

# the **Practical Farmer**

**Annual  
Conference  
Jan. 14 & 15  
in Des Moines!**  
See page 4.

A Newsletter of Practical Farmers of Iowa | Vol. 19, #3 | Fall 2004



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Cover photo by Helen Gunderson: Harvest at Vic Madsen's

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# Who Shall We Serve?

By Robert Karp

At a recent PFI board retreat, a remarkable stream of poetry began to pour forth from the mouth of one of our farmer directors, something I've gotten used to over the years.

He was talking about his farm, of course, and the idea that each aspect of his operation is like a musical note; every little chore, he said, strikes a certain tone. Running a good farm operation, therefore, involves bringing these notes into harmony, or seeing the harmony that wants to arise from them and being able to improvise amidst the ever changing conditions of weather, markets and the moods and talents of each farmer and his or her helpers.

Ah the poetry of common sense!

These comments arose in the context of a discussion with staff and some PFI past presidents about whom we see as the core farmer constituency of PFI, or in other words, who are the main farmers PFI is trying to serve?

Are we mainly about helping large, conventional farms become more sustainable? Are we mainly about helping mid-sized farmers succeed, particularly those who are already committed to sustainable agriculture? Or are we about helping the small CSA farmers, the urban fringe farmers, or the "gardeners" as some members have been known to refer to their fruit and vegetable-growing brothers and sisters.

The conversation that emerged from this topic was not only poetic, but also, I found, very deep. It was very deep in the sense that board members and past presidents were clearly uncomfortable with answering this question easily with abstract terms that tend to divide rather than unite, terms like mid-sized, small, traditional, conventional or organic.

Instead, what emerged was a very musical way of thinking about the farmers and types of farming PFI wants to be most involved in serving. Without wanting to be rigid, everyone nonetheless came to agree on several things.

First, we agreed that PFI farmers are often characterized by their unique view of the world, a perspective on life characterized by cooperation rather than competition, by stewardship of creation rather than personal gain and purely human ambitions.

This way of looking at the world, then, often translates

into a more musical way of farming, whether the farm is small, mid-sized or large, whether it is raising corn and soybeans, hogs and cattle, or fruits and vegetables. PFI farmers tend to take the givens of their farms, their talents and their finances, and use their creativity to make music that is in harmony with nature, local communities and human needs.

We also agreed that to farm this way requires that farming be a full-time occupation for at least one family member. PFI then, needs to especially serve those farmers described above who are trying to make a primary living from farming. We need to be about learning and doing everything we can to make it possible for this type of farming to become a real source of livelihood. Without this, no one will have the time to farm musically, and before long, no one will even remember how.

While the board felt that in many respects it was our mid-sized farmer members who had retained both crops and livestock—who in some ways best fit all three of the above described characteristics, and who were most in need of our support—they acknowledged that this was by no means universally the case.

They also acknowledged that the entrepreneurial spirit of our "gardener" farmers, and the connections they have been able to forge with the consumer, have played an essential role in the vitality of the organization and in helping all our members see the importance of connecting directly with consumers and in learning how to market their products effectively.

Finally, there was a lot of discussion on the tremendous importance of both young people and consumers to the future of the organization and the future of sustainable agriculture. Without involving and working more diligently with young people and consumers, our work on behalf of current farmers will simply not be successful.

Thus, in the end, what emerged from this meeting was a perspective on the future of PFI that truly reflects the type of musical farming our members are practicing on their farms. From this perspective, the talents and gifts and focus of every member of PFI strikes a particular tone, a particular note, and if we do our work well, we will bring those notes into harmony, in the service of our goal of seeing sustainable agriculture thrive and prosper in Iowa. ❧



# Reflections on our Past, Visions for our Future

Annual Conference and 20th Anniversary Celebration Jan. 14 & 15

The PFI Annual Conference and 20th Anniversary Celebration is set for Jan. 14 and 15 at the Airport Holiday Inn in Des Moines.

Our theme will be "Reflections on our Past, Visions for our Future: Twenty Years of Sustainable Agriculture in Iowa."

Stewart N. Smith and Woody Tasch will address the theme Saturday in a co-keynote program.

Smith, former Maine Commissioner of Agriculture and an ag. economist, is well known for his work in sustainable agriculture.

Tasch is chairman and CEO of Investors' Circle, a national network of angel and institutional investors, foundation officers and entrepreneurs seeking financial, social and environ-

mental returns.

And don't miss the Friday night 20th Anniversary Celebration. Activities will include:

- ❖ Reception with cash bar
- ❖ Light supper
- ❖ Reminiscences from the history of PFI
- ❖ Showing of Cynthia Vagnetti's new documentary "Voices of Iowa Farm Women"
- ❖ Music and dancing
- ❖ Displays with PFI historical documents, photos and timeline.

Watch for full details and registration materials in the annual conference flyer, which should arrive in your mailbox in a few weeks!

## Denise O'Brien to receive Sustainable Ag Achievement Award

The recipient of PFI's 2005 Sustainable Agriculture Achievement Award is Denise O'Brien of Atlantic. Denise founded Women, Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN) in 1997, with the goal of building an intergenerational network and sense of community among rural women. Denise is coordinator of the group with members from over 25 states and several other countries.

Denise and her husband Larry

Harris have been farming organically since 1976. Denise directed Rural Women's Leadership Development Project of Prairie Fire Rural Action, Inc. and was president of the National Family Farm Coalition.

WFAN has done an in-depth study of the women landowners in Cass County (her home country) and started an internship program to place women interested in agriculture on farms with women operators.

## Reserve your hotel room now!

Reserve your room at the conference hotel for only \$69 a night! The Airport Holiday Inn is offering this reduced rate until Dec. 20. Call 1-800-248-4013.

## Exciting workshops!

Here's a sampling of Friday and Saturday workshop and networking session topics:

- ❖ Soybean Aphids
- ❖ Crop Rotations: Production and Marketing Issues
- ❖ Reducing Livestock Stress
- ❖ Direct and Grass-based Meat Marketing Seminar
- ❖ Getting Started with Community Supported Agriculture
- ❖ Corn Breeding for Alternative Systems
- ❖ Herd Health in Alternative Pork Systems
- ❖ Fostering Bio-Diversity on the Farm
- ❖ Networking Session: PFI Youth and Students
- ❖ Conservation Security Program
- ❖ Integrating Crops and Livestock
- ❖ Networking Session: How can PFI Better Serve Mid-sized Farms?
- ❖ Survival Strategies for Mid-Sized Farms
- ❖ Buy Fresh, Buy Local
- ❖ Edible Landscapes
- ❖ Networking Session: How Can PFI Foster Neighboring and Community

Wanted: PFI member to help organize 20th anniversary activities and develop historical displays. Honorarium available. Contact Robert Karp, 515-232-5661 ext. 102, robert@practicalfarmers.org by Oct. 30.



# First Signup Completed for CSP

By Teresa Opheim, regional coordinator, MSAWG

Farmers from northern and southwest Iowa are now among the first in the nation to be accepted into the new Conservation Security Program (CSP). Results of the first CSP signup, which was available in Iowa only to farmers in the watersheds of East Nishnabotna (southwest Iowa) and Blue Earth (Minnesota-Iowa border), were announced Aug. 27.

Denise O'Brien and Larry Harris, PFI members from Atlantic, were among those who qualified to participate in this new voluntary farm program that will help farmers protect farmland and provide clean water and wildlife habitat.

"This program begins the process of rewarding farmers for good stewardship," O'Brien said. "For the first time in our 29 years of farming, it looks like a farm program will work for us. We're stewardship minded. We rotate our crops, we plant trees, we use integrated pest management, we use organic practices. In the past, our farming practices prevented us from qualifying for other farm programs."

"We're happy to have been chosen, but we along with others are unhappy about how the USDA ignored the law and restricted access to the Conservation Security Program," she continued. "This program should have been open to all farmers in the United States."

Less than a quarter of 1 percent

of the nation's farmers were given the opportunity to participate in 2004, and virtually all of the best conservation farmers in the country are still waiting for their first chance to enroll.

Nationwide, more than 2,200 farmers from 18 areas or "watersheds" have enrolled in the CSP this round, representing 1.9 million acres. Farm, environmental and a variety of other groups have been vocal in their denouncement of how the USDA is cutting back this innovative program.

Family farmers are particularly concerned with the Bush Adminis-

tration's insertion into the CSP of a per acre payment cap not found in the law that severely limits the program's benefit to small and medium-sized farms, discouraging their participation and environmental contribution and tilting program benefits to larger farms in general and those with high rental rates in particular.

The 2002 Farm Bill required the program to be implemented nationwide by February 2003, but a long series of delays by the Bush Administration kept the program under wraps until this summer. ☞

## Grant will help gather feedback

The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture has awarded Practical Farmers of Iowa a \$21,755 grant to get farmer feedback on the first round of the Conservation Security Program (CSP). PFI will be working with the Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (MSAWG) to get farmers' answers to questions such as:

- Is the program—as implemented—still rewarding conservation farmers?
- Will it encourage them to do more conservation?
- Are the payment rates adequate?
- Are the practices for which payments granted the right ones?

