

the Practical Farmer

Practical Farmers of Iowa Newsletter

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Growing our Markets, Maintaining our Values

Consumer demand for humanely raised and sustainably grown products continues to grow, creating both opportunities and challenges. How can farmers position themselves to effectively serve these markets, while maintaining a fair share of the premiums that their products are capturing? How can we build cooperative rather than competitive relationships between retailers, middlemen and farmers? How can we educate consumers to continue to bring their influence to bear on the market?

These questions and more will be addressed at PFI's 18th Annual Conference Jan. 24-25 at the Hotel at Gateway Center, Ames. In lieu of a traditional keynote, this year we have invited two visionary and successful businesspersons: Michael Rozyne, managing director and founder of Red Tomato, and Rick Schnieders, CEO and president of SYSCO Corporation, to discuss their efforts to support sustainable agriculture through their very different businesses.



Michael Rozyne,
Red Tomato



Rick Schnieders,
SYSCO Corp.

Michael Rozyne: from coffee to vegetable growers

Just out of college, Michael Rozyne learned the hard realities of farm life working for \$3 an hour on a Maine farm. He went on to co-found Equal Exchange, an organic coffee distributor. The first U.S. company to

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**PFI's 18th Annual
Conference
Jan. 24-25**



**Featuring a bigger Friday
with in-depth workshops,
business meeting, book reading
and dance.
See pages 3, 5 & 6**

Rich Pirog to receive Sustainable Ag Achievement Award



Rich Pirog, marketing and food systems research program leader at the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, has been chosen to receive PFI's 2003 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award. Rich's tenure with the Leopold Center goes back to 1990 when he served as education coordinator. Since 1997, Rich has been instrumental in the effort to bring Iowa food back to Iowa tables, advising the Governor's Food Policy Council, promoting the use of Iowa foods at hotels and conference centers, and leading the Leopold Center's local and regional food system grant programs. Rich has been a true "team player," working with PFI and many other Iowa organizations to move this food system work forward.

Rich is increasingly recognized for his groundbreaking investigations into food system pathways and energy use. Rich's "food miles" paper (*Food, Fuel, and Freeways: An Iowa Perspective on How Far Food Travels, Fuel Usage, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions*) and his follow-up work to use the information in ecolabels has garnered attention from researchers around the world and from practitioners who are using the data in their local food system projects. And his work on apple and grape production in Iowa has paved the way for increased support for the production and marketing of these crops in Iowa.

Rich is originally from New Jersey (son of a dairy farmer!) and has a master's degree in agricultural meteorology from the University of Missouri. Congratulations, Rich. 🍅

officially adopt European Fair Trade standards as guiding principles, Equal Exchange now sells more "Fair Trade Certified" coffee than any other company in North America.



With both his early farm experience and the goal of applying the fair trade philosophy to local farmers in mind, Rozyne founded Red Tomato in 1998. The nonprofit food broker's mission is to "strengthen family farms and ecological farms in the Northeast and to increase consumers' access to and awareness of farm-fresh fruits and vegetables." Red Tomato services more than 30 supermarkets and retail co-operatives in Massachusetts, Maryland and Philadelphia.

The company recently started a pilot program with five Boston-area Stop 'n' Shop stores, opening the potential of securing a 190-store account.

Red Tomato handles produce from both organic farms and farms practicing Integrated Pest Management.

"We believe that true freshness and real flavor are the competitive edge that local growers will always have."

- Michael Rozyne

Rozyne, who has chosen to work mostly with mid-sized farms, said last year in an issue of *Agri Marketing*, "The writing is on the wall that the middle group of family farmers is disappearing. But we believe that true freshness and real flavor are the competitive edge that local growers will always have and the best chance at securing a lasting place in the market."



SYSCO Corporation

Rick Schnieders: working with independents

Rick Schnieders was exposed to farmers and the farm life at an even younger age than Rozyne: He grew up in the small northwest Iowa farming community of Remsen, where his parents ran a small grocery store. In 1970, he graduated from the University of Iowa with a degree in mathematics.

As head of the nation's largest marketer and distributor of foodservice products, Schnieders has begun to add sustainable products to his company's offerings. Operating from distribution facilities nationwide, the Houston-based company provides products and services to about 415,000 restaurants, health care and educational institutions. The vital stats: \$24 billion in annual sales, 46,000-plus employees and 143 distribution centers. Despite its size, the company places a strong emphasis on working with indepen-

dents and granting those independents lots of autonomy. This approach has allowed the company to not only weather the post-9/11 economy but meet growth goals. SYSCO has also managed to avoid becoming an acquisition target. "Because of our emphasis on independent operators, it's a business that a Carrefour or a Wal-Mart or other large company would not want," Schnieders said in a recent industry report. "They are predicated on a strong supply-chain logistics orientation, versus growth and differentiation for independents."

"Frankly, we think there's more money in this for everybody."

- Rick Schnieders

Schnieders' faith in independents extends to farmers as well. In a recent *Des Moines Register* article, he said that independent, family-owned farms are important to rural communities like the one where he grew up. By purchasing pork and other products produced by independent farmers, he hopes to support those communities. "Frankly, he said, "we think there's more money in this for everybody." 🐷

Annual Conference Schedule

Friday, Jan. 24

9am-1pm	Registration
10am-5pm	Workshops
5-6pm	PFI Business Meeting
7:30-10pm	Book reading followed by live music

Saturday, Jan. 25

7-8:30am	Registration
8:30-10:15am	Welcome, Keynote
10:30-11:45am	Workshops Round 1
11:45-12:15pm	Networking Break
12:15-1:15pm	Iowa Bounty Buffet, Sustainable Ag Achievement Award
1:30-2:20pm	Workshops Round 2
2:25-3:10pm	District Meetings
3:10-3:30pm	Networking Break
3:30-5pm	Workshops Round 3

2003 conference features expanded Friday offerings

In-depth workshops & biz meeting

This year, the PFI Annual Conference expands its Friday offerings to include a slate of in-depth workshops. Michael Rozyne of Red Tomato will be part of a workshop titled *Institutional Markets: Supply Chain Development and Risk Management Strategies* that will run from 10am to 5pm. A lunch will be provided, but pre-registration is required.

