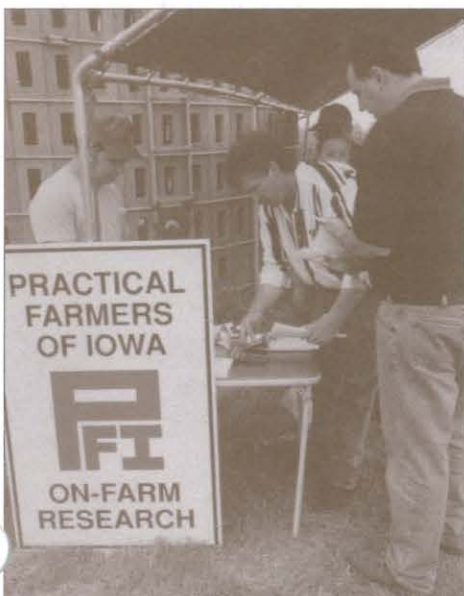
Darwin McGhee, Correctionville High School ag instructor, points out weevil larvae in a thistle head.



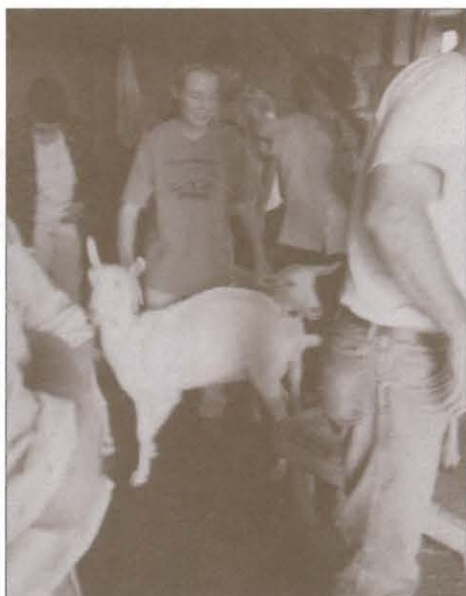
Dan Wilson, Paullina, is one of those modifying the design of the Illinois-style farrowing hut.



Pick up some locally-produced honey, apples or jam and "Please leave money in box."



Arlyn Valvick, Swea City, checks the field day sign-up sheet.



Cheerful chaos reigns when goats share the milking parlor with visitors.



Of course, if the field day gets too boring, you can always go fishing for cats. Rachel Wilson demonstrates.

2000 Summer Field Days Out and About – III



Everyone was a piece of the puzzle at the Libbey-Landgraf harvest festival.



The road to John and Joan Lubke's nitrogen trial led through rolling, northeast Iowa scenery.



Joe Keenan, Ogden, shows how he modified an air planter for vegetable seed.



Grazing economics was on the agenda at the field day hosted by the Dordt College Ag Stewardship Center.



The composting starts here – Wayne and Ruth Fredericks, Osage, are part of the hoop manure composting study.



After the Zacharakis-Jutz field day – what better than a potluck and a barn dance?

PFI 1999 ON-FARM TRIAL RESULTS – IV

(Editor's note: On-farm research results for 1999 first appeared in the program for the Jan., 2000 Winter Workshops. Those trials have been featured over the course of 2000, while cooperators were at work on new trials. We close our review of 1999 on-farm research by returning to soil fertility – fertility and plant population, nitrogen and soybeans, deep-banding, byproducts, and compost. Here also are first-year results of PFI's "fertility paradigms" study, comparing two basically different approaches to soil amendments. Come to the next PFI annual meeting for the 2000 research update.)

Fertility Research

Dennis and Eve Abbas, Hampton, carried out a trial that may not look like a fertility experiment. They compared two planting populations of corn, looking for effects on nitrogen sufficiency. This was the second year of the trial. Dennis figures that in their organic cropping system, nitrogen can be a limiting factor for corn. So he wonders if reducing the number of plants competing for that nitrogen might actually have the effect of improving each plant's N status – and therefore overall yields.



Dennis Abbas described his research at the August, 1999 field day.

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.

As Table 1 indicates, it didn't seem to work that way in 1999. Whereas in 1998 they at least saw higher leaf N at the low population, this year there was no difference in leaf nutrients. Stalk nitrate-N was close to zero for both population treatments, which wasn't an unusual result in PFI 1999 trials. The higher population actually would yield significantly better if rep 1 were eliminated from the analysis. As it is, the yield difference is nonsignificant, and the extra seed cost is the only economic difference. It may be that any nitrogen benefit from reduced population is offset by the greater number of ears at higher populations. But Dennis would like to see some more data before he draws final conclusions from this experiment.