The information gathered will identify the potential opportunities and barriers with CSP implementation and provide policy makers with the information they need to make sound decisions about the program.

PFI and MSAWG will interview farmers in the watersheds chosen for CSP. In addition, PFI and MSAWG will interview members of the PFI Farmer Advisory Committee on CSP. A report will be prepared presenting the farmers' comments, conclusions and recommendations for improving CSP implementation.

A group of the conservation farmers, including several PFI members, also will present the reports and comments to NRCS staff in Washington, likely in March 2005.

# Livin' Large on a Small Farm

By Todd Kimm

**Linda Barnes and Mark Rundquist's farm near Melbourne might not make them a living, but it does make them a life**

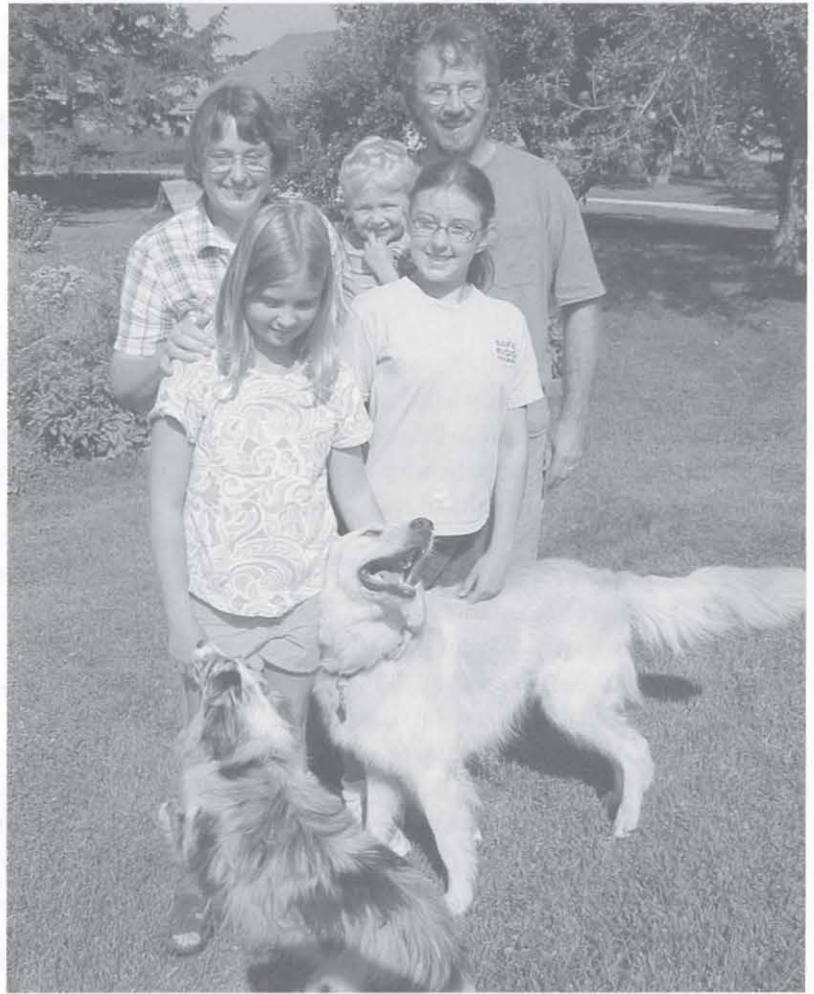
Linda Barnes, Mark Rundquist, their children (Emma, 9; Martin, 3; Claire, 11) and family dogs April and Frankie.

**L**inda Barnes and Mark Rundquist are some of the most practical farmers you'll ever meet. While their seven-acre operation near Melbourne doesn't make them a living (they both have off-farm jobs), it does make them a life. Linda and Mark's pragmatic approach is a shining example of farming where even the smallest resource is integrated into a diversified system, where an array of practices, crops and animals feeds the body *and* soul of a vital, happy family of five.

It's true, when Linda and Mark first purchased the rundown acreage, house and outbuildings in 1996, their heads were a little closer to the sky. They were fresh off a chunk of book learning at Iowa State University—Linda with a PhD in molecular biology and Mark with a masters in business and technical communications.

"We were really enamored with the idea of having a farm," Linda recalls.

At first, they wanted to try everything—and they did. While the diversity of their current operation reflects that early enthusiasm, Linda says, "We now think about how something works with our own lifestyle. So we're getting older and better at guarding our time and trying to make sure what we do works not just in our heads but in reality. We're not so blinded by the beauty of the farm as thinking about what works for us. We're getting more



practical."

This will be the last year, for example, they will sell strawberries at the Marshalltown farmers market—too hard on the back. "But one person's pleasure is another person's pain," Linda allows, as careful as ever to keep every possibility in play. "It really depends on who you are. That's why we try everything."

(At this point, "everything" includes organic fruits and vegetables, cut flowers, 200 pasture-raised broilers, 30 free-range laying hens, 15 turkeys and six lambs.)

They will also be concentrating more on perennial crops for the farmers market. "People get fussy about how much they're going to pay for green beans," Linda explains, "but if you put peaches in front of them, they go nuts."



## The search for good food

One of Linda and Mark's main motivations over the years has been pretty pragmatic as well: the search for fresh, good-tasting and healthy food. When they moved to Iowa from the wilds of Minnesota in 1988 to attend grad school, they fully expected to find a place teeming with fresh fruits and vegetables.

"I was really floored," Linda recalls, "because my family homesteaded near Ankeny and whenever we came to visit the farm in Iowa, my grandma always had great gardens and tomatoes—and I expected that."

"There were very few farmers markets—or the ones they had weren't very good," Mark says. "In grocery stores, it was the same fruits and vegetables we had in Minnesota."

"And keep in mind," Linda adds, "we went to school in Duluth where you can't grow a tomato—the season's too short."

So the couple took matters into their own hands and dug up the yard of their Ames rental property to plant a garden. Then they dug up part of their neighbor's yard; and some other neighbors had a garden they weren't using; and then they knew some people out in the country...

"We had four gardens at once," Linda laughs. "We were out of control. We were canning and freezing, contacting Extension for advice, and pleased to look at our shelves and see all the canned goods. That felt good."

Living as they did within the city limits of Ames, growing their own meat was more of a challenge, though. Their interest in finding a place in the country eventually led them to the Practical Farmers of Iowa annual conference where they discovered Dick Thompson and his organic beef. They've been members ever since.

"The thing I admire most about PFI are the farmers that take risks with their livelihood," Mark says. "These farmers are out there and they are truly committed to finding a better way, and they are putting their livelihood on the line and demonstrating it. I have the utmost respect for those farmers. That's one reason I want to support them and join."



"The other thing is the meetings," Linda says. "It's marvelous to be able to get together with likeminded people. You're not isolated. I think we all get too isolated and when you do that you can kind of get spinning in a circle. The meeting last winter was wonderful. If nothing else I walked away with a better way to wash my eggs. I love stealing ideas. I love farm tours. I like taking people's ideas and applying them. Then we all do better."

Claire harvests some late-ripening raspberries. A nearby mulberry tree keeps the birds busy and away from the raspberries.

## Concern for the environment

Concern for the environment has been another driving force for Linda and Mark. After growing up in the relative wilderness of Northern Minnesota, Mark saw his move to Iowa bring about a shift in his approach to environmental advocacy.

"Iowa was drastically different," he recalls. "I missed the lakes and the trees. But we realized it's not the wild lands we need to spend our time on; we need to spend our time on the land that's devoted to farming, in a state with the most altered landscape in the nation, where most of that land is devoted to corn and beans. I decided I needed to make



## Member Profile

friends with this place.” So Mark got a summer job with the Story County Conservation Board’s roadside management program, introducing native prairie to roadside ditches.

“We started to realize about the Dead Zone in the Gulf and what herbicides and pesticides have done,” Linda says. “And his work with the prairie made us think about what was here now and trying to improve the ecology of this place.”

Upon graduating from Iowa State, Mark got a job with an environmental consultant, inventorying contaminated soil and groundwater around

leaky underground storage tanks at gas stations. But his idealism took a hit when a change in how the program was implemented ended the position. With their first two children born, and another on the way, Mark knew his next step would be a practical one.

A grad school friend working for Wells Fargo bank in Des Moines invited him to apply. Mark’s been with the company 12 years now working as a technical writer.

An independent schedule keeps lets him spend more time with the kids and on the farm. Despite the nice arrangement, Mark’s goal is to be home even

more. Linda says, “We want to become more independent so Mark doesn’t have to work off the farm.”

To reach that place of independence, they hope to purchase more land, possibly get into small cattle breeds, develop their orchard and even lease plots of ground to townfolk with dreams of expanding their gardening or getting into things like grape growing (the latter, Mark dreams, might even include classes).