The other three workshops will run 1-4 or 5pm. A seasonal cooking workshop led by Carol Hunt will include a light dinner; registration is required. Other Friday workshops include a weed management seminar and a primer on the new Conservation Security Program. (See page 6 for more details.)

Also, this year, the PFI Business Meeting will move from Saturday to Friday night, 5-6pm.

Book reading, signing and live music

After a dinner break, activities resume at 7:30pm with a book reading and live music. Former Iowa State sociology professor Michael Bell will read from his forthcoming book, *Farming for Us All: Practical Agriculture and the Cultivation of Sustainability*, which focuses on Dick Thompson and PFI's work in the sustainable ag movement. Bell now teaches in the Department of Rural Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Laura Jackson will also be on hand to sign copies of the new book she edited with her mother, Dana Jackson, *The Farm as Natural Habitat: Reconnecting Food Systems with Ecosystems*.

Then be sure to stick around for live music and dancing. 🐷

OVERNIGHT OPTIONS

The PFI discount on guest rooms at the Hotel at Gateway Center is only guaranteed for reservations received before January 3, 2003. Call 515-292-8600 or 1-800-367-2637 to reserve a room there. 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 meeting site. The first one is just across from Gateway Center on Elwood Drive.

Baymont Inn (formerly the Budgetel)
515-296-2500

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

Best Western Starlite Village
515-232-9260
or 800-903-0009 x4

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 800-446-4656

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

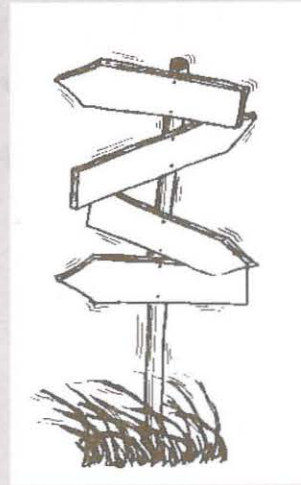
University Inn 515-232-0280
or 800-422-5250

Additional Sponsors Needed

If your business or organization would like to help sponsor the Annual Conference, contact Sandra Trca-Black at 515-232-5661 ext.101 or sandra@practicalfarmers.org. Sponsors receive recognition in the Annual Conference program and can request display space in our networking room.

Annual Meeting Board Elections

There will be PFI district meetings after



lunch on Saturday as usual this year, giving you a chance to meet your PFI neighbors, plan district events and elect board members.

If you want more information or if you want to nominate or be nominated, please contact one of your district directors listed

on the back of the newsletter. You can also direct questions to Robert Karp at 515-232-5661 ext. 102, robert@practicalfarmers.org.

***Save money by registering
for the Annual Conference
before
January 10, 2003.
See page 5.***

Silent Auction to Support Summer Camp

Please consider donating an art, food, craft or other item from your farm or business for the silent auction camp fund-raiser. Donna Bauer is coordinating the auction again this year—Thanks Donna! Contact her if you have an item to donate at 712-563-4084 or dbauer@metc.net Thank you for supporting PFI Camp!

Registration for PFI Annual Conference Friday, January 24 and Saturday, January 25, 2003

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

A. Practical Farmers of Iowa Membership Registration (membership or processing fee required)

- 1-year membership for PFI household (includes 4 issues of *The Practical Farmer*) – \$25.....\$ _____
 - New member Membership renewal

or I would prefer to not become a member (add non-member surcharge) – \$25.....or \$ _____

or I have already renewed my membership for this year, no additional charge.....or \$ 0
Call Sandra Trca-Black at 515-232-5661 ext 101 with questions about membership

B. Registration – Please send in your registration **postmarked by Friday, January 10, 2003**

Registration is for an entire household, or two persons per organization.

- Friday Session (please see reverse for details)– \$15.....\$ _____
 - Institutional Markets Living with the Seasons CSP Weeds

Saturday Session – \$20.....\$ _____

Late registration (after January 10) – add \$15.....\$ _____
Sorry, no phone registrations. Mail late-registrations postmarked by January 17 or register as a walk-in.

or Student Registration – \$15.....or \$ _____
Discounted registration for individual high school and college students, includes both days of the conference. Walk-ins welcome. PFI membership or surcharge not required. Student ID required at the door.

C. Iowa Bounty Noon Buffet on Saturday, January 25 (optional)

Pre-purchase recommended; seats not guaranteed after January 10, 2003. No reservation without payment.

_____ Adults x \$14.50.....\$ _____
_____ Children (12 and under) x \$9.....\$ _____

D. Childcare and Youth Activities (optional)

- Friday childcare for toddlers ages 5 and under – \$10 x _____ child(ren).....\$ _____
- Saturday childcare for toddlers ages 5 and under – \$15 x _____ child(ren).....\$ _____

Supervised care at the hotel includes snacks but no lunch. Walk-in registration available, as space permits. Available 12:30-5pm on Friday and 8am-5pm on Saturday.

- Saturday activities for youth ages 6 and up – \$20 x _____ youth.....\$ _____

Full day program with Camp Hantesa includes lunch. Pre-registration required.

Names & ages of all children: _____

E. Exhibitors!

- This year to improve the exhibits and networking, we have designated the Garden Room for these activities. If you are a member and would like to bring a poster or if you would like to be a co-sponsor for the meeting and display an exhibit in this area, please indicate here and Sandra Trca-Black will get back to you with more information.

Make checks payable to **Practical Farmers of Iowa**..... **Total** \$ _____

Mail check and this form to:

Sandra Trca-Black, Practical Farmers of Iowa, P.O. Box 349, Ames, IA 50010

No refunds after January 10, 2003

Please don't hesitate to contact Sandra at 515-232-5661 ext. 101 or sandra@practicalfarmers.org, or view the website at <http://www.pfi.iastate.edu>, for any questions about membership or registration for the PFI Annual Conference.