John and Jean Sellers, Corydon, graze beef cows and sell hay. John is also active in the effort to make switchgrass a biofuel for southern Iowa. Sellers wants to make the best use of local resources, including a by-product of lysine production. This by-product is 107+7+7+7S per ton. John spiked it to 145+45+45+7S and applied it at the 1-ton rate in



Backed by switchgrass, John Sellers showed a watering system near to the fertility experiment.

Sellers wants to make the best use of local resources, including a by-product of lysine production.

Table 1. Fertility Trials

COOPER- ATOR	CROP	TREATMENT "A"			TREATMENT "B"
		DESCRIPTION	YIELD (bu.)	TREAT- MENT COST	DESCRIPTION
ABBAS	CORN	25,000 FINAL POP	102.7	\$16.80	20,000 FINAL POP
SELLERS	HAY	LYSINE BY- PRODUCT TO HAY FIELD	3.2 T	\$73.02	NO FERTILIZATION
VALVICK	SOYBEAN	N & S SIDEDRESS SOYBEAN, VAR 272	32.1	\$16.35	NO SIDEDRESSING
VALVICK	SOYBEAN	N & S SIDEDRESS SOYBEAN, VAR 210N	40.7	\$16.35	NO SIDEDRESSING
WEIS	CORN	FALL DEEP 0+2+48	195.6	\$37.45	NO FALL FERTILIZER
WILSON	CORN	COMPOST	175.8	\$5.61	NO COMPOST

strips to a mixed grass-clover hay field (Table 1). The fertilized strips yielded nearly 90 percent more than the check treatment, although with only three replications in the experiment, it wasn't a difference that was statistically significant. As such, the input costs were pretty staggering. If you assume that the yield difference observed was in fact because of the application, then the yield benefit marginally outweighs cost by \$10-\$15. The test is encouraging. But to convince other producers to use this material, we may need to see how it works without the additional fertilizers that doubled the treatment cost in this trial.

Another alternative fertilizer use trial was carried out by **Arlyn and Annette Valvick**, Swea City, but instead of putting an alternative fertilizer on a standard crop, they applied a standard fertilizer – nitrogen – to a crop that usually doesn't receive it – soybeans. Soybeans have a symbiotic relationship with *Rhizobium* bacteria that make atmospheric nitrogen available to the plant "in return for" sugars. However, Arlyn had read in the April, 1996 issue of *Soybean Digest* how some southern farmers were applying nitrogen and



Arlyn Valvick showed the soybean fertility plots at the late August field day.

sulfur to soybeans in mid-season for a yield increase. On August 1, Arlyn soil-applied a mix of UAN and ammonium thiosulfate to two different soybean varieties, one following corn and the other following soybeans (Table 1). He saw no yield benefit at all in these two trials. With leaf tissue samples from only two replications, it is not possible to tell whether

Fertility Trials

TRT "B"		DIFFERENCE				COMMENT
YIELD (bu.)	TREATMENT COST	YIELD DIFF.	YLD LSD (bu.)	YLD SIG.	\$ BENEFIT OF TRT "A"	
99.9	\$13.20	2.9	5.6	NS	-\$3.60	NO DIFFERENCE IN LEAF OR STALK N STATUS BETWEEN POPULATIONS. LOW STALK N
1.7	\$5.29	1.5	1.6	NS	-\$67.73	IF YIELD DIFFERENCE IS "REAL," YIELD BENEFIT EXCEEDS COST
31.5	\$0.00	0.6	1.7	NS	-\$16.35	FOLLOWING SOYBEANS. NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN LEAF N OR S
39.6	\$0.00	1.1	7.1	NS	-\$16.35	FOLLOWING CORN, SECOND VARIETY. ONLY 3 REPS. COMBINED TRIALS NOT SIGNIFICANT EITHER
189.3	\$0.00	6.3	10.7	NS	-\$37.45	FERTILIZER TRT HAD HIGHER LEAF K, LOWER LEAF Ca & Mg
171.9	\$0.00	3.9	11.5	NS	-\$5.61	NONSIGNIF. REDUCTIONS IN LEAF N, S, P, K WITH COMPOST. STALK NITRATE NONDETECTABLE IN BOTH TRTS

additional nitrogen and sulfur were getting into the plants. The developing soybean crop probably used the additional nutrients, but the fertilizer didn't increase the total amount of nutrients converted to grain.