If you throw in the food the farm provides, Linda and Mark estimate their operation contributes about 15  
**(continued on pg 20)**

## A farm where everything works together

Eleven-year-old Claire is in the seventh grade and one of the farm’s biggest ambassadors. She writes class papers on her family’s operation and shares with classmates and teachers about what life’s like on a sustainable farm. She even convinced her school to add her family’s farm to the list of conventional ones students visit each year. Here’s a sample from one of Claire’s recent papers where she explains her family’s application of the integrated systems approach in language a seventh grader could understand:

“Some of the ways we get the most out of our animals, gardens and land is by using them for more than one thing. The laying hens are used for eggs and then when they’re older they become meat for chicken noodle soup. We use our sheep not only for meat but their hide for selling and personal use. [They also keep the grass down between the outbuildings.] My family rotates the crops to keep our soil rich and strong. We feed our food scraps to the chickens (excluding meat), compost it or feed meat to the dogs and cats. We have our cats not only for pets but as rodent control. Our dogs are to help protect our farm and as pets. We have the geese to guard our chickens from predators\* but they also give us goose eggs every spring.”

\* “Mink were getting into the chicken house killing one chicken every other day,” Linda remembers. “It was like a lottery. Somebody told us to get a goose and we haven’t had a predator problem since. It’s marvelous predator control without killing the predator. Because the truth is you could probably use the mink to get rid of rats and other things. We have this philosophy: We’ll tithe 10 percent to nature and then we’ll take action.”



**Little Jane keeps the chickens safe from predators.**

## A few more tips

Here are some other ways Linda, Mark and the kids artfully combine resources on their farm:

- Don, a neighbor who farms the surrounding land, plows their snow in exchange for pasture-raised chicken and computer help from Mark. Don also supplies corn for the family’s corn-burning stove in exchange for storage space for his farm machinery (“Even our heat is locally grown,” Mark says. Last winter they spent just \$60 on propane for additional heating).

- The fruit bushes that ring the property provide food and shelter for wildlife (they work better than bird feeders because the cats aren’t able to get at the birds) and provide a buffer against spraying.

- A mulberry tree keeps the birds out of the raspberry patch. “Nobody gets hurt and everyone’s happy,” Linda says.

- They were having erosion problems with lots of rain coming off the barn but turned the problem to their advantage by catching the rain in a tank and using it to water their fruit trees and garden. The chickens are watered automatically by a similar system worthy of Rube Goldberg.

- True to his Northern Minnesota Finnish heritage, Mark plans to re-use the tongue-and-groove boards salvaged from the demolition of an old house on the property for a wood-fired sauna.



# Lessons in Practical Farming

## The Marshalltown Community College Sustainable Ag program

Linda Barnes' inspiration for a two-year sustainable ag degree program at Marshalltown Community College had some very practical sources. Linda half-jokingly recalls her dreams of fresh vegetables for the college cafeteria being one strong impetus. A more serious inspiration, though, was the deep need she saw for such a program in Iowa.

"An undergraduate degree program in sustainable ag was a niche that hadn't been filled," she says. "I think there's a lot of people who want to try something different, but they need some practical experience and they need to be together. Plus, the quality of food and the quality of life in Iowa is really one of the missions of community colleges, because we retain so many students in the state after they graduate."

Linda lists off the backgrounds of some of the students enrolled in the program's pilot semester:

- The farmers market manager from Tama. "She's been coming to the college for about a year and when this came up she was so excited."
- Two 18-year-old kids who want to raise organic beef.
- A 40-year-old guy who wants to do something different with his farm but doesn't know what.

"It's all good," she says. "I've got this really eclectic group of people. I'm so excited to get them together."

The program is kicking off this fall with an Introduction to Sustainable Agriculture class. The textbook, *The Next Green Revolution*, covers the eight essential steps of sustainable ag. "We'll focus on those first so we can



Linda and Claire in the barn space they use as a staging area for farmers market

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"I think there's a lot of people who want to try something different, but they need some practical experience..."

—Linda Barnes

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have those threads running throughout every course," Linda explains. Subsequent courses include Ecological Concepts, Horticultural Crops, Livestock Management, Sustainable Pest Management, Organic Crop Production, and Property Ownership and Financing.

The program's board of advisors includes PFI board vice president Mark Tjelmeland, as well as other PFI members like Shellie Orngard, Carol Smith, Margaret Smith and Rich Pirog. The Leopold Center provided a \$25,000 challenge grant.

"People are starting to look at

things like this and ask, 'How do we get this going?'" Linda says. "I think it will grow." She's already fielded calls from people at colleges in Wisconsin and Fairfield seeking advice on how to get their own programs going.

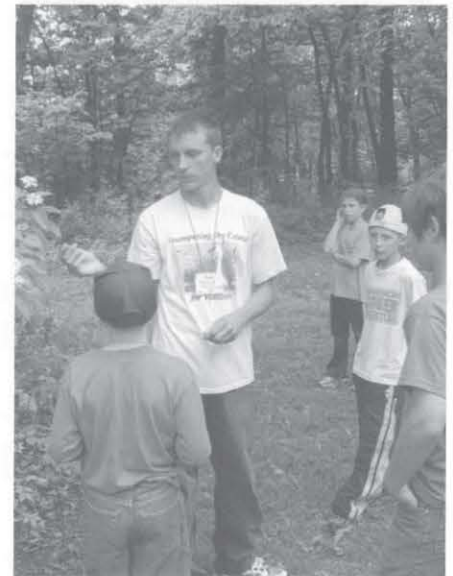
All in all, it's a host of supportive colleagues (including a dean and college president) and the goal of providing a practical and positive learning experience that keeps Linda going. She says, "I want them to think about how they can make a positive influence rather than just walking away thinking, 'This isn't good, but I don't have an alternative.'"

Another benefit of the program will be the public awareness it will help build. "It's so beautiful," Linda says. "You just have one of these meals and everybody wants a chicken, everybody wants a tomato that tastes like a tomato. People are re-learning what good food is. People really want a face on their food that they can respect, that they can relate to." ☘



# PFI Camp 2004

## You are What You Eat



By Brad Meyer

**M**mm, that smells good! The 10th annual 2004 PFI Camp held June 10-13 was a huge success, held in the Des Moines River valley at the Iowa 4-H Center near Madrid, Iowa.

Fund-raising went well this year by increasing the silent auction income in January and by getting a Cennex Foundation Grant for \$3,500. We had a little over \$1,000 donated through the camp brochures mailed out with a letter written by Jessi Thompson.

The staff consisted of Frances Zacharakis-Jutz, Meryl Wise, Tori Olsen and Kate Gilbert. In all, we hosted a total of 33 youth, with a 16/17 counselor-to-camper ratio. Don Broshar did leadership training and Judy Levings taught some naturalist programs for the counselors.

The theme was “You are What

you Eat,” and that is exactly what we did-eat, that is, as well as learning about new ways of preparing food and the benefits of eating locally. Kim McDermott, a nutritionist and excellent cook, came to work with all 33 youth over a couple of nights. Together we all made and ate several dishes, including pizza and salads.

Kim, who hails from the area, used vegetables from the local farmers market and CSA, as well as some of the 20-dozen eggs that were donated from Alex Feldstein’s farm. The camp chef also commented that he had never seen eggs so fresh and beautiful looking.

This year we also tried something a little different to add to our theme. First-year staffer Kate Gilbert, who has attended camp for three years, led a three-hour interactive program on different healthy snacks that are great tasting and easy to prepare.

There were many opportunities to wear off some of that eating by playing different games and taking advantage of the climbing tower, the famous creek walk, and canoeing.

We also had some nature hikes where we talked about our similarities with animals in preparation, storing and eating of food and looked at basic plant names. Most campers left with flowering dogwood sketched into their brains as the leaf that you can pull apart, and little stretchy fibers hold it together as if by magic.

See, campers didn’t just eat the whole time, they did a lot of playing and learning-even if they didn’t realize they were doing the latter. Camp wrapped up again this year with a family banquet held on the final day, where we finished by having a buffet of good, healthy food. See everyone next year! ☺





Photos by Bryce Bauer





# Field Days 2004



Jill Burkhart leads a tour of Picket Fence Creamery at the Aug. 21 *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* field day near Woodward.

The 2004 PFI field day season wrapped up with a big weekend Sept. 18-19. Field days at ZJ Farm near Solon; Rock Spring Farm near Spring Grove, Minn., and the Henry A. Wallace Center near Orient virtually covered the countryside with PFI activity. Although the first and last field days had to be cancelled due to a wet spring in Northeast Iowa, the remaining 17 came off without a hitch.