Friday Workshop Registration

Pre-registration is required for *Risk Management* and *Living with the Seasons* to plan for food. If you are interested in one of the other workshops, your check mark on the registration form (page 5) will not obligate you, but it will help us to determine how large of a room to arrange. **More details are on the way to your mailbox in our Annual Conference Flyer.**

- **Institutional Markets: Supply Chain Development and Risk Management Strategies** – with Michael Rozyne of Red Tomato & others, from 10am to 5pm, *pre-registration required, includes lunch*
- **Living with the Seasons** – with Carol Hunt & others, *pre-registration required, includes light dinner*
- **Green Payments in Your Future? A Workshop on the New Conservation Security Program (CSP)** – with Craig Cox, Brian and Jerry DePew, Michael Duffy, Ferd Hoefner, Mike McGrath, Amy Miller and Mike Natvig, Dennis Pate, Francis Thicke
- **Alternative Weed Management Strategies: Tips from Master Farmers and ISU Researchers** – with farmers Dick Thompson, Gary Guthrie, Doug Alert & Matt Liebman of ISU

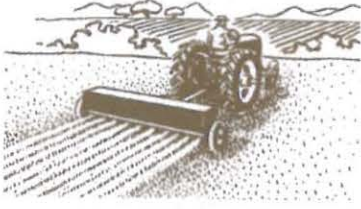
Saturday Workshop Preferences

Your check marks here in no way obligate you, but your initial preferences will give us another guideline as we piece the program together. Please choose three preferences per person registering; indicate number if multiple persons will attend the same workshop.

- Growing Markets, Maintaining Values: Continuing the Keynote Discussion** – with Rick Schnieders of SYSCO & Michael Rozyne of Red Tomato
- Swine Nutrition for Health** – with Ed Kleinwort & Mark Storlie
- Consumer Messages for Grass-Based Foods: What Works** – with Jim Ennis & Gary Huber
- Winter Farrowing in a Greenhouse** – with Dan Wilson & Colin Wilson
- Media Visibility for Sustainable Ag: The IA Writers' Circle Comes to Town** – with Denise O'Brien, Laura Miller & Todd Kimm
- Celebrating the Culture of Food: Perspectives from the Slow Food Movement** – with Neil Hamilton
- Understanding Food Claims & Labels: A Consumers' Guide to Finding the Food You Want**
- Financing Your Farming Operation: A Bankers' Perspective** – with Roger Schlitter & Dave Lubben
- Renewable Energy: Iowa's New Sustainable Cash Crop** – with Rich Dana & others
- Managing Nitrogen from Organic Sources** – with Cindy Cambardella, Kathleen Delate & Tom Richard
- Keep Antibiotics Working** – with Liz Wagstrom, Michael Apley, Dave Struthers & Wayne Fredericks
- Triticale and Other Small Grains on your Farm** – with Lance Gibson, Paul Mugge & Margaret Smith
- Giving Customers What They Want: Quality Management Systems for Ag Producers, Processors & Distributors** – with Bill Pennington
- Learning the Farmer Way: Introducing the PFI Farm Apprenticeship Program** – with Kamyar Enshayan
- Putting Your Farm on the Menu: How to Market Your Products Directly to Restaurants** – with Larry Cleverley, Michael Nash & chefs to be announced
- PFI Camp Planning Session** – with Francis Zacharakis-Jutz

Iowa tops nation in USDA value-added grant awards

Teresa Opheim, regional coordinator, MSAWG



Iowa was the envy of the nation in late October when the USDA announced awardees for the program officially known as the “Value-

Added Agricultural Product Market Development Grants.” Our fair state pulled in \$5.6 million—about double the amount secured by any other state.

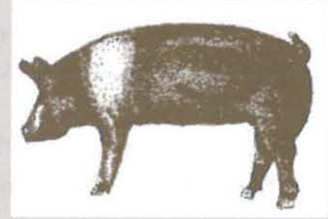
Most exciting was the support given to Practical Farmers of Iowa and several of its members. PFI received a grant of \$108,544 to complete a feasibility study on its “pork-niche marketing project,” which PFI is working on with the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Iowa State University (see article this page.) Other PFI members who benefited include:

- Wholesome Harvest, to assist PFI member Wende Elliott and her group in marketing pasture-based organic meat on a national level.
- Eden Farms, to assist PFI members Kelly and Nina Biensen with legal advice and develop a business plan, feasibility study and source verification plan.
- Greene Bean Project, to assist PFI member Chris Henning Cooklin in exploring the feasibility of marketing edible beans and developing a business plan.
- Our Family Farms, to assist PFI member Al Doering in the expansion and operation of his pork marketing company.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture launched the value-added program in 2001. That first round of grants aided the efforts of several PFI members, such as Jeff Kling, Greg Koether and Dan Specht of Upper Mississippi Family Meats, who received grant funds to conduct a feasibility study and develop a business plan for the possibility of a cooperatively owned, multi-species processing plant for natural and organic meats.

After the 2001 grants were awarded, the Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (of which PFI is a member) decided the program could do a lot more

USDA Grants Approved for Niche Pork Project



The efforts of the Pork Niche Market Working Group (PNMWG) will receive a boost from two USDA grants. These grants will support a project to analyze and plan for the development of a cooperative supply chain to provide high quality pork to food service markets. One grant totaling \$23,000 will come through the Iowa Farmers Union. The other will come from the new Value-Added Agricultural Product Market Development Grant (VADG) program. Practical Farmers of Iowa submitted the proposal to this program on behalf of the PNMWG. The total amount of the grant was \$108,544.

The goal of the project supported by these grants is to determine the feasibility of a cooperative, integrated supply chain to provide food service markets with premium pork products that are raised using very high community, environmental and animal welfare standards while increasing returns to producers. For more information, contact PNMWG coordinator Gary Huber at 515-232-5661 (extension 103) or gary@practicalfarmers.org.

The PNMWG is a coalition of farmers, processors, distributors, retailers and agency staff working to create new niche pork markets, serve existing ones and address challenges facing pork niche marketing efforts in general. Gary Huber of PFI is the group’s coordinator. The PNMWG is funded by contributions from member organizations and has received additional funding through a food systems grant awarded to the Leopold Center by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. 🐷

Continued on page 18

Farm Bill update: green payments and more

Teresa Opheim, regional coordinator, MSAWG

As the PFI newsletter reported in its last issue, the 2002 Farm Bill establishes a program that holds great promise for rewarding farmers based on how well they are protecting and improving the environment. The Conservation Security Program (CSP) provides payments for producers who historically have practiced good stewardship on their agricultural lands, and incentives for those who want to do more.

