

the Practical Farmer

Practical Farmers of Iowa newsletter

Volume 4, #1
Spring, 1989

ISU RESEARCHERS ON PFI FARMS

A goal of our on-farm trials program has been to encourage the participation of agricultural scientists. Because PFI trials are laid out in a randomized and replicated manner, they can provide a good field laboratory for researchers. With their training and lab facilities, these scientists can provide a more detailed understanding than cooperators could gain on their own. PFI is fortunate this year to be involved in four research projects and two demonstrations in cooperation with ISU.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 2** Wisconsin "PEPS" Program Promotes Efficient Crop Production
- 3** 1989 Field Days Shaping Up
- 5** Two Conferences Discuss Sustainable Agriculture
- 6** Help for the Hotline
- 7** An Economist Asks Questions About Sustainable Agriculture
- 7** Conference on Biotechnology and Sustainable Agriculture
- 8** References on Sustainable Agriculture: Part II
- 9** Notes and Notices
- 10** From the Coordinator's Desk
- 11** Song in a Year of Catastrophe

SOIL FERTILITY

In 1988, PFI cooperators tried out the soil nitrate test being evaluated by Dr. Alfred Blackmer. Tom Morris, a graduate student under Blackmer, will continue that work in 1989. In addition, Blackmer has assigned Dr. Antonio Mallorino to carry out the on-farm evaluation of a late-season stalk tissue test for corn. Antonio has put out plots on about 10 PFI farms, and he will also show cooperators how to take their own stalk samples.

SMALL GRAINS ON RIDGES

For a second year, Dr. Richard Cruse will be observing PFI cooperators who drill oats on permanent ridges. If this technique proves practical, it will increase the cropping flexibility for ridge-till systems. Last year Cruse measured 80 bushel/acre oat yields in a ridged field on the farm of Harlan and Sharon Grau.

WEED CONTROL

Over this past winter, PFI has worked with ISU scientists from several departments to develop a number of project proposals. One of these bore fruit this spring when the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture funded a proposal to investigate mechanical versus chemical weed control in ridge-till systems. Dr. Tom Jurik, of the Botany Department, will intensively study soybean weed control

trials on four cooperator farms. He and his team will not only document the effectiveness of the practices used, they will also begin to describe dynamic relationships [among] weeds in this system. The project is a good example of the scientific community turning attention to techniques that have been developed by farmers.

EFFECTS OF MANAGEMENT

The farm of Richard and Sharon Thompson, near Boone, is the subject of a detailed field observation by researchers connected with the USDA Tilth Laboratory, in Ames. The soil scientists are comparing long-term effects of management on a field of the Thompsons' and a nearby field that belongs to a neighbor. The Thompsons' field has been in a six-year rotation for 20 years, while the neighbor's field has been in a conventional corn-soybean rotation.

DEMONSTRATIONS

Two kinds of demonstrations will be conducted with the help of Dr. Dean Grundman, head of the Extension Integrated Pest Management project. Dean will work with cooperators Ron and Maria Rosmann and Dave and Bonnie Oien to establish the musk thistle weevil on their land. He will also conduct small-scale demonstrations of the potential of controlled grazing on several cooperator farms.

The cooperative relationship between PFI and agricultural scientists is really producing results this year. The cooperators' on-farm trials offer a good starting point for detailed scientific study, and scheduled field days present the opportunity to communicate results to a wider audience.

WISCONSIN "PEPS" PROGRAM PROMOTES EFFICIENT CROP PRODUCTION

Steve Hopkins, coordinator for the Grinnell 2000 farming project, recently mentioned the idea of an alternative to the typical crop yield contests. These contests usually emphasize bushels-per-acre, ignoring two important questions:

What were the *economics of production*?

What were the unmeasured costs in soil erosion and water pollution?

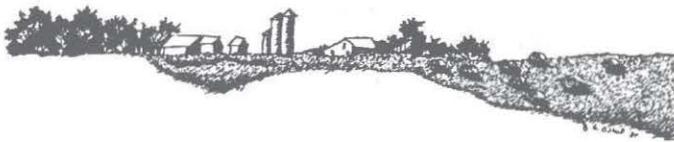
Simple yield contests don't apply to typical farmers, who have to watch their costs and who want to leave the farm in as good or better shape than they found it.