Highlights included big turnouts for the two *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* farm tours. The first, on June 12, celebrated the campaign's successes in Northeast Iowa with visits to Hansen's Farm Fresh Dairy near Hudson and Don and Ruth Beck's Porkland farm near Buckingham. The second event on Aug. 21 celebrated the expansion of the campaign to Central Iowa with tours of Angela Tedesco's Turtle Farm near Granger and Picket Fence Creamery near Woodward.

Research field days included biological control of soybean aphids July 21 near Decorah, weed management through crop rotation Aug. 16 near Ames and corn breeding for nutritional content Sept. 16 near South English on Grice Family Farms.

A July 14 field day near Sigourney focusing on the Kuntz brothers' integration of pheasants, grapes and sweet corn drew a good crowd and lots of media attention. All in all, a great field day season! ☺



Transplanting is child's play. Laura Krouse called on a couple of kids to help demonstrate her new vegetable transplanter at her July 28 field day.



Photo by Rick Exner

Photo by Rick Exner

Dr. Pat Halbur (striped shirt, right), of the ISU Department of Veterinary Diagnostic and Production Animal Medicine, facilitated the Vets' Circle workshop before the Allee Farm field day. The veterinarians agreed to draft a herd health guide for alternative swine systems.



## Summer board meeting notes

The summer meeting of the PFI Board of Directors was held at the Iowa Arboretum on July 8. Important items of interest discussed at this meeting included: looking at alternative ways to provide an income stream for the organization, developing a revised strategic plan, planning for the annual conference in January, and board elections.

PFI executive director Robert Karp and the board agreed that alternative ways to generate income will be important for the stability and continued growth of the organization. A decision was made to hire Penny Brown Huber as a consultant to help the organization develop a plan to address these needs.

As the needs of the organization change so do our strategic plans for the future, so the board and staff were to begin working on these plans in August at the board/staff retreat.

Plans for the annual conference were well underway and it looks like another great conference. Robert provided an update on current activities and what still remains to be done. The conference will be held in Des Moines again this year. Elections of officers will occur at the conference and nominations are being sought for all districts.

Eric Franzenburg  
Board member  
District 3

## Grant to fund BFBL work

Practical Farmers of Iowa in partnership with the University of Northern Iowa-Center for Energy and Environmental Education, has received a USDA Risk Management Agency grant to support the *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* campaign. The grant will allow us to work with three to five communities in Iowa to help them implement *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* strategies to local direct-market farmers.

## Membership renewals now monthly

PFI's membership cycle has been an annual one with renewal notices being sent in October or November. Our planned conversion to a new membership database will facilitate a monthly renewal system instead. So if a membership renewal letter doesn't appear in your mailbox this harvest season, don't despair! We haven't forgotten you! If you've grown accustomed to renewing your membership with your annual conference registration, feel free to do so again this winter. We'll be sure to credit your record appropriately. If you have questions about your membership status, please contact Sandra Trca-Black, 515-232-5661 ext. 101, [sandra@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:sandra@practicalfarmers.org).

## The Farmer Funny

Art by Kevin de Laplante

S/W/F loves planting by the moonlight and long walks among the beans. All natural, weed friendly. Married to the farm spring to fall, but seeking winter partner. Must love Wendell Berry and be willing to experiment with unusual vegetables. Fence mending skills a plus. No transgenics please.

Key: S = sustainable, W = wholesome, F = farmer



SUSTAINABLE AG PERSONALS



### Thompsons win Spencer Award

Boone PFI members Richard and Sharon Thompson received the 2004 Spencer Award for Sustainable Agriculture Aug. 14 at the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines.

The Spencer Award recognizes farmers, researchers and educators who have made a significant contribution toward the stability of mainstream family farms in Iowa. One of the state's largest awards in sustainable agriculture, the honor includes a \$1,000 cash gift from the family of Norman and Margaretha Spencer, who farmed near Sioux City for 40 years.

The Thompsons operate a 300-



Dick and Sharon Thompson (center) with Mike Duffy (left) and Marvin Shirley (right)

acre diverse crop and livestock farm, raising beef cattle and hogs. In 1985 they were instrumental in founding Practical Farmers of Iowa.

### PFI members awarded SARE grants

Several PFI members have been awarded grants through the North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE) program to implement sustainable farm projects.

- Solveig Hanson of Postville leads a team of producers exploring "Functional Value-Added Fruit and Vegetable Processing, Product Development, and Marketing for Small Farms." The team received \$17,646.

- Greg Koether of McGregor and a team of other producers were

awarded \$18,000 for their project, "Value-Added Forestry Through a Cooperative."

- In Plainfield, Gary Laydon was awarded \$2,698 for his project, "Wood-fired Heat for an Alternative Winter Farrowing System."

- Jeff and Jill Burkhart of Woodward were awarded \$5,940 for their project, "Picket Fence Creamery: Milk from Cow to Carton, Bridging the Gap Between City and Country Through Website Education and a Field Day Open House."

### O'Brien featured in 'Ms. Magazine'

Atlantic PFI member Denise O'Brien and her organization Women, Food and Agriculture Network were recently featured in *Ms. Magazine* in an article titled "Food, Farming ...

Feminism? Why Going Organic Makes Good Sense." Read the article at [www.msomagazine.com/summer2004/organicfarming.asp](http://www.msomagazine.com/summer2004/organicfarming.asp).

Wanted: Communications support volunteer to help with proofreading of PFI publications and gather and/or write material for new newsletter departments. If interested, contact Todd Kimm, 515-232-5661 ext. 108, [todd@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:todd@practicalfarmers.org).

### Mugge is Friend of Extension

Sutherland PFI farmer Paul Mugge has been named 2004 Friend of Extension. The award recognizes outstanding contributions to and support of Extension programs and its mission. An award luncheon was held Sept. 28 in Ames. "Paul has been a leader in helping develop alternatives to the conventional cropping practices in Northwest Iowa," O'Brien County Extension education director Terry L. Janssen wrote in his nomination of Mugge for the award.

### 'Farming for Us All' is out!

There's good news and there's more good news: Michael Bell's new book has been released by Penn State Press, and PFI will receive half of all royalties! *Farming for Us All: Practical Agriculture and the Cultivation of Sustainability* is based on interviews with more than 60 Iowa farm families, many of them PFI members. Copies (both hard and soft cover) can be ordered at [www.psupress.org/books/titles/0-271-02386-4.html](http://www.psupress.org/books/titles/0-271-02386-4.html) or by contacting the PFI office.

### For sale

Three-point 7010, six-row, 30-inch Buffalo planter and 885 John Deere matching cultivator. Planter has big sweeps with two-row huggers. Seeking \$800 for each. Also selling three-point Melroe, 24-foot vibrating tine drag. Contact: Gerald Van Meeteren, 712-324-4193.



# Pickles

## From dill to sweet, they can't be beat

By Sarah Marx Feldner

### Resources

For more traditional recipes and an in-depth explanation of pickling, check out *The Joy of Pickling* by Linda Ziedrich (Harvard Common Press, 1998)

[www.ilovepickles.org/](http://www.ilovepickles.org/), the authoritative pickle website.

Pickling Jeopardy at <http://foodsafety.cas.psu.edu/preserve.html> (click on "Food Preservation Jeopardy Game"), and for fun, interactive pickling experiments, go to [www.exploratorium.edu/cooking/pickles/index.html](http://www.exploratorium.edu/cooking/pickles/index.html) (click on "Pickle Lab").

### Pickle festival

The Rosendale, New York Picklefest, Nov. 21, 2004

### Pickling contest

Sponsored by Pinnacle Foods (Vlassic). For a list of the 2004 winners, go to [www.iowastatefair.org/cgi-bin/displayresults.pl?1092359624~pickles](http://www.iowastatefair.org/cgi-bin/displayresults.pl?1092359624~pickles)

First discovered in Mesopotamia over 4,500 years ago, pickling is one of the oldest forms of food preservation. And it's been making history ever since.<sup>1</sup> Cleopatra thought pickles contributed to health and beauty, Aristotle praised them for their healing effects, Shakespeare was the first to introduce the phrase "in a pickle,"<sup>2</sup> and the Philadelphia Eagles used pickle juice to hydrate during a victorious game against the Dallas Cowboys. And did you know that the United States of America is actually named after a pickle peddler? Amerigo Vespucci, who later became an explorer himself, made sure Columbus' Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria were stocked with the vitamin C-rich pickles to prevent scurvy outbreaks among crew members. And just a couple hundred years later, the first pickle plant in America was constructed in New York City.<sup>3</sup>

### So what actually is a pickle?

According to the U.S. Supreme Court, pickles—meaning a pickled cucumber—are

technically a fruit of the vine (like tomatoes), although they're more commonly known as a vegetable. But really, the definition is much broader than that. A "pickle" is any food that's been soaked in a solution (usually salt, vinegar, or a combination thereof) to prevent spoilage.<sup>4</sup> So while cucumbers may be the pickler's most common subject, pretty much any fruit or vegetable will work.<sup>5</sup>

### Making pickles

More than half the cucumbers grown in the United States are made into pickles! And in Iowa, there are 79 farms (88 acres) devoted to cucumber production, although just one grows them expressly to become pickles on a commercial scale. Yet another reason to hit up your local farmer market—it's much harder for the pickling solution to penetrate the skin of wax-coated fruits and vegetables, especially cucumbers, sold at grocery stores.