A workshop on this new green payments program will be held Friday, Jan. 24, during the PFI annual conference (see page 6). Enrollment for the CSP likely will start after planting has begun in 2003. NRCS officials are preparing a "proposed rule" for the program, which may be released late 2002. Input from Iowa farmers on this proposed rule will be important. In addition, the officials are writing a manual that will provide direction to local NRCS staff.

ing agriculture appropriations bill (which currently is stalled in Congress), the program would become the very first U.S. Department of Agriculture program directed at beginning farmers other than debt financing credit programs.

Examples of the types of services such initiatives might provide include: entrepreneurial, financial management and business training; mentoring, apprenticeship and internship programs; "land link" assistance to match retiring farmers and ranchers with new farmers and ranchers; risk management education; innovative farm transfer tools and transition strategies; sustainable conservation planning; curriculum and course development; and other means of assisting beginning farmers and ranchers.

Farmers' Market Promotion Program

In the 2002 Farm Bill, a new Farmers' Market Promotion Program was created that authorizes USDA to make grants available to establish, expand and promote farmers' markets, roadside stands, community supported-agriculture programs and other direct producer-to-consumer opportunities. Entities eligible for grants include, among others, nonprofit corporations, public benefit corporations, and regional farmers' market authorities. The Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (MSAWG) and others now are working to get this Farmers' Market Promotion Program funded in the upcoming agriculture appropriations bill (which currently is stalled in Congress). More in future issues of the PFI newsletter.

National Organic Cost-Share Program

The Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) meanwhile has allocated \$5 million for the National Organic Cost-Share Program in Fiscal Year 2002. Funds will be available to help organic producers or organic handlers offset the costs of certification. Up to \$500 (or 75 percent of the cost) will be available to each individual. But states must apply for these funds by Dec. 31 in order for individuals to take advantage of the funds. For more information go to www.ams.usda.gov/nop, or call Robert Pooler, marketing specialist, National Organic Program, 202-720-3252. 🐾

Additional Information on CSP

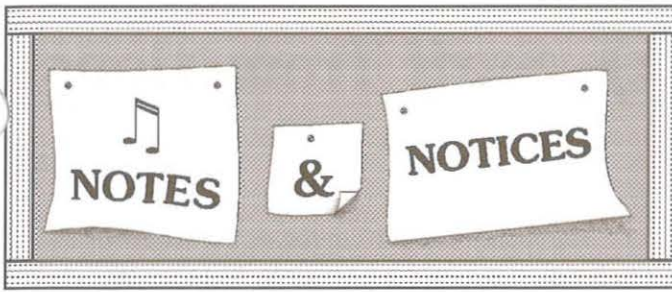
Information on CSP is available on the Web at: www.landstewardshipproject.org and www.mnproject.org

Official CSP factsheets are available at: www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/products.html

An ISU extension publication is also available as a PDF file: www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/FM1872B.pdf

Beginning farmer program

Congress established the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program as part of the 2002 Farm Bill earlier this year. Now policymakers will have to decide how much money to allocate to it. In recent decades, farm entry rates have declined precipitously, so that there are twice as many farmers over 65 as under 35 years old. This new program would support (on a competitive grant basis) education, extension, outreach and technical-assistance initiatives directed at new farming opportunities. If funded in the upcoming



dinner at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, DC.

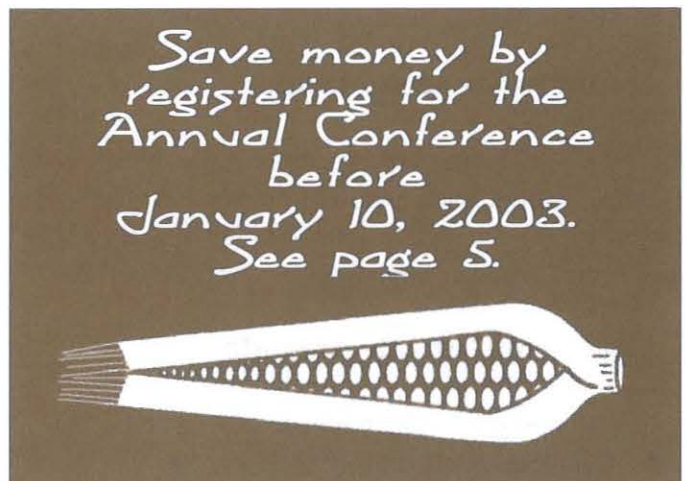
The *Newsweek* article, which accompanied a cover story titled "Should you Buy Organic?", featured Tom as contrast to Gary Lynch, a nearby farmer whose 100,000-hog operation is spread out over six counties.

The Frantzens were honored with the Spirit of Organic Award as part of the Natural Products Expo East in Washington, D.C., Oct. 2-6. The award, presented by the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) and New Hope Natural Media, honors the unsung heroes of the organic movement. The OFRF, a nonprofit organization based in Santa Cruz, Calif., took nominations from a variety of organic-related groups around the country to choose the award recipients.

"Organic livestock, in our opinion, is the front line of a huge battle," Tom said, "and someone has to go there."

WOMEN'S WINTER GATHERING FEBRUARY 15-16

Sisters! Mark your calendar now for a winter escape on Feb. 15 and 16, 2003. Now in its fourth year, the Women's Winter Gathering is being organized by Donna Bauer. Don't miss the opportunity to come down to Taylor Hill Lodge—a beautiful renovated barn in Audubon. Want to get in on the planning? Contact Donna at 712-563-4084 or dbauer@metc.net for more information.



THOMPSONS RECEIVE SEVENTH GENERATION AWARD



Richard and Sharon Thompson

PFI founders Richard and Sharon Thompson were awarded the third annual Seventh Generation Award Nov. 13 in Indianapolis, Ind., at the American Society of Agronomy luncheon. The award is cosponsored by the Center for Rural Affairs and the Consortium for Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education.

The award highlights innovators in agriculture research whose work furthers sustainable food and farming systems that are practical, productive and environmentally sound. It is named after the philosophy and tradition of the Iroquois people and other North American tribes, which says to plan current activities (agriculture, hunting, fishing) with seven generations (150 years) of beneficiaries in mind.