Expect to see more trials with manure and compost in the year 2000 research results because several ISU scientists have a project that involves PFI. For 1999 we have just one trial to show you. **Colin and Carla Wilson** and **Dan and Lorna Wilson**, Paullina, repeated a trial with the composted bedding/manure from their swine facility. As in 1998, there was no yield difference between the corn that received compost (nearly 7 tons) and the corn that did not (Table 1). (Both treatments received 40 lbs of nitrogen before planting.) As in 1998, stalk tests at the end of the season suggested the crop ran out of nitrogen in both treatments. In 1999 mid-season leaf samples suggested that tissue levels of N, P, K, and S might actually be lower in compost-treated corn. So how composted *was* this material? It had not been turned, and basically just sat in a windrow for a year. Did it pull nutrients "out" of the soil to complete its



Ag engineer Tom Richard probes a PFI compost pile. Tom's team will be probing more piles in a Leopold-funded project.

breakdown after application? PFI trials in 2000 will help shed light on these questions.

Steve and June Weis, Osage, had potassium on their minds in 1999, and they approached the topic

Table 2. Fertility Paradigm Trials

COOPER- ATOR	CROP	TREATMENT "A"			TREATMENT "B"
		DESCRIPTION	YIELD (bu.)	TREAT- MENT COST	DESCRIPTION
ALERT	SOYBEANS	18-46-0, GYPSUM, ZINC	—	\$32.60	18-46-0
ARMSTRONG	CORN	18-46-0, GYPSUM, ZINC	121.2	\$48.66	18-46-0
BRUNER	CORN	18-46-0, 0-0-60, ZINC	152.4	\$35.80	18-46-0
DORSHEIMER	CORN	GYPSUM, ZINC	133.6	\$24.66	NOTHING
HENNINGS	OATS	ROCK PHOSPHATE, CALCITIC LIME, ZINC	—	\$102.58	ROCK PHOSPHATE, DOLOMITIC LIME
LUBBEN	SOYBEANS	0-0-60, CALCITIC LIME	63.0	\$88.54	0-0-60, DOLOMITIC LIME
MUGGE	CORN	CALCITIC LIME	172.0	\$48.07	NOTHING
NEW MELLERAY	CORN	ROCK PHOSPHATE, ZINC	168.9	\$25.60	ROCK PHOSPHATE
AVERAGE				\$50.81	

with two kinds of trials. Steve tried a fall deep-band application of 0+2+48 before corn (Table 1). The application did result in significantly more potassium in the mid-season leaf samples, although K levels in both treatments would be considered adequate. Given the fairly large LSD of this trial, the 6.3-bushel yield difference between treatments isn't close to being statistically significant. If it were, it still wouldn't have paid for the fertilizer and application.

Steve and June also tried to get at nutrient sufficiency in an indirect fashion by examining the effect of tillage on potassium uptake. See below for those trial results.

Fertility Paradigms

Readers of the PFI newsletter may remember that in 1998 the organization received a grant from the USDA SARE program to evaluate "fertility paradigms." Paradigms are ways of looking at the world, constructions that we put on reality to make sense of it. There are two important ways of looking at soil

Paradigms are ways of looking at the world, constructions that we put on reality to make sense of it.

fertility, which can be characterized as the "sufficiency" paradigm and the "ratio" paradigm. The sufficiency perspective looks at a soil sample and asks "is there enough?" of available crop nutrients. The ratio approach looks at the cation (positively charged) nutrients attracted to the (negatively charged) soil cation exchange (clay minerals and organic matter) and asks "are they in the appropriate proportions?" for optimum crop growth. There has not been much communication between the two schools of thought, with universities taking the sufficiency approach and some crop consultants and testing laboratories espousing the ratio approach. Farmers are left to make their own decisions when it comes to soil amendments, and the related expenses can be great.

Fertility Paradigm Trials

TRT "B"		DIFFERENCE				COMMENT
YIELD (bu.)	TREATMENT COST	YIELD DIFF.	YLD LSD (bu.)	YLD SIG.	\$ BENEFIT OF TRT "A"	
—	\$12.57	—	—	—		BROADLEAF WEED BIOMASS LESS IN RATIO TRT
119.6	\$10.12	1.6	13.3	NS		HIGHER GRAIN CRUDE PROTEIN IN RATIO TRT
152.0	\$25.13	0.4	20.3	NS		
133.4	\$0.00	0.2	5.8	NS		
—	\$96.19	—	—	—		
62.0	\$38.92	1.0	1.3	NS		
171.3	\$0.00	0.7	4.0	NS		
165.3	\$22.15	3.6	12.4	NS		
	\$25.64					

Farmers are left to make their own decisions when it comes to soil amendments, and the related expenses can be great.