There are three methods for pickling: Refrigerated, Fresh-Packed and Fermentation, the most traditional. In all three, either

<sup>1</sup> Today, Americans consume more than nine pounds of pickles per person per year.

<sup>2</sup> From *The Tempest* (around 1610-1611): "How cam'st thou in this pickle?" and "I have been in such a pickle..."

<sup>3</sup> In 1820 by Nicholas Appert.

<sup>4</sup> But "pickle" (n.) has a lot of meanings beyond the food-stuff, too. 1) A person, usually a boy, who is always causing trouble, mischief 2) a woman with a sour disposition; an unattractive woman 3) a small quantity or amount; a little 4) a troublesome situation, as in "you've got us into a pretty pickle."

"Pickle" (v.) can mean to prepare, as an imitation, and sell as genuine—usually in regard to paintings. If someone says, "I'm pickled," he's drunk. A "pickler" is one who picks a little at a time, or who eats sparingly. A "pickled-herring" is a clown, a buffoon, a merry-andrew. And "a rod in pickle" is a punishment in reserve, for future application. —Oxford English Dictionary Online

<sup>5</sup> Just stay away from super juicy foods, like ripe red tomatoes—they'll collapse in the process. The sturdiness of root vegetables makes them ideal for pickling.

salt, vinegar, or a combination of the two is used. Salt is what pickles food, and vinegar is what changes its pH.

Refrigerated, or overnight, pickling is the most common home-pickling process. Cucumbers are simply placed in vinegar with seasonings, then refrigerated. That's it. The cucumbers turn bright green and crunchy, but of all the pickles, these have the shortest shelf life—about 90 days.

Fresh-packed, or quick process, is the method most commercial manufacturers use. The cucumbers are covered with vinegar and seasonings, then vacuum-sealed and pasteurized.<sup>6</sup> As a result, these shelf-stable pickles are crispier and less acidic than processed pickles (see below), retaining some of the cucumber's fresh color and flavor with a shelf-life of nine months to one year.

Processed (also called “cured” or “fermented”) pickles are made the old-fashioned way, by a process of fermentation. To make them, the cucumbers are first put into brine.<sup>7</sup> As the cucumbers ferment, the naturally occurring yeast and bacteria feed on the sugars in the cucumber fruit. A by-product of this process (fermentation) is lactic acid<sup>8</sup>—what gives pickles their salty “pickle” taste. Once the sugars are gone, the fermentation is complete. The cucumbers are then rinsed and placed in fresh water with various seasonings. Processed pickles have a sharp flavor, and are usually dark green and somewhat translucent. They have a shelf-life of over one year. ☞

*Sarah Marx Feldner, a Des Moines PFI member, is associate editor/researcher for Cuisine at Home magazine.*

## Pickle Terminology

Pickled cucumbers can be classified into three main categories: Dill, Sour or Half Sour and Sweet.

❖ **Dill** is the most popular variety. But to clarify, there is no breed of “dill” (or any other flavor-specific) cucumber. It's how the cucumbers are processed that earns them their title. In this case, dill flavoring is added at the end of fermentation.

- *Genuine Dill* pickles have the most concentrated, sour flavor of the dill pickles.

- *Kosher* typically means that garlic has been added for flavor, not that the pickles were produced according to kosher law.

- *Overnight* pickles are what you often find at a deli.

❖ **Sour** and **Half Sour** cucumbers are made with only salt, not vinegar. The amount of salt added controls fermentation, and the longer the cucumber ferments, the more sour it becomes.

- Sour pickles have been fermented the longest.

- Half Sour pickles are made with less salt, allowing for quicker fermentation. These pickles are extra crispy.

❖ **Sweet** pickles are made with a mixture of vinegar, sugar and spices.

- *Bread & Butter* pickles are sweet and thinly sliced with a distinct, slightly tangy flavor.

- *Candied pickles* are packed in a heavily sweetened liquid.

- *No-Salt Sweet* is a rather new variety of sweet pickles with no salt added.

- *Sweet/Hot* pickles are flavored with hot spices and seasonings.

## Recipe

### Fried Pickles

#### Ingredients:

6-10 pickle spears, halved lengthwise	2 t. garlic powder	1 t. salt
1 cup flour	2 t. onion powder	2 eggs
1 cup cornmeal	2 t. freshly ground black pepper	1¼ cup beer
2 t. cayenne		Oil for frying

#### Directions:

Combine the flour, cornmeal, cayenne, garlic powder, onion powder, black pepper, salt, eggs, and beer to form a batter. Coat the pickles slices with the batter, then fry in oil until golden brown, about 4 minutes. Serve immediately.

—Sarah Feldner

<sup>6</sup> Pasteurization stops the fermentation and provides a level of food safety.

<sup>7</sup> Salt water.

<sup>8</sup> Acetic acid is the man-made version of it.



## OCTOBER

- ❖ **Voices of Iowa Farm Women**, Oct. 7, 7-9pm, Brunnier Art Museum, Ames. Video and photo display featuring PFI members followed by panel discussion and reception. Contact: Denise O'Brien, 712-243-3264, cowfan@metc.net.
- ❖ **Biotechnology Forum: Explore the Challenges of Using Biotechnology**, Oct. 10, 2pm, Sun Room, Memorial Union, Iowa State University, Ames. Following a brief videotape about biotechnology foods, participants will explore three alternative approaches to dealing with the use of biotechnology in food production. Contact: 515-294-9934, lectures@iastate.edu.
- ❖ **Super Rice Research**, Oct. 12, 3:30pm, 1414 Molecular Biology Aud., Iowa State University, Ames. With Professor Yuan Longping, director-general of the China National Hybrid Rice Research and Development Center. Contact: 515-294-9934, lectures@iastate.edu.
- ❖ **2004 Norman Borlaug Lecture**, Catherine Bertini, Oct. 13, 8pm, Sun Room, Memorial Union, Iowa State University, Ames. Bertini served for 10 years as executive director of the United Nations World Food Programme. Contact: 515-294-9934, lectures@iastate.edu.
- ❖ **Bioneers Satellite Conference**, Oct. 15-17, Fairfield. Local activities include live music, booths, tours and practical workshops on ecological topics such as plant-based products, greenhouses and local foods. Local keynote speakers are renewable energy expert David Osterberg and executive director of the Organic Consumers Association. Contact: 641-472-6665, fairfieldbioneers@yahoo.com.
- ❖ **"Celebrating a Decade of Community Food Security,"** Community Food Security Coalition annual conference, Oct. 16-19, Milwaukee. Farmer scholarships available. Contact: Andy Fisher, 310-822-5410, andy@foodsecurity.org.
- ❖ **"The Journey of Corn,"** Lois Girton, Oct. 21, 7pm, Hughes Auditorium, Reiman Gardens, Ames. The development of modern corn (maize) from its Mexican ancestors, the teosintes.
- ❖ **Robert Wolf reading**, Oct. 21, 7:30pm, Central College, Pella. Wolf reads from his book, *An American Mosaic: Prose and Poetry by Everyday Folk*, followed by discussion. Contact: Robert Wolf, rw59@earthlink.net.
- ❖ **Introduction to Fire Behavior and Fire Safety**, Oct. 21-24, Jefferson County Park Nature Center, 2003 Libertyville Rd., Fairfield. Class covers fire suppression and prescribed burns (prairie/woodland). Contact: Sally Gavre, 641-472-6112, email sallyg@lisco.com.
- ❖ **"From Seed to Soul: Benefits for Earth's Low Income Emerging Farmers,"** 2004 Annual CORNS Seed Gathering, Oct. 29-30, Stillwater, Okla. Topics: women's contribution to food security, seed saver networks, nutritional benefits. Contact: Al Toops, 405-624-1964, altoops@cox.net.

## NOVEMBER

- ❖ **Fourth Annual Iowa Organic Conference**, Nov. 1, Scheman Bldg., Iowa State University, Ames. Keynote: "Working Together on Behalf of Family Farms," Chuck Hassebrook, Center for Rural Affairs. Workshops, organic meal. Contact: www.ucs.iastate.edu/mnet/organic/about.html.
- ❖ **"A Democratic Approach to Saving the Environment,"** David Hulse, conservation and sustainable development program officer, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Nov. 4, 8pm, Sun Room, Memorial Union, Iowa State University, Ames. Contact: 515-294-9934, lectures@iastate.edu.
- ❖ **Future Farms 2004**, Nov. 6, Oklahoma City. Workshops designed for farmers and ranchers who want to begin, expand or refine the production and marketing of alternative crops or enterprises. Contact: Kerr Center, 918-647-9123.
- ❖ **Fall Harvest Gathering for Women in Sustainable Agriculture**, Nov. 12-14, Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center, Lanesboro, Minn. Workshops and activities bring women involved in sustainable agriculture together from Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa to learn new skills, network and eat great food. Contact: Stacey Brown, staceyleighbrown@yahoo.com.