In response to having been named recipients of the award, the Thompsons said, "Receiving this award is a high honor, but to receive it as farmer researchers is an even higher honor."

FRANTZENS HAVING A PRETTY GOOD YEAR

Nashua PFI members Tom and Irene Frantzen have had quite a year.

First, Tom was featured prominently in a Sept. 30 *Newsweek* article, "A Tale of Two Hogs." Then on Oct. 3 Tom and Irene accepted the Spirit of Organic Award as part of a ceremony and organic

PFI NEWSLETTER CALENDAR OF EVENTS COMING NEXT ISSUE

The Winter 2003 PFI newsletter will have a new look as well as a few new features. One of those features will be a calendar of events. Organizations or individuals wishing to list events should email them to todd@practicalfarmers.org. Regular mail works too: Calendar, PO Box 349, Ames, IA 50010. Please include date, time and place of the event as well as a short description. Deadline for submission of material is Feb. 1, 2003. The winter newsletter will cover March-June, 2003. We reserve the right to edit or decline submissions. Email or call calendar editor Todd Kimm with questions: 515-232-5661 ext. 108.

ADS - SWITCHGRASS, BEEF & LAMB, ONE GOOD FARMER, RYE

Switchgrass for sale

Thirty ton dry, covered, large square bales of switchgrass that would make excellent bedding for hoop house. \$12/bale to break even on baling and cutting costs. Located near I-80 by Muscatine. Would also qualify as organic hay, but is not certified, 6 percent protein, contact Mike Baxter, usinland@muscanet.com.

Beef & lamb, calves & yearlings

Beef and lamb ready for the locker. Also have many yearlings and this year's calves available (sired by Angus bull). No junk and raised on organic grasses, hay and grains. Wise Acres Farm, 712-622-7716.

Landowner seeks farmer

Landowner near Dallas Center seeks a farmer to possibly partner with, who is interested in alternative crops and/or alternative management practices. For more info. contact Janit Roberts, 515-237-5122.

Rye grain for sale or trade

Forty bushels of rye grain for sale, or trade for oats. Call Joe Lynch, 515-292-0117. 🐾

✈ Staff Transitions

Robert Karp

There are some changes in the world of PFI staff that we wanted you all to know about.

Nancy Dundascheck is moving on from her duties as PFI's Membership Services Coordinator to massage therapy school and other adventures. We can't thank Nancy enough for stepping in and mastering a very complex job with ease and humor and professionalism. We will miss her greatly. Good luck, Nancy!

Sandy Trca-Black has stepped into a newly created role at PFI that we call Membership Services & Office Manager. Besides managing the membership renewal process and maintaining the PFI database, Sandy is keeping books, managing accounts payable and receivable, and assisting PFI staff with a wide variety of administrative tasks. Sandy brings a lot of experience to this job and we are very pleased to have her. (For more on Sandy, see her article on page 11.)

Another benefit of Sandy's new role is that we now have a person in the PFI office five days a week who can answer general queries, and membership- or program-related questions. Note that Sandy is working out of the PFI office in downtown Ames, where we have now consolidated all membership and administrative functions of PFI. To reach Sandy simply call 515-232-5661 and then enter extension 101. If you do not have a touch-tone phone you will automatically be sent to Sandy's extension.

Nan Bonfils has reduced her hours but continues to help PFI in a number of areas including youth program development, community days, sorting out the future of the PFI library, and making delicious meals for PFI board meetings. Thank you, Nan! 🐾

The logic of following your heart

Meet new PFI staff member Sandra Trca-Black

In preparing to write this important article, I made a mistake. Not one as serious as falling down the steps or sticking my tongue on a frozen flagpole, but a troubling mistake nonetheless. What could it possibly be? I'll tell you.

My mistake was reading staff introductions in previous issues of *The Practical Farmer*. Rather than cultivating ideas for my own article, it reawakened a sense of awe that I had managed to quell for the past few weeks. It may sound like a lot of hogwash—"brown-nosing" they call it back home—but I am sincerely awed. I am so grateful to be here.

I was raised in northern Iowa, Garner to be specific, and loved growing up in a small town. There was nowhere I would have rather been...except on a farm! My parents moved off the farm just two months before I was born. I never let them forget it, either.

I graduated from Simpson College with a degree in religion and political science. I thought I would go on to law school. But, as the song goes, "life happened." My dad died during my junior year and, had it not been for a guy named Bruce Black, I would have left Simpson at that point. But he stuck beside me and soon I knew that what my mom told me never to do was going to happen. I was going to marry a farmer. And I did. (And two years later we joined PFI, so there!)

So what does a logical thinker with a liberal arts degree and a passion for social justice do? In one of the strangest, but wisest, things I've ever done, I enrolled at Iowa State University for a second undergraduate degree. (I know I "should" have enrolled in graduate school, but I had just gotten married. That was more than enough commitment for one year!) ISU even had the perfect program for me—Public Service and Administration in Agriculture—a balance of economics, political science and sociology with a touch of agronomy, animal science and, fortunately, Ricardo Salvador's sustainable agriculture class. I was hooked on a vision of agriculture that kept people on the land and land underneath the people.

But again, life happened and I got sidetracked. I



worked in several different areas, most in agriculture and rural issues, some not. Since graduating from Iowa State, I've worked for ISU Extension Sociology, produced a video for the Center for Rural Affairs on industrialization of pork production and alternative methods, and completed a short stint at PrairieFire Rural Action. Most recently, I was communications assistant at First United Methodist Church in Ames and I continue to own an administrative consulting business.

There was nowhere I would have rather been...except on a farm!

And so here I am—doing what I love to do around people I really enjoy. Bruce and I live west of Story City with our laying hens and guard roosters, broilers (in season), one incredibly annoying cat and two dogs—Jack and Rudy. Bruce also graduated from ISU (in agricultural studies) and has been a welder at US Filter the last several years. He's committed to being self-employed, hopefully in farming, and we're working on getting there. Life is good.

I already know so many of you and look forward to meeting those I don't. I have always felt at home among PFI people and never failed to learn something.