I've just received a brochure for the Wisconsin Crop "PEPS" Program. PEPS stands for "Profits through Efficient Production Systems." It is a crop production contest whose objectives are:

- 1) "To recognize the practices utilized by the [most efficient] growers and to provide other growers, educators and researchers insights into ways these producers integrate practices into a system."
- 2) "To emphasize soil and water conservation, efficiency, profitability, and competitiveness vs. productivity alone. Sponsors of the PEPS program include the University of Wisconsin Extension, the Soil Conservation Service, the Wisconsin Soybean Association, the Wisconsin Corn Growers Association, and more than a dozen producers of seed and other inputs."

There are categories for soybeans, wheat, corn in a cash-crop system, and corn in a livestock/green manure system. Most costs are based on figures supplied by the producers. The state has been divided into regions to account for climatic variability. Land costs are based on soil type and local cash-rent rates. Conservation practices appropriate to the field must be used. Land with greater than 6% slope, for example, must be contour cropped.

A production efficiency contest in Iowa would require a lot of resources and coordination. On the other hand, it could get state agencies, the Extension Service and agribusiness working together for a good cause. Sociologist Bill Heffernan, of Missouri, says sustainable agriculture needs to be made "*challenging*" in order to capture the imaginations of farmers. A production efficiency contest would help to redefine the challenge of farming in terms of more sustainable goals.



1989 FIELD DAYS SHAPING UP

Here is the first listing of PFI field days for the year. A more detailed schedule will be sent out before too long. First, you might be interested to learn about two non-PFI field days coming up.

ALLEE FARMING SYSTEMS TRIAL

On June 27, from 9:00 to 12:00, The Allee Farm, near Newell, will hold its third annual field day. This is the third year for the long-term study that compares three farming systems: 1) high-input, low-management; 2) medium-input, medium-management; and 3) low-input, high-management (semi-organic). The farm is one of the outlying experiment stations of Iowa State University. Extension specialists in IPM, weeds, economics and other areas will be on hand to discuss the work being done there. The farm is located one mile south of Newell. If you're coming from the east on Hwy. 7, just continue straight when the road turns north toward town.

VENNER FARM

Cyril and Anita Venner will have a field day July 11 on their farm near Arcadia. The Vanners farm 800 of their 1200 acres organically. A rotation of oats-hay-corn-beans-corn is used, with conventional tillage. The farm also has a hog operation, feeder cattle and dairy cows. There will be tours at 1:30 and 6:30 P.M. Call if you need more details: (712)-673-2557. The farm is 5 miles west of Carroll on Hwy. 30, then one and one-half miles north.

PFI FIELD DAYS

Beside the ISU research and demonstration projects, on-farm demonstrations this year include:

- 13 nitrogen rate trials;
- 13 comparisons of weed control with- and without herbicides, in ridge-till;



A discussion on nitrogen at the 1988 northeast Iowa field day.

- 2 comparisons of banded-vs.-broadcast herbicides;
- 4 demonstrations of P and K rates;
- 4 trials involving manure;
- 3 trials of starter fertilizer;
- 2 cover crop trials;
- 3 comparisons of crops on ridges to crops grown with conventional tillage; and others.

Most of these demonstrations will be shown at field days.

Aug. 9 North-Central Iowa

Allyn and Laura Hagensick
RR 4, Box 57, Hampton
50441 (515)-456-2945
time: 2:00 P.M.

Hal and Georgia Bumgarner
RR 2, Box 180, Hampton
50441 (515)-456-3069
time: 4:00 P.M.
(sandwiches and chips served)

Aug. 10 Northwest Iowa

Harlan and Sharon Grau
RR 2, Newell, 50568
(712)-272-3692
time: 1:00 P.M.

Bob and Diane Graaf
RR 1, Palmer, 50571
(712)-359-7787
time: 3:00 P.M.