This project compares the ratio and sufficiency approaches in side-by-side strips on six farms and two ISU experiment farms. Several producers from the Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA) are also cooperating in the study, as are ISU organic specialist Kathleen Delate and National Soil Tilth Lab scientist Doug Karlen. Crop consultant Keith Cuvelier

is also a partner in the project, providing ratio-based recommendations.

In the first year of the effort, no significant differences appeared in crop yields (Table 2). Input costs are shown in the table, but neither yields nor costs should be taken too seriously after one year. Soil fertility is not necessarily a "one shot deal"; it will take several growing seasons for any long term effects to become evident and for input costs to be amortized. Thanks in part to the Tilth Lab, quite a number of soil and crop quality components are being examined. These also may take some years to develop patterns. Funds are being sought to continue the project through 2001. 🌱

FOOTPRINTS OF A GRASS FARMER Ecological and Economic Aspects of Subsurface Drainage

Tom Frantzen, Alta Vista

In the summer issue of *the Practical Farmer* my Footprints column detailed my experiences with subsurface drainage. In the process of writing that piece, I asked Dr. Laura Jackson from the Biology Department of UNI to comment on my opinions. I found Dr. Jackson's thoughts interesting and I wanted to share them with the readers of this column.

Dr. Jackson's Comments

Jackson writes, "Subsurface drainage has good points for the organic farmer, as Tom has described, but I wonder about its sustainability in three areas: accelerated nitrogen losses due to leaching, accelerated organic matter decomposition due to increased aeration of the soil, and changes to the hydrology of the landscape that make the country more flood-prone and the streams more likely to be unstable and silty.

For the nitrogen question, we need to know which nitrogen loss is greatest, denitrification, or nitrate leaching? I imagine it depends on the year, but I would guess that leaching is more extensive than denitrification. Then the question becomes, on average, does tile drainage reduce or increase nitrate leaching?"

The grass farmer replies, "There may be some new information from the drainage study in Minnesota by Dr. Gary Sands [grsands@umn.edu]. Also see the article by Hoover and Schwab entitled 'Effect of tile depth, spacing and cropping practices on drain discharge.' It's in the transactions of *American Society of Agricultural Engineers*, 12:150-152, 1969."

Jackson continues. "As for organic matter, we know that organic matter figures into nitrogen delivery to the soil and also to soil moisture-holding capacity. It could be that your better organic matter in the crop rotation is holding more water, so that tile drainage makes a big difference. But we need to find out if the tiling leads to faster organic matter decomposition in tiled fields, and when during the growing season. You want organic matter to break down when the crops need it, not before. If tiling speeds up this break down, then you are reducing not only moisture holding capacity, but also the ability of the soil to hold organic matter nitrogen and then deliver it to crops."

The grass farmer is stumped. "I don't have a clue!"

More from Jackson. "The third issue is hydrology. Organic farmers are improving the situation by having more land in grass at any given time than conventional

...a practice that helps on the field helps to create a collective problem downstream.

farmers. But tiling still speeds up the water and sends it downstream, where the overall effect is to make for faster, higher flooding and bank destabilization. Much of the water quality problem in our state has to do with siltation and excess nutrients, and most of that silt is coming from the stream bed, where it has been knocked loose by flash flooding. So a practice that helps on the field helps to create a collective problem downstream.

I like your discussion at the end [about wetland restoration]. I would gladly pay more for food, or lobby to get some of the ag subsidies to go to wetland restoration for tiled fields instead. The Clyde soils were a hybrid prairie-wetland for the very spongy, slowly draining but high water-use prairie uplands. In the spring they would be very wet but in the mid summer when the upland prairie was really using a lot of water, they would begin to dry out. Now that the uplands are crops, how much wetland would be needed to process surface and subsurface flow in spring? My guess is no less than the entire Clyde surface area, because runoff and subsurface drainage are if anything faster and higher total volume than they were in prairie days. That's a lot of land to take out of production!

If only we could figure a way to speed up drainage in some areas that need early, timely cultivation, and allow low areas of the landscape to drain more slowly, yet still get a crop off of them that works into the organic rotation. The low, wet prairie hay meadows were traditionally cut in mid-July, just once a year, and got 1.5 to 2.5 tons/acre. That's probably not good enough economic return for those soils now, I suppose. But that level of production would pay the bills locally, so to speak, instead of exporting them downstream. It would certainly make for a super buffer strip!