You can reach me at 515-232-5661, extension 101 and by email at sandra@practicalfarmers.org. ☺

Direct Marketing News

Farm-to-restaurant workshops set for February and March

Shelly Gradwell

During the months of February and March, PFI Districts 3 and 4 will host day-long farm-to-restaurant production and marketing workshops: "Putting Your Farm on the Menu: How to Market Your Products Directly to Restaurants." The workshops will cover marketing to all kinds of restaurants, large and small, urban and rural, fancy and casual. The District 3 workshop will be held in the Cedar Rapids area, and the District 4 workshop will be held in the Des Moines area.



The morning session of each workshop will feature a producer roundtable with discussions of tools and tips for growing for restaurant and similar markets. Topics will include: crop selection, production and harvest methods; meat production and processing; food safety; and collaboration options for farmers. The lunch will include PFI district information along with a short panel presentation by afternoon speakers.

Farmers, chefs, restaurant owners and other food service professionals who have pioneered successful

farm-to-restaurant connections in Iowa will lead the afternoon workshop sessions. These presenters will discuss the "how-to's" of marketing locally grown vegetables, meats and other products to local restaurants. The topics will include: assessing the restaurant and similar markets; making contacts and working with chefs and restaurant owners; post-harvest handling, packaging and

delivery methods; quality control; branding and pricing products; licenses, insurance and other legal requirements; and partnerships to educate consumers and strengthen local food systems.

An in-depth Farm to Restaurant resource manual also will be available at the workshops.

For a taste of what will be presented at these two workshops, you can attend the Jan. 25 panel of farmers, chefs and restaurant owners at the PFI annual meeting.

For more information contact Shelly at 515-232-5661 ext. 107 or shelly@practicalfarmers.org.

Local Foods & Institutional Food Services: A Match for Iowa's Future



Projects across Iowa are helping institutions use local foods. Here are some examples and reasons to support the development of these markets.

This brochure is a product of the award-winning "Feeding Iowa's Future" project, a collaboration of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, the Iowa Farm Bureau, and the Johnson County and University of Northern Iowa local food projects.

Institutional markets brochure available

A handy brochure produced by PFI is available for people interested in marketing local foods to institutional food services in their area. The full-color, three-panel brochure includes short summaries of five institutional marketing projects: PFI's Local Food Brokering Project, the GROWN Locally

Cooperative, the Iowa Farm Bureau Dining Facility Project, and the Johnson County and University of Northern Iowa local food projects. Also included is a list of reasons for buying locally. Direct marketers can use the brochures to spur interest among local institutional food services, such as hotels, restaurants and hospitals. To order, contact Gary Huber at 515-232-5661 or gary@practicalfarmers.org. Please indicate how many brochures you would like to receive.

WORKING RELATIONSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE LAND USE

Rick Exner

PFI has always had a slow, steady trickle of calls from people wanting land farmed more sustainably. Sometimes it's an operator who would like to find a landlord who would allow sustainable practices; other times it's that kind of landowner looking for a tenant with the skills and inclination. There usually seems to be some obstacle—neighborhood norms, competition for land, lack of equipment, farm managers or operators who don't listen.

For the past two years, PFI has been part of an effort to evaluate these barriers and seek keys to change. Funding has come from the USDA SARE program. Sociologist Mike Bell has been project director. The project currently involves ISU Extension personnel Margaret Smith, Diane Mayerfeld and me. Extension Economist William Edwards is consulting.

The initial research phase of the project impressed us with how great competition is for rental land and how lacking is landowner-tenant communication in general. In this climate, people are unwilling to risk something out of the ordinary. Well, not quite everyone. We have also turned up a number of examples of relationships that are working in benefit of the land.

Last August, a "shade tree discussion" on the topic was part of the field day at the farm of Dennis and Eve Abbas, near Hampton. We heard from landowners, tenants and custom farmers who have



The audience was active at the "shade tree" discussion.

We have also turned up a number of examples of relationships that are working in benefit of the land.

reached various arrangements that promote sustainable land use. Since that time, several more PFI members have presented us with new examples. Maybe they will stimulate your own thinking, or maybe they'll prompt you to tell me about another approach that you know about. We hope to acquire more such "recipes."

Turn-Key Hay in North-Central Iowa



Jay Van Wert II (r).

What, on Class A soils? Yes, and Jay Van Wert II is doing just fine, thanks. Jay and one of his landowners, Brad Staley, consider hay more profitable than row crops. Flexibility is important, says Jay; he'll work on a cash rent, a crop share, or a custom farming basis, depending on the landowner's

preference. Jay can handle everything from production to marketing, so landowners can use him to bring a little diversity into their rotation—without greatly disturbing relations with their other tenants. "There's probably someone in every neighborhood who'd do what we do," comments Jay.

Organic Custom Farming

Dennis Abbas, Hampton, has bridged a generation gap for retired neighbors whose grandson currently isn't in a position to take on the farm. Dennis custom farms their land organically, as is their preference. Because this requires skills and equipment not readily available, Abbas charges the "high end" of the custom rates in the ISU Survey of



Dennis Abbas (l).

Custom Rates. The relationship allows him to more fully use his machinery in a community where rental rates are usually high. Dennis and Eve Abbas farm organically on their own land, but they do rent land from relatives, which they farm conventionally. Dennis would consider transitioning some of that rental land to organic as well, but he is somewhat concerned about the labor required and would start with the fields closest to the home farm.

A "Team Effort" Organic Crop Share



Monica Pletcher (r).

In Hancock County, Monica Pletcher of Forest City co-owns with her brother Monte Johnson the land that her father once farmed organically. She has found a tenant to continue the organic cropping practices on a crop share basis. He does not farm organi-

cally on his own land, but Monica reports he "goes the extra mile." For instance, he cleaned the oat harvest so that it could get an extra premium this year. For some additional tasks, Monica covers expenses. The two share fees for organic certification. On her side, Monica handles paperwork for certifying and marketing the organic crops. In this arrangement, the tenant provides the skilled farming and the landowner makes the tenant's work simpler by doing the business tasks.

Another Owner-Initiated Organic Crop Share

In Franklin county, another landowner transitioned his land to organic using custom farming services. After the transition, as the system stabilized, he went to a crop-share arrangement. In this way, the landowner assumed the risk during the transition and later found a tenant for the established system.