Todd and Linda Hartsock
 RR2, Box 47, Rolfe, 50581
 (712)-857-3426
 time: 5:00 P.M.
 (followed by picnic supper)

Aug. 16 Northeast Iowa

Ray and Marj Stonecypher
 RR 1, Box 127, Floyd 50435
 (515)-398-2417
 time: 10:00 A.M.
 (light noon lunch served)

Mike and Jamie Reicherts
 RR 1, Box 32, New Hampton
 50659 (515)-364-6776
 time: 1:30 P.M.

Tom and Irene Frantzen
 RR 2, New Hampton 50659
 (515)-364-6426
 time: 4:00 P.M.
 (refreshments served)

Aug. 17 Northeast Iowa

Brian Houlihan
 Harper's Ferry
 (319)-586-2329
 time: 1:00 P.M.

Greg Koether
 RR 1, Box 215
 McGregor, 52157
 (319)-873-3385
 time: 2:30 P.M.
 (refreshments served)

Aug. 22 Southeast Iowa

Eddie Broders
 RR 1, Box 101, Stockton
 52769 (319)-785-6022
 time: 1:00 P.M.

Rod and Wanda Treimer
 RR 1, Durant, 52747
 (319)-785-4427
 time: 2:00 P.M.

Dave and Bonnie Oien
 109 4th St., Durant, 52747
 (319)-785-6542
 time: 3:00 P.M.

Steve and Gloria Leazer
 RR 2, Wilton, 52778
 (319)-785-4577
 time: 4:00 P.M.

Mark and Rita Mays
 RR 2, Box 45, Wilton
 52778 (319)-732-2040
 time: 5:00 P.M.
 (light supper served)

Aug. 30 Southwest Iowa

Vic and Cindy Madsen
 RR 3, Audubon, 50025
 (712)-563-3044
 time: 1:00 P.M.

Ted and Donna Bauer
 RR 1, Audubon, 50025
 (712)-563-4084
 time: 2:30 P.M.

Ronald and Maria Rosmann
 RR 1, Box 177, Harlan
 51537 (712)-627-4653
 time: 4:00
 (picnic supper served)

Sept. 1 Northwest Iowa

Lowell and Eunice Wilson,
 Doyle and Sheryl Wilson
 Box 54, Primghar, 51245
 (712)-757-1874
 time: 10:00 A.M.

Ag. Stewardship Center
 Dordt College
 Sioux Center, 51250
 (712)-722-3111 ext. 6285
 time: 1:00 P.M.
 (refreshments provided)

Sept. 7, 8 Central Iowa

Richard and Sharon Thompson
 RR 2, Box 132, Boone, 50036
 (515)-432-1560
 registration begins at 7:00 A.M.
 (\$8 adults, \$12 families)
 slide shows begin at 8:00 A.M.
 field tours at 9:00 A.M.
 (catered lunch may be purchased)

TWO CONFERENCES DISCUSS SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

— Rick Exner

You know that a topic has really "arrived" in the public view when it acquires an acronym. Acronyms are those names made out of initials, such as EPA, USDA, and ERA. The term "sustainable agriculture" is not an acronym. It encompasses a wide diversity of agricultural activities, generally those that are kind to the environment, profitable, and — well — sustainable. Sustainable agriculture has been recognized in Washington, D.C. Roughly four million dollars of funding to the Department of Agriculture supports the "Low-Input Sustainable Agriculture" program, or "LISA".

LISA is the high-visibility word that will be many farmers' first encounter with sustainable agriculture as such. If you have been keeping up with the popular farm press, you know that LISA has become a favorite moving target for editors who would have you believe that sustainable agriculture means farming with oxen and stone hoes. For example, the Potash and Phosphate Institute recently warned that: "If legislation is passed to mandate a widespread adoption of low-input practices, there would be a decrease in the productive and competitive capacity of American agriculture, both the crop and livestock economies would be set into turmoil, environmental problems would be increased, and the ability of the U.S. to remain a stable supplier of food for a growing world population would be curtailed." (*Fertilegrams*, February, 1989). It's interesting that the most extreme forecasts of change come these days from those most opposed to sustainable agriculture.