Hope this level of speculation doesn't drive you crazy, but it doesn't hurt to keep asking whether something is really sustainable in the long run, even if we can't fix it right away."

Using the Web for Drainage Pipe Calculations

In the last article I wrote about improved crop fields and how they are influenced by drainage. I recently visited a website of a drainage pipe manufacturer. They have a calculator to assist your decision making. That site is www.prinsco.com. Their email is

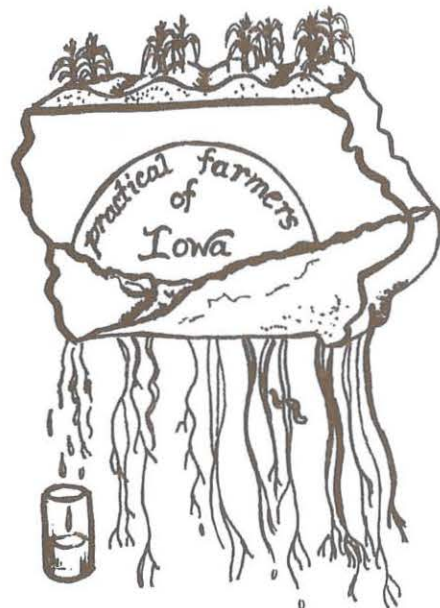
info@prinsco.com. When I put in the current prices for organic corn (\$3.20 delivered) and soybeans (\$14), the calculator gives these results:

- drainage cost is \$300 an acre;
- annual return before taxes is 18%;
- payback is 5 years;
- breakeven corn yield improvement is 8.9 bpa;
- breakeven soybean yield improvement is 3.0 bpa.

...these figures have to be adjusted for the current cropping rotation.

One important consideration here is that organic crop production is not a corn and soybean rotation! So these figures have to be adjusted for the current cropping rotation. I use both a corn, soybean, oats, hay, pasture rotation and a soybean, corn, soybean, oats hay rotation. I have no information about the response to drainage on oat, hay or pasture lands.

My guess is that they do respond, but the economics will be less inviting. What is needed to make a good decision on this investment is a better idea of the actual yield improvements. I am certain that the soil type is the critical factor. If one is observing crop loss than those yield figures will be way over the breakeven point. Installing extra tile on the soil types that show the most response makes the most sense.





(Editor's note: Our Information Age has given us more reading material than we know what to do with. The PFI offices receive dozens of newsletters, which staff attempts to keep up with. Why? Because many provide info and insights hard to get any other way. In case you don't have enough to read, we will occasionally review some of the publications that come across our desks.)

The Carbohydrate Economy (A Publication of the Institute for Local Self-Reliance)

Rick Exner

If you are one of those who is "out in front" on energy and recycling issues, you may already know about this quarterly newsletter. If you're a producer or co-op manager curious about new opportunities, you may want to give it a look. This publication is full of news about things you can grow to substitute for things you mine or pump out of the ground. The latest issue provides:

- some basic education (What is "bast" and how is it used?);

- an extensive review of the state of plant-derived lubricants, including a profile of Iowa's West Central Co-op;

- an update on industrial hemp;

- a listing of web sites and publications;

- and an editorial advocating farmer ownership and equity in the new, "carbohydrate economy."

The Carbohydrate Economy is published in Minneapolis by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, a Washington, D.C.-based organization that describes itself as "a nonprofit research and technical organization that provides technical assistance and information on environmentally sound economic development strategies." A year's subscription costs \$35, from ILSR, 1313 5th St. SE, Minneapolis, MN 55414, or (612) 379-3920, or kmullen.ilsr.org. If you are interested, you might convince them to send you a free review copy. Or contact the PFI office – we seem to be receiving two or three copies. 🍄

"...IT IS NOT JUST A JOB, IT IS A LIFE STYLE"

Yalem Teshome, Ames

Editor's note: Yalem Teshome is a Program Assistant in Women's Studies and African American Studies and a graduate student in the Department of Agricultural Education at Iowa State University. She volunteered to cover the Rosmann tribute for PFI.

On September 14, the Margaret Sloss Women's Center of Iowa State University celebrated its annual Open House. Always held in the beginning of the fall semester to highlight the Center's programs and services, this annual event features invited male administrators as "chefs" who demonstrate their support to the center by flipping burgers for open house guests.