## Triticale

### A Step Toward Diversity

By Rick Exner

#### Background

The small grain triticale may be an alternative crop livestock producers can use to provide quality feed or forage without high production costs, even though there is no established market for triticale. But does it work in Midwest cropping systems?

#### Objective

Test how triticale compares to oats as a spring-seeded grain crop that is compatible with an underseeding of forages or a green manure crop.

#### Results

Spring triticale was equivalent to oats as a nurse crop for establishing forages. Triticale grain yield tended to be less than that of oats, but considering the feed value of triticale, the crop was competitive with oats. A demonstration field of fall triticale yielded twice as much as the spring triticale.

#### Conclusion

When producers know how to include triticale in rations, it can be a valuable feedstock. Spring triticale is equivalent to oats in agronomic use and feed value per acre.

We often wish there were more alternatives to corn and soybeans. Often when we describe what we need, it sounds much like... corn and soybeans: a grain that can be sold at the local elevator, high yield-

ing, etc. But any new crop that comes along will not enjoy the infrastructure or markets that have evolved with corn and beans. And a new crop won't have years of development behind it, as do

**Table 1. Triticale vs. Oats Trials**

COOPERATOR	YEAR	TRITICALE TREATMENT		
		DESCRIPTION	YIELD (bu.)	UNITS
DORDT COLLEGE	2003	SPRING TRITICALE (Trimark 37812)	91.3	(BU.)
			5,112	(LBS GRAIN)
			1.88	(T STRAW)
MUGGE	2003	SPRING TRITICALE (Trimark 37812)	67.1	(BU.)
			3,670	(LBS GRAIN)
			1.1	(T STRAW)
DORDT COLLEGE	2004	SPRING TRITICALE (Trimark 37812)	59.3	(BU.)
			3,320	(LBS GRAIN)
			0.73	(T STRAW)
MUGGE	2004	SPRING TRITICALE (Trimark 37812)	53.2	(BU.)
			2,980	(LBS GRAIN)
			—	(T STRAW)
MUGGE	2003/2004	FALL TRITICALE (NE 426GT)	90.0	(BU.)
			5,040	(LBS GRAIN)

Oat prices: 2003, \$1.56; 2004, \$1.30.  
Triticale prices based on corn: 2003, \$2.05; 2004, \$2.10.



the established crops. So how can a potential alternative crop “get its foot in the door” of Midwest agriculture?

Producers might be willing to try a new crop if it filled a need on the farm and never had to leave the farm. Such a crop might be consumed by livestock, for example. One of the latest entries in the category is a cross of durum wheat and winter rye called “triticale.” (The common Iowa pro-

nunciation seems to be “TRIT-ih-cale-ey,” but some regions make a three-syllable word out of it.) In the past few years, ISU agronomy professor Lance Gibson has evaluated this crop on two Northwest Iowa PFI farms, that of Paul and Karen Mugge, Sutherland, and the Dordt College Ag Stewardship Center, in Sioux Center.

As the crop’s heritage suggests, this is a small grain. Like other small

grains, triticale is good at scavenging nutrients left by previous crops, good at breaking up weed cycles, and helpful in breaking up the cropping labor demands. Unlike oats, barley and wheat, there isn’t an established market for the grain. However, triticale is superior to most of the other small grains as a livestock feed. Its energy content is closer to corn than to oats. Like oats, it has a higher lysine con-

## Triticale vs. Oats Trials

OAT TREATMENT			DIFFERENCE				COMMENT
DESCRIPTION	YIELD	UNITS	YIELD DIFF.	YLD LSD	YLD SIG.	TRITICALE \$ BENEFIT	
OAT	153.8	(BU.)	-62.5	20.3	*	-\$72.90	OAT MARKET VALUE VS. TRITICALE PRICE BASED ON CORN
	4,922	(LBS GRAIN)					ACTUAL GRAIN WEIGHTS ARE ALMOST THE SAME
	2.29	(T STRAW)	0.40	0.15	*		TRITICALE HAS GREATER FEED VALUE PER POUND
OATS ("JERRY")	121.5	(BU.)	-54.4	11.3	*	-\$69.07	OAT MARKET VALUE VS. TRITICALE PRICE BASED ON CORN
	3,813	(LBS GRAIN)					ACTUAL GRAIN WEIGHTS ARE ALMOST THE SAME
	1.4	(T STRAW)					TRITICALE HAS GREATER FEED VALUE PER POUND
OAT	153.4	(BU.)				-\$74.89	OAT MARKET VALUE VS. TRITICALE PRICE BASED ON CORN
	4,909	(LBS GRAIN)	-1,589	364	*		
	1.41	(T STRAW)	-0.68		—		TRITICALE HAS GREATER FEED VALUE PER POUND
OAT	103.4	(BU.)				-\$22.70	YIELDS WERE NOT STATISTICALLY DIFFERENT, SO THE ECONOMICS PROBABLY ACTUALLY FAVOR TRITICALE
	3,308	(LBS GRAIN)	-328	1,074	N.S.		
	—	(T STRAW)			—		NO STRAW YIELDS COLLECTED
							FALL VARIETIES YIELD BETTER THAN SPRING VARIETIES OF TRITICALE. SPRING VARIETIES ARE BETTER NURSE CROPS FOR FORAGE ESTABLISHMENT.

tent than corn, but its crude protein content, 12.5 percent, is higher than either corn or oats. Perhaps most importantly, the fiber content of triticale is less than half that of oats. The fiber in oats makes it a useful feed for young livestock, but it also makes it less efficient for use in growing/finishing animals. Finally, the phosphorus in triticale is utilized three times more efficiently than that in corn, reducing the potential for P buildup on the farm. Lance Gibson is helping to write a bulletin on feeding small grains, including triticale.

The Dordt College Agricultural Stewardship Center maintains a dairy herd, and Paul and Karen Mugge finish pigs. Both raise small grains for feed and as a nurse crop to establish forage or green manure crops. Older varieties of triticale were lower yielding, had lower test weight, did not stand well, sometimes contained feeding inhibitors, and were subject to the fungus that causes ergot. Recent work has improved these traits, and has led to varieties specifically for grain production or for forage. The variety that Dordt College and the Mugges grew is a spring variety (Trimark 37812) from Resource Seeds, in California. This is one of the few spring varieties with good ergot tolerance. (See Table 2 of varieties.)

In 2003, the Dordt College Agricultural Stewardship Center and Paul and Karen Mugge both compared triticale to oats (Table 1). In both cases, the oat yield (in 32-lb bushels) was much greater, but the harvested weights were very similar to the triticale yields. (Triticale test weight is now typically 56 pounds per bushel, the same as corn.) In 2004, the harvested weights were similar on the Mugge farm, while at the Ag Stewardship Center the harvested weight of oats was significantly greater.

But yield was only one of the objectives. As mentioned, Trimark 37812 is a spring triticale. Spring triticale can serve as a nurse crop for spring-seeded forages, although it does not yield as well as fall triticale. In the fall of 2003, Paul Mugge seeded NE426GT, a variety of fall triticale developed at the University of Nebraska. The yield was 90 bushels per acre (5,040 lbs/acre), nearly double that of the spring triticale.

**Table 2. Triticale varieties with low ergot levels and good agronomic characteristics for grain production in Iowa triticale performance tests. (Courtesy of Lance Gibson.)**

Winter varieties	Spring varieties
Alzo <sup>a</sup>	AC Alta <sup>c</sup>
Décor <sup>a</sup>	AC William <sup>c</sup>
DANKO Presto <sup>a</sup>	Trical Brand 37812 <sup>d</sup>
Kitaro <sup>b</sup>	Trical Brand 46520 <sup>c</sup>
Lamberto <sup>b</sup>	Wapiti <sup>c</sup>
NE95T426 <sup>a</sup>	
Presto <sup>b</sup>	
Roughrider <sup>b</sup>	
Trical Brand 336 <sup>a</sup>	
Trical Brand 815 <sup>a</sup>	
Sorento <sup>b</sup>	
Vero <sup>b</sup>	

<sup>a</sup> Tested at 5 sites in 2002 and 2003

<sup>b</sup> Tested at 5 sites in 2003

<sup>c</sup> Tested at 3 sites in 2003

<sup>d</sup> Tested at 3 sites in 2002 and 2003

How do you place an economic value on triticale? There is no established market price for the crop. Lance Gibson suggests basing it on the value of corn. Table 1 shows both oat market prices and corn prices for the two years of the study. Besides that, pound-for-pound, triticale is a superior feed to oats. So for similar pound yields, a farmer in a position to feed these crops is better off with the triticale.