Despite these cries of doom, this winter has seen a sustainable agriculture conference take place somewhere in the country almost every week. Two recent ones were very much in contrast and illustrated how to organize — and how not to organize a dialogue on sustainable agriculture.

OMAHA CONFERENCE

The Soil and Water Conservation Society held a national sustainable agriculture conference in Omaha, March 8-10. In attendance were 400 representatives from farmers' groups, conservation organizations, universities — and the agricultural input industry. There was the potential for a good exchange of ideas, but somehow it never took place. Discussion was drowned out by the "back to farming with horses" claims.



Tom and Irene Frantzen at the National Ridge-till Conference last March. Three other PFI cooperators were also on the program.

The organizers of this conference made a big mistake in their choice of the farmer panel that supposedly represented sustainable agriculture. They chose four strictly organic farmers. That gave many in the audience the impression that there was no common ground between themselves and sustainable agriculture. There were PFI members in the audience who exemplify the efficient and prudent use of inputs, but they were not on the program. So the farmer panel, instead of opening up communication, chilled the atmosphere.



The new PFI display at the Omaha conference.

ST. JOSEPH CONFERENCE

Coming after that experience, the second conference was a breath of fresh air. About 40 extensionists, farmers and researchers met for 3 days in St. Joseph, Missouri to discuss LISA programs and ideas for the four-state area of

Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas and Missouri. They didn't all share the same point of view, but they did all see something of value in the LISA program and the concept of sustainable agriculture. There was a lot to talk about. The discussion brought out some very major gaps in our knowledge, and it also pointed to priority areas for future work.

Cover crops was a popular topic. It became clear that we need to survey a whole range of native legumes for their potential as cover crops. Then, some simple mass selection breeding programs will be necessary to develop plant types suitable for agricultural situations. But it's hard to carry on a breeding program on the one-year-at-a-time LISA funding, and traditional forage breeding programs are already fighting to survive. We also need to know whether these covers can fit into cropping systems without increasing pest populations. Hairy vetch could be a trap crop for soybean cyst nematode, or it could be a reservoir that makes the nematode population worse — we just don't know.

ED PEAK COMMENTS ON THE ST. JOSEPH CONFERENCE

I was privileged to attend the four-state LISA workshop as a member of PFI and the Farm 2000 Project. I found it encouraging that research and Extension people are taking the concept of LISA seriously.

I am presently farming some no-till and reduced tillage, using chemicals. I told the non-farmers at the LISA workshop that I am satisfied with the prevention of soil erosion and profitable yields from the no-till, but I am concerned about the broadcast of herbicides and the problems I may be creating in the soil, water, and possibly even in the food supply.

Our present fossil fuel-based agriculture is inefficient; that is, our inputs are greater than our outputs. We are a net USER of natural resources. We have also exploited our highly productive topsoil, losing half of it in just four generations of farming.

I suggested to the researchers that I needed a profitable farming system that did [not] use poisons to control weeds and insects. I hope we can look forward to farming systems that do [not] contaminate and use up our natural resources, farming systems that preserve and improve our mother earth to the benefit of all its inhabitants.

Weed control and soil conservation was another major subject of discussion. No-till probably saves more soil than ridge-till, but it is unsuitable for colder soils. Besides, ridge-till allows herbicide rates to be brought to zero. Opinions were expressed that we need to account for the long-term effects of rotations and tillage on soil erosion — but we don't yet know exactly what they are.

Several speakers at the conference would be great on a PFI program. Among these was Ron Morrow, a Missouri livestock specialist who talked about controlled grazing and who believes small, semi-confinement livestock operations will make a comeback in the 1990's. Another fascinating speaker was John Ikerd, an economist who is spending a year in Missouri trying to develop a model for helping farmers choose alternate farming systems. It was refreshing to hear an economist say that there is more to life than the short-term profit margin.

One recommendation that came out of the meeting was that some simple newsletter be started to help keep the discussion going. That would allow some of these ideas to mature into joint LISA projects. The other kind of communication that is needed is with the folks back home — farmers and county extension agents. It will take time to develop materials for them to use. In Iowa, a first step will be to place general information packets on sustainable agriculture in each county Extension office.