Flexible Cash-Rent

Some people say that crop-share arrangements

put sustainable farmers at a disadvantage because the shared expenses (fertilizer, pesticides) are those that sustainable farmers use less of and the unshared expenses (fuel, labor) are those that occur more in sustainable farming. A Warren County owner wanted his land in a rotation longer than corn-soybeans, so he found a tenant who was also interested in a diverse system. When the land is in hay, the cash rent is reduced 20 percent. This doesn't mean that the hay is less profitable, but it may help to compensate for the additional equipment and management required.

Just Send Cash

We learned of a couple of examples in which cash rent serves to preserve the operator's flexibility. One operator transitioned to organic while he was cash-renting with a five-year lease to out-of-state landowners. He has continued to farm organically on a cash-rent basis even as some of the land passed to a new owner.



Jerry Depew.

In northwest Iowa, PFI member Jerry Depew persuaded landlords to allow him to convert a crop-share arrangement to cash rent based on a corn-soybean rotation. This cash rent gives him the freedom *not* to use a corn-soybean rotation. "I think diversification is good for me," writes Jerry. The cash rent protects his landowners from concerns about the profitability or marketing of other crops. ISU Extension bulletin FM-1724, *The Flexible Farm Lease Agreement*, provides a method for convert-

ing crop share to cash rent.

What Are We Missing?

Just as every situation is different, there is no single best arrangement to make farming more sustainable. Do you know of another example in which people have found a way to meet environmental goals and still meet the economic expectations of all parties? We would like to hear about it. 🐾

PFI 2001 ON-FARM TRIAL RESULTS – IV

(Editor's note: Everyone who farms deals with soil fertility. What is optimal fertility? Is it having *enough*, or is it having the correct *balance*? You would think that a question as basic as this would have been resolved long ago, yet rational people go different ways on the issue. And until the three-year project reported here, farmers had no opportunity to compare the two approaches side by side.)

Fertility Paradigms

In the last several years, you may have heard something about PFI's work with *fertility paradigms*. If so, you probably heard the explanation that a paradigm is a way of looking at the world, a way of making sense of things. People have different ways of looking at soil fertility, for instance. One person asks, "Do I have *enough* soil fertility?" Another's question is, "Do I have soil fertility in the right *balance*, or proportion?"



Dave Ruden (right) manages the New Melleray Abbey farm and cooperated with the fertility paradigms project.

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 percent 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 2001 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 2001 prices of \$1.80 per bushel for corn, \$4.15 for soybeans, and \$1.55 for oats, and \$95 per ton for grass-clover hay in large bales. Labor was charged at \$9.00 per hour. 🍷

Soil scientists at land grant universities use the “do I have enough,” or “sufficiency” criterion and have calibrated crop responses with soil tests on this basis. The “balance” school of thought is represented by producers and consultants who view fertility in terms of the proportions of nutrients on the soil’s cation exchange; this could be termed the “ratio” approach. Little communication takes place between proponents of the sufficiency and ratio paradigms, and farmers are left on their own to decide where to put their money.

The PFI soil paradigms project was designed to spark discussion on this question and to discover what are the immediate outcomes producers could expect from adopting one approach or the other. This SARE-

funded project was in its third and final year in 2001. Collaborators are Kathleen Delate, the ISU Organic Agriculture Specialist; Doug Karlen, a soil scientist at the National Soil Tilth Laboratory; and crop consultant Keith Cuvelier, of Supergrow of Iowa, Inc.

Results from 2001 come from six private farms and two ISU experiment farms and appear in Table 1. The cooperators were: **Dennis and Eve Abbas**, Hampton; **John Bokelman**, Ventura; **John Hestad**, Gamer; **Dave and Lisa Lubben**, Monticello; **Paul and Karen Mugge**, Sutherland; and the **New Melleraay Abbey**, Dubuque. Cooperating ISU farms were the Armstrong Research Farm, near Atlantic, and the Bruner Research Farm, west of Ames.

Table 1. Fertility Paradigm Trials

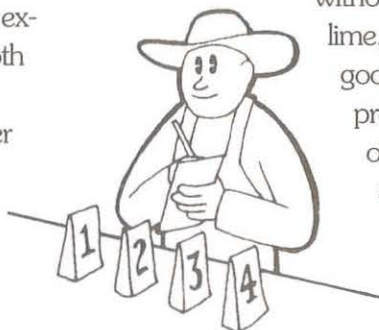
COOPERATOR	CROP	TRT. “A”, RATIO FERTILITY			SUFFICIENCY TRT.
		DESCRIPTION	YIELD (bu.)	TREATMENT COST	DESCRIPTION
ABBAS	BARLEY	POTTASIMUM SULFATE, ZINC	53.8	\$27.50	NO ADDITIONAL INPUTS
ARMSTRONG	CORN	ZINC	132.4	\$9.00	NO ADDITIONAL INPUTS
BOKELMAN	CORN	0-0-60, ZINC	143.1	\$11.19	NO ADDITIONAL INPUTS
BRUNER	CORN	ZINC, 0-0-60	143.6	\$14.89	NO ADDITIONAL INPUTS
HESTAD	CORN	0-0-60	170.8	\$8.25	NO ADDITIONAL INPUTS
LUBBEN	SOYBEAN	100 LBS/ACRE 0-0-60	53.1	\$7.98	100 LBS/ACRE 0-0-60
MUGGE	CORN	Zn SULFATE	109.2	\$0.88	NO ADDITIONAL INPUTS
NEW MELLERAY	OATS	POTASSIUM SULFATE, ZINC	81.8	\$27.00	NO ADDITIONAL INPUTS
			AVG:	\$13.34	
		AVERAGE CORN:	139.8		
		AVERAGE SMALL GRAIN:	67.8		
		SOYBEANS:	53.1		

Table 1 shows that there were no significant differences in yield between the two treatments in 2001. This has been the norm during the study. Of 16 site-years reporting yields, there have been only two significant yield differences—one either way.

Table 1 also provides average fertilizer expenses related to the trial. Fig. 1 shows both fertilizer and lime costs. There has been a consistent trend for those costs to be greater with the fertilizer recommendations stemming from the cation ratio approach to fertility.