With continued work, triticale may “come in the back door” of Midwest agriculture, becoming less an alternative crop and more a standard option for producers who can utilize the feed and who like the idea of having another crop in the rotation. ☞

## Livin' Large (continued from pg 8)

percent of their income.

“You’ve got to be profitable, and we’ve got to find ways for farmers to make it,” Linda says. “We’re not a model of that. We have to reconcile that sometimes.”

Linda and Mark look at their operation as a teaching tool. Linda teaches biology at nearby Marshalltown Com-

munity College and this fall is launching a sustainable and entrepreneurial agriculture program there that will be the first of its kind in the Midwest (see story on page 9).

“In a lot of ways this is a demonstration farm,” Linda says. “People come out to see what pastured poultry looks like. We talk a lot about how

we treat our soil, how we rotate our gardens, how we use our manure...”

“And how we feed ourselves is a huge part of it,” Mark adds. “The other thing is that as the number of farms dwindles people really like to go see firsthand how an environmentally friendly farm works. I think that connection is very important.” ☞



Sustainable agriculture... We throw those words around a lot, but are we really sure what they mean, or what we want them to mean? We wondered what the phrase means to you, our readers and members.

Send your 150-words-or-less definitions of sustainable agriculture to Practical Farmers of Iowa, Attn. Todd, PO Box 349, Ames, IA 50010, or email them to [todd@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:todd@practicalfarmers.org). Feel free to be as poetic or technical as you'd like. A free PFI hat to anyone who sends in a thoughtful response.

Ralph Alshouse farms with his wife Shirley near Corydon. They no-till crop corn and beans. Ralph is also chair of Appanoose County Landfill.

# What Is Sustainable Agriculture?

For me, sustainable agriculture is balancing micro-organisms, soil erosion and costs. Sustainable agriculture must make a reasonable profit to stay in business. So real life dictates that each acre produce the highest income possible while keeping soil erosion and chemical inputs to a minimum.

In my limited attempt to reach this noble goal, I use complete no-till, winter wheat as a cover crop, filter strips along our two creeks, CRP where eligible, tile inlet terraces, a diversion terrace, cross slope planting, 2.2-acre grid soil sampling—all to get my erosion down to less than half-a-ton per acre on our

very rolling farm. I use Roundup chemical to burn down the wheat at planting time. I use soil sampling and application to avoid too much fertilizer.

Good soil tilth is only a thrifty multitude of interacting, living soil creatures. Earthworms, bacteria, fungi, protozoa and other nematodes decompose organic matter and convert it to nutrients that plants can process. It has been estimated that all the living creatures found in one acre of good no-till soil equals the body weight of one mature cow. ☺

—Ralph Alshouse

In each issue we focus on a selection of resource organizations and highlight some of the reports, books, newsletters, etc. each offers. This issue, we look at resources offering info on organic farming.

## MOSES

[www.mosesorganic.org](http://www.mosesorganic.org)

With a purview of the Upper Midwest, The Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) is working to help agriculture make the transition to a sustainable organic system of farming that is ecologically sound, economically viable and socially just, through information, education and research.

Resources include:

### Organic Broadcaster

A bimonthly newspaper highlighting news, information and innovations in organic agriculture. Individual articles are available on the website (including a recent feature about PFI's *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* campaign). Subscriptions (\$20 for six issues and \$38 for 12) are available by writing: 51560 Johnstown Rd., Soldiers Grove, WI 54655.

### Organic fact sheets

Available online in Word and PDF, topics include "WI, MN and IA Organic Resource List," "Introduction to Crop Insurance" and "Marketing Organic Grains."

### Upper Midwest Organic Resource Directory

Information about certification agencies, state and government agencies, farmer co-ops, networks, suppliers, processors, buyers and much more.

### Organic Conference

Attracting over 1,400 people each year, this event offers workshops, discussions and lectures on many organic subjects. Next year's conference is Feb. 26-28 at the LaCrosse, Wisc. Convention Center.

## Books available from Moses

- *Alternative Treatments for Ruminant Animals*
- *The Small Dairy Resource Book*
- *The Organic Livestock Handbook*
- *The Flower Farmer*
- *Four-Season Harvest*
- *The Legal Guide for Direct Farm Marketing*
- *Managing Cover Crops Profitably*
- *Weeds and Why They Grow*

## Certifying Agencies

A comprehensive list of accredited certifying agencies can be found at [www.ams.usda.gov/nop/CertifyingAgents/Accredited.html](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/CertifyingAgents/Accredited.html). The site lists 55 domestic agents by state. Some listed area agencies include:

### Certified Organic, Inc.

500 1st St.

Keosauqua, IA 52565

Contact: Nanette Rambo, 866-581-6428

E-mail: [certifiedorg@netins.net](mailto:certifiedorg@netins.net)

Website: [www.certifiedorginc.org](http://www.certifiedorginc.org)

Scope: crop, livestock, wild crop, handling

### Iowa Department of Agriculture Organic Program

502 East 9th St.

Des Moines, IA 50319

Contact: Maury Wills, 515-281-5783

E-mail: [maury.wills@idals.state.ia.us](mailto:maury.wills@idals.state.ia.us)

Website: [www.agriculture.state.ia.us/organic.html](http://www.agriculture.state.ia.us/organic.html)

Scope: crop, livestock, wild crop, handling

### Organic Crop Improvement Association

6400 Cornhusker, Ste. 125

Lincoln, NE 68507

Contact: Jeff See, 402-477-2323

E-mail: [JSee@ocia.org](mailto:JSee@ocia.org)

Website: [www.ocia.org](http://www.ocia.org)

Scope: crop, livestock, wild crop, handling



## ISU

<http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/organica/>

Iowa State University's organics department has a website that includes various resources:

### Publications

Available online in PDF. Hard copies can be ordered at any county extension office or by contacting the Extension Distribution Center on the Iowa State University campus (515-294-5247, [pubdist@iastate.edu](mailto:pubdist@iastate.edu)). Minimal fees are charged for multiple copies of publications and for single copies of publications of more than four pages.

- Fundamentals of Organic Agriculture
- Growing Organic Soybeans on Conservation Reserve Program Land
- Soil Quality in Organic Agricultural Systems
- Weed Management for Organic Farmers
- Open-Pollinated Corn Variety Trial
- Effect of Organic Soil Amendments on Broccoli Production

### Research Reports

- Evaluation of Corn Varieties for Certified Organic Production
- Evaluation of Tillage and Crop Rotation Effects in Certified Organic Production

### Other resources

Lists of sources for seeds, soil amendments, feeds and pest management

### Iowa Organic Conference

Workshops, discussions and lectures on many organic subjects. This year's conference is Nov. 1 in Ames.

## OFRF

[www.ofrf.org](http://www.ofrf.org)

The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) sponsors research related to organic farming practices, disseminates results of that research to organic farmers, and educates the public and decision-makers about organic farming issues. Resources include:

### Website

OFRF's website includes a comprehensive FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) with answers to questions from "What does certified organic mean?" to "Why does organic cost more?"

### Research Grants

Information on applying for OFRF on-farm research grants is available online. There is an excellent On-farm Research Guide, as well as grant guidelines and deadlines. A list of grant reports is also available, but actual reports must be ordered through the mail: PO Box 339, Spring Valley, WI 54767, 715-772-3153, [research@ofrf.org](mailto:research@ofrf.org).

### SCOAR bulletins

SCOAR is a collaboration of producers and scientists to develop and conduct a national research agenda for organic agriculture. Bulletins and other information about the project are available on the website.

### Publications

#### Information Bulletin

Recent issues include articles on breeding seeds for organic systems, impacts of GMOs on organic farmers, as well as regular sections on research and policy. Issues are available as PDFs online or by contacting the OFRF office.

#### State of the States

A compilation of organic programs, contacts and resources at the nation's public land grant agriculture schools.

#### Survey results

Since 1993, OFRF has conducted three national surveys of certified organic farmers. Information includes farm profiles, production and marketing details, and effects of GMOs.

## Opportunity

### Breeding livestock loan fund

Ag Connect offers a new breeding livestock loan fund for farmers in Southern Iowa. The fund is part of a national demonstration project to help beginning farmers start livestock businesses. The plan calls for loaning bred females in groups of 14 sows, 20 bred ewes or goats, 12 dairy cows, or 15 bred beef cows. For more info, contact Bill Beaman, Ag Connect, 614-333-4656, [agconnect@ll.net](mailto:agconnect@ll.net).

# Learning to Dance Together

By Millicent Hicks Cozzie

**P**FI is to be congratulated on the success of its *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* campaign. I have maintained for many years that the answer to family farmer woes and consumers searching for healthy food is to reconnect these two segments of our society and have us learn to dance together.



Government-sponsored farm programs, the prepared food industry, and fast food restaurants are among many of the developments that drove a wedge between producer and consumer in the 20th century.