This year, something new was added to the Women's Center's celebration. Not only was the beef purchased from the certified organic farm of Rosmann Family Farms, but also the Center recognized Maria Vakulskas Rosmann as a "Visionary Iowa Woman," who is committed to safe and humane food production. Maria was awarded a plaque which read, "In recognition of her commitment to diverse and sustainable life-ways in rural Iowa and of her efforts on behalf of safe and humane food production, The Margaret Sloss Women's Center of Iowa State University is pleased to recognize Maria Rosmann of Rosmann Family Farms as a Visionary Iowa Woman (September 14, 2000)."

A mother and a career woman, Maria Vakulskas Rosmann farms with her husband Ron in Harlan. They operate a diversified grain and livestock farm, all certified organic through Farm Verified Organic. Both through her career and volunteer experiences in leadership and public relations positions, Maria has made significant contributions to her community. She has been a member of MI-LEAD, an Extension Leadership Training Program. For over six years, Maria has assisted in the promotion of on-farm research and demonstration sites for Practical Farmers of Iowa. As a Program Assistant, Maria has worked for Iowa Extension's "Tomorrow Leaders Today." Outside farming she has held management and public relations positions with Shelby County Catholic Schools, Myrtue Memorial Hospital, KCAU-TV, Creighton University and more. Since 1982, Maria has been a host of "Traveling with Maria," a daily radio show highlighting local events at KJAN, Atlantic, Iowa. In addition, she and her family have been



Maria Rosmann, left, was honored as a "Visionary Iowa Woman." On the right is Nancy Bevin, Interim Director of ISU's Margaret Sloss Women's Center.

regular hosts to international visitors/delegations from six continents.

A strong supporter of organic farming, Maria said, "Choosing this type of farming and business (organic) is not just a job, for us it's a lifestyle and vocation. Organic agriculture presents challenges, but it also offers opportunities and options. For us, it helps us retain the culture of agriculture – for instance, families working together."

Thanking her parents for their positive influence in her life, Maria gives a lot of credit to her husband for his supportive role in her life, career, and for all she has learned about farming. 🐾

Editor's note: See page 11 for another tribute to the Rosmann family farm.



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.

IN GOOD COMPANY

Maria Vakulskas Rosmann, Harlan

I was very honored to be recognized by the Sloss Women's Center at ISU as a Visionary Iowa Woman. It is gratifying to know this award recognizes our efforts (my husband Ron and I) as a team to be involved with safe and humane food production. However, one doesn't have to look very far to realize there are many, many unsung special women here in Iowa who, for years, have been involved in these efforts. I consider myself in "good company" when I think of these women, many of whom have been dedicated to the efforts of sustainable agriculture with their involvement with PFI. 🐾

Women's Winter Gathering February 17 and 18, 2001

PrairieWoods in Cedar Rapids

See Notes and Notices on page 12.

Contact Kate Hogg at 319-247-0223

rkhogg@aol.com

2750 Otis Rd. SE, Cedar Rapids 52403.

PFI Membership Application and Renewal Form

Name _____
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City _____
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Zip Code _____
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.

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**Practical Farmers of Iowa
2035 190th St.
Boone, IA 50036-7423**

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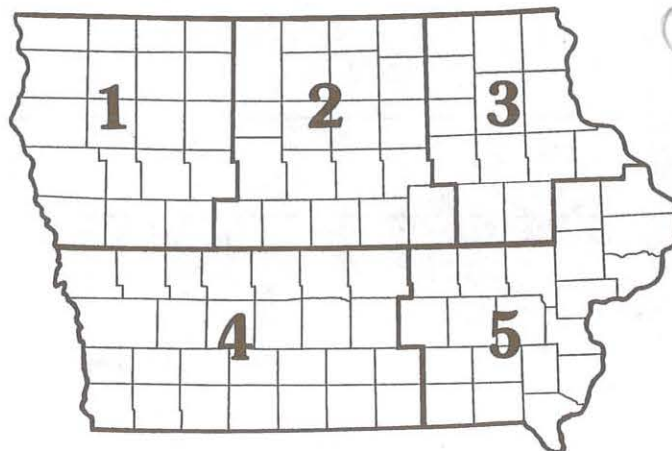
Agronomy Hall, ISU, Ames, Iowa, 50011.

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robertftf@isunet.net, Field to Family, 300 Main St., Suite 1, Ames 50010.



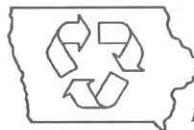
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<http://www.pfi.iastate.edu>

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