There appears to be a cost difference between the two approaches to fertility.

The lime costs shown are based on local delivery without application. Western Iowa has calcitic lime, while the eastern half of the state has a good deal of limestone in which magnesium is present along with the calcium. The choice of limestone does affect the ratio of calcium and magnesium on the soil cation exchange. However, in some areas of Iowa there are no local sources of calcitic (“high-cal”) lime, so additional transporta-

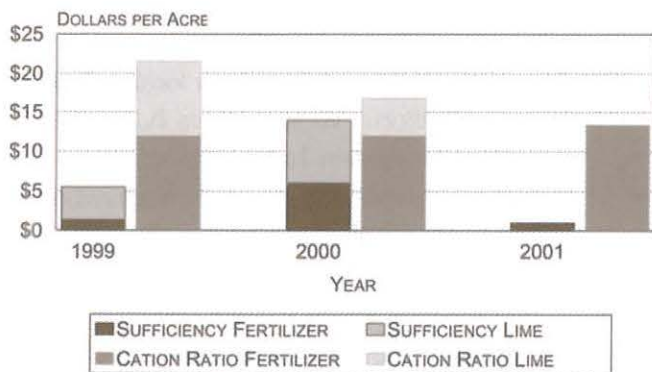


Fertility Paradigm Trials

SUFFICIENCY		DIFFERENCE				COMMENT
YIELD (bu.)	TREATMENT COST	YIELD DIFF.	YLD LSD (bu.)	YLD SIG.	\$ BENEFIT OF TRT "A"	
50.5	\$0.00	3.3	9.3	N.S.	-\$27.50	
139.7	\$0.00	-7.3	15.4	N.S.	-\$9.00	SUPERPHOSPHATE (0-46-0) APPLIED TO BOTH TREATMENTS
142.3	\$0.00	0.8	5.4	N.S.	-\$11.19	18-46-0 DAP APPLIED TO BOTH TREATMENTS
143.9	\$0.00	-0.3	16.2	N.S.	-\$14.89	
155.6	\$0.00	15.2	25.2	N.S.	-\$8.25	11-52-0 (MAP) APPLIED TO BOTH TREATMENTS
52.4	\$7.98	0.7	1.1	N.S.	\$0.00	
104.7	\$0.00	4.4	9.5	N.S.	-\$0.88	ROCK PHOSPHATE APPLIED TO BOTH TREATMENTS
81.6	\$0.00	0.2	7.2	N.S.	-\$27.00	
AVG:	\$1.00					
137.2						
66.0						
52.4						

LIME, CALCIUM, POTASSIUM AND ZINC

LIME COSTS BASED ON LOCAL PRICES



FERTILIZER: \$9.59 AVG. DIFFERENCE. LIME: \$.81 AVG. DIFFERENCE

Fig. 1. Limestone and fertilizer costs for the two approaches to soil fertility.

tion costs are a factor. Long distance hauling runs from 10 to 15 cents per ton-mile.

Final conclusions cannot be drawn until analysis of soil, crop, plant tissue and weed biomass has been completed. The project is looking for changes in soil quality, crop quality, and the overall agroecosystem. However, evidence from cooperator farms suggests two things. First, it is possible to raise good crops by either approach, at least for the fairly short term that this study encompassed.

Second, there appears to be a cost difference between the two approaches to fertility. The ratio treatment was not implemented using expensive proprietary or highly processed products; nevertheless, the cation ratio approach to fertility averaged more expensive by \$9.59 per acre, and the difference did not decline over the period of the study. The lime cost averaged only \$.81 more expensive in the ratio approach, but this was based on local transportation costs. Despite the lack of many significant yield differences, taking into account all the yields in all the crops grown, the value of the harvest did average about \$3.35 greater in the plots fertilized by the ratio approach than in the sufficiency treatments. However, that is still more than \$7 per acre less than the difference in expenses. As always with crop production decisions, consider the value delivered for the cost paid. 🍀

(Value-Added Grants continued from p. 7)

to truly help get more income to farmers (and in turn keep that money in their communities).

Through the work of MSAWG and others on the 2002 Farm Bill, the value-added program was broadened to include marketing of products produced or raised in a manner that increases their value (so processing is no longer required to have a "value-added product.") This broadening of the language will help support grants for organic marketing, local foods, eco-labeling, and other innovative approaches. Congress also doubled the program funding to \$40 million annually through 2007 (for a total of \$240 million), and made it entirely "mandatory funding," which makes it less at the whim of annual funding battles.

The results in the 2002 value-added round were encouraging, according to a preliminary analysis by the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (SAC). SAC, a subset of the Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, found that a large number of small and mid-sized grants were awarded, and the projects funded were more diverse than the 2001 round. For example:

- Projects dealing with grains and oilseeds received close to 50 percent of total funding, while livestock, dairy, and poultry received close to 25 percent, and fruits, nuts, and vegetables about 15 percent.

- Organically grown crops and natural-raised meat value-added projects totaled about 8 percent of the total grant funding.

- The average award was \$158,000, with the size of grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$500,000.

The next round for the value-added grants program could start as early as January 2003. SAC will be working to ensure that the program supports a broad diversity of value-added agricultural enterprises.

To apply for the program and view the 2002 award winners, go to: www.rurdev.usda.gov/coops/vadg.htm. To help make this program better serve PFI and its members, contact Teresa Opheim, regional coordinator, Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, msawg@aol.com or 515-270-2634. 🍀

Summer 2002, Out and About



Dan Wilson describes farrowing in a hoop greenhouse at the Wilson field day.



Walter Ebert makes a point to Executive Director Robert Karp at the PFI Board retreat in August.



A good, old-fashioned barn dance featured Bob and Kristie Black at the Zacharakis-Jutz community day.



Philippine veterinarian Geraldine Sanchez (left) offered suggestions on the mineral nutrition of pigs at the Thompson field day.

PFI Membership Application and Renewal Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

County _____

State _____

Zip Code _____

Phone # (_____) _____

Email _____

This is a _____ new membership
 _____ renewal

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 (while supplies last).

Please enclose check or money order payable to "Practical Farmers of Iowa" and mail to:

Practical Farmers of Iowa
PO Box 349
Ames, IA 50010-0349

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

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