The demise of the family farm and the consequent burgeoning of health problems attest to the alarming effects of this wedge. For the sake of survival of family farmers and consumers trying to maintain their health in a very toxic world, we must persevere in our attempts to stop this dance of death between consumers with unaffordable healthcare needs and corporate agriculture and food processing. I challenge PFI members to carry their *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* success to new heights and lead the Midwest in the production and marketing of bulk organic grains and pulses (peas, beans, lentils) to our nation's

health-conscious consumers.

*Buy Fresh, Buy Local* is successfully connecting local consumers with very small producers of perishable foods through direct, face-to-face marketing. The next challenge for PFI is to connect consumers nationwide with the mid-size Midwestern producer of nonperishable (translate: easily shipped) organic grains and pulses. Internet marketing can become the tool for this joyous dance between family farmer and health-conscious consumer. With this dance we can rapidly increase the attempts to undo the deleterious effects of the 20th century on both farmer and consumer. With this dance we can hasten the dawning of a Midwestern "organic spring" in Iowa fields of row crops. With this dance, Iowa can become to this nation a new beacon shining a slightly different hue on what it grows best: grains and pulses.

## A diet of whole grains and pulses

I am a consumer whose diet consists primarily of organic whole grains and pulses. I enjoy oat groats for breakfast and afternoon snack, barley for lunch and dinner, and unleavened bread made from soft white wheat throughout the day. Four times each day I delight in a serving of low fat pulses from which the soybean (due to its abnormally high fat content) is conspicuously absent. Most of my food could easily be grown in Iowa. It is a constant source of frustration to

me that I live in the breadbasket of the world, the grain and pulse capital of the Midwest, but am forced beyond the confines of my own state to purchase my food.

The ideas for this article emerged after an attempt to buy black turtle beans at a local health food store. When I came home with beans grown in China, I began an earnest search for new methods to purchase my food. I sought the most reliable, trustworthy, "Midwestern grown" sources of Internet sales and now purchase all of my organic grains and pulses with the aid of cyberspace technology.

California led the nation in the production of organic fruits and vegetables for health-conscious consumers. Wisconsin shaped the organic dairy industry. It is my prayer that Iowa soil and cooperatives of mid-size farmers will provide Internet purchasing power of bulk organic grains and pulses to hungry, health-conscious consumers across our land. As the organic industry has grown, the availability of bulk organic grains and pulses has ironically diminished. Though the organic movement began with health food stores full of bulk bins of nonperishable staples, those bins in modern health food stores are being eclipsed by the larger profit margins of a rapidly growing new industry: prepared organic foods.

## The Internet connection

I fervently believe a nationwide niche market of bulk organic grains



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I fervently believe a nationwide niche market of bulk grains and pulses is emerging.

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and pulses is emerging. The larger conglomerates that have driven the smaller health food stores out of business are not interested in this market. Yet we consumers who began this movement by preparing our own food from bulk organic ingredients are having difficulty finding our food. The Internet can connect consumers to producers with joyous disregard for the latest executive insider trading in the large conglomerates of the new health food industry or the idiosyncrasies of current USDA farm programs. The Internet provides a direct marketing opportunity that keeps my food dollars out of the stock portfolios of “middle men” and in the wallets of those I treasure most: the producers of my wholesome food.

Within two or three years, I hope to have a second PFI apron. It will have two pictures on it. One picture will be of a male farmer with his baseball cap and jeans dancing with a woman in a fancy, long dress. The other will be of a female farmer in her straw hat and overalls dancing with a man in a business suit. A new program to connect hungry urban consumers with Iowa’s rural producers of bulk organic grains and pulses will be in full swing across my state, thanks to cyberspace marketing.

## A ‘Harvest Dance’ this fall

I suggest that PFI celebrate the expansion of its *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* campaign and

launch this new program with a potluck dinner and “Harvest Dance” this fall. Those who are primarily producers could wear one color of nametag. Those who are primarily consumers could wear another. Only opposite colors would be allowed to sit and dance together. We need to talk to each other. Strong media coverage (hopefully nationwide) could swell the numbers of those mid-size organic farmers still searching for financial success and those consumers who say that eating organically is too expensive. Though the cost of prepared organic foods is exorbitant (and lining the investment portfolios of the health food executives), Internet purchasing of bulk organic grains and pulses, even with shipping costs, is reasonable. Furthermore, with the aid of modern kitchen appliances, the preparation of multiple servings of pulses and grains offers a busy society quick, healthy alternatives to commercially prepared or restaurant foods.

These are my dreams. These are my perspectives as a long-time consumer of bulk organic foods. I pray now for many “pointers” among PFI staff and members who can implement my dreams with successful, practical applications. What is motivating me to write? I want to stop weeping at the plight of the American family farmer. I want to be able to purchase the food I need. Always most important to a mother, however...I want my adult children in urban settings to be able to buy the food they need in the future. May the seeds of this article fall on fertile PFI hands, minds and soil across my state and begin a radical, massive transformation of Iowa row crop production.

Dear reader, may I have this dance? ☺

*Millicent Hicks Cozzie is a PFI member from Ely, Iowa.*

# PFI Merchandise

Be a proud PFI member!  
Wear a PFI shirt, cook with a PFI apron,  
shop with a PFI tote bag...



Wear your love of local foods with PFI's  
new Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign logo.  
Beautiful design, dazzling colors!

## Casual Cap—\$12

Khaki, Velcro closure, "Healthy Food,  
Diverse Farms, Vibrant Communities"  
tagline printed on back.

Made in the USA.

\_\_\_\_\_ QTY \_\_\_\_\_ \$



## Farmer Cap—\$8

Summer style farmer cap with light  
denim cotton front and mesh back.

Made in the USA.

\_\_\_\_\_ QTY \_\_\_\_\_ \$



## T-shirt—\$10

Heavyweight, 6.1 oz  
100% cotton jersey in S-2XL.  
White with full-color Buy Fresh,  
Buy Local logo on front.

\_\_\_\_\_ QTY \_\_\_\_\_ SIZE \_\_\_\_\_ \$



## Grocery Tote—\$10

Natural color 100% cotton canvas  
tote with full color Buy Fresh,  
Buy Local logo. Perfect for grocery  
shopping, or taking to the  
farmers market.

Made in the USA.

\_\_\_\_\_ QTY \_\_\_\_\_ \$



Posters—\$5 each, \$20 for five.  
\$3 each for orders of 10 or more.  
11 1/2" x 13"

\_\_\_\_\_ QTY \_\_\_\_\_ \$



## Apron—\$15

White, 8 oz. 100% cotton canvas,  
26"-long, adjustable  
neck strap, tie straps

\_\_\_\_\_ QTY \_\_\_\_\_ \$



Sub-Total \_\_\_\_\_

Shipping & Handling \_\_\_\_\_

—\$3 for the first item, \$1 for each additional item.

### Poster Shipping & Handling

—\$2 for up to 5, \$1 extra for each additional 5 posters.

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to PFI. Or use credit card form  
on next page.



# Support Our Efforts ~ Sustain Our Work

**This annual membership is a:**

- new membership
- renewal

**I am joining at the level of:**

- Student—\$15
- Individual—\$25
- Farm or Household—\$35
- Organization (including businesses, agencies, not-for-profit groups)—\$50

Each membership includes one vote and one subscription to *The Practical Farmer*.

**My interest in joining PFI is primarily as a:**

- farmer/grower
- food or farm related business person
- concerned citizen/consumer/advocate
- other professional, please check one:
  - agency/extension/non-profit staff
  - educator
  - policy maker
  - researcher
  - other \_\_\_\_\_

## Sustain PFI

For the sake of the long term health and vitality of PFI, we ask you to consider making a donation above and beyond your membership fee. Donation without membership is also welcome. Donors who give \$100 and above will receive a special gift and will receive an invitation to our annual Cooperators and Partners Banquet.

**I would like to make a tax deductible donation to PFI in the amount of:**

- \$1,000
- \$500
- \$250
- \$100
- \$50
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Individual or Farm or Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Phone (with area code): \_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Phone (with area code): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

\* For Farm/Household membership, please list names of persons included.

\* For Organization membership, please list one or two contact persons.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Payment:**

Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_ membership + \$ \_\_\_\_\_ donation + \$ \_\_\_\_\_ merchandise (from opposite page)

Check or money order enclosed. (Please make payable to "Practical Farmers of Iowa.")

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Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

# Our Vision for Iowa



Food that is celebrated  
for its freshness  
and flavor  
and connection  
to local farmers  
to seasons  
to hard work  
and good stewardship

Farms that are prized  
for their diversity  
of crops and livestock  
their wildlife and healthy soils  
their innovations, beauty and productivity  
their connection to a rich past  
and a fulfilling present  
where individuals and families  
are earning a good living

Communities that are alive  
with diverse connections  
between farmers and non-farmers;  
places where commerce, cooperation, creativity  
and spirituality are thriving;  
places where the working landscape, the fresh air  
and the clear water remind us of all that is good about Iowa

## Practical Farmers of Iowa

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