You can kill a program, but you can't kill an idea. The LISA program could eventually fall victim to the opposition. On the other hand, the concepts and practices that are being discussed now as part of sustainable agriculture are going to be around for a long time.

HELP FOR THE HOTLINE

— Harold Wright

In March, I and Steve Hopkins, who is coordinator of the Farm 2000 Project, were invited to speak to Extension staff who work with the Rural Concern farm hotline counselling and information service. These program assistants work in 51 counties throughout Iowa, helping rural families with financial planning and crisis problems. We were brought in to acquaint them with low-input, or sustainable agriculture and with the information resources that are available. I exhibited various books, newsletters, magazines and other publications relating to sustainable agriculture, land stewardship, care of the soil and the environment.

Steve and I reviewed the changes going on in agriculture today and told how both rural and urban people are becoming concerned about the environment. Farm families are particularly concerned about groundwater contamination, since it usually affects them directly.

I described Practical Farmers of Iowa's on-farm research in low-input practices that improve farm income and protect the productive capacity of the land. I also told the group about various other practices PFI members are using such as sowing oats and legumes in crop rotation, planting cover crops to save the soil and provide green manure, and controlling weeds in row crops without herbicides.

There were about 25 Extension staff people at the meeting. I certainly appreciated the opportunity to speak to the group, and I think we gave them information that will be useful to them in their work with Iowa farmers.

AN ECONOMIST ASKS QUESTIONS ABOUT SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

Some important questions about sustainable agriculture were raised in a short article that appeared in the December issue of the American Journal of Agricultural Economics. The author was Douglas L. Young, a professor at Washington State University.

Young starts with the assumption that "current levels of adoption of low-input agriculture (LIA) by U.S. farmers are based upon private profit-maximizing behavior." In other words, farmers generally do what's profitable. Going on, the author agrees with other writers that "removal or modification of commodity program incentives would likely have the most dramatic short-term influence on the (economic) feasibility of LIA systems."

The paper outlines the current discussion on the relationship of input use to commodity programs. "Conceptually, commodity programs can increase agrichemical use and discourage LIA by (a) biasing the (farm) output mix toward chemical-intensive crops and (b) encouraging growers to apply more agrichemicals per acre than they would in the absence of commodity programs." Young cites microeconomic principles that suggest these outcomes logically follow from the economic climate created for producers by present commodity programs. However, he points out, it is difficult to prove that relationship from the historical record since, for one thing, direct payments and deficiency payments have not always been tied to past yields.

Douglas Young agrees with economist Patrick Madden that better information is needed, and he challenges agricultural economists and policy analysts to address these issues. Among the areas of study he recommends are: (1) "more detailed examinations of the impacts of alternative commodity programs on LIA adoption incentives"; (2) estimation of the costs to society of agricultural pollution and of programs to reduce this environmental damage; (3) evaluation of the effects that market price and/or policy changes necessary to promote LIA would have on "food prices, farm incomes, agricultural imports, interregional production shifts, land prices, rural communities, farm program costs, and the agribusiness sector."

CONFERENCE ON BIOTECHNOLOGY AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

On May 22-24, a conference entitled "Biotechnology and Sustainable Agriculture: Policy Alternatives" will take place in Ames. The conference is sponsored by an organization called the National Agricultural Biotechnology Council, with major support from those at Iowa State who are involved with biotechnology research and ethics.

There are no farmers on the program, and the registration fee will make it difficult for anyone who isn't on expense account to attend. However, the program promises to present a variety of viewpoints on aspects of biotechnology. On Monday morning, back-to-back keynote addresses will open the conference. The first will be from Chuck Hassebrook, of the Center for Rural Affairs, on "Biotechnology, Sustainable Agriculture and the Family Farm." The second address is to be given by Robert Goodman, of the Calgene Corporation. His title is also the title of the conference: "Biotechnology and Sustainable Agriculture: Policy Alternatives."

The conference will focus on four subjects: herbicide resistance in plants; biopesticides; animal growth promotants; and disease control in animals. These topics will be discussed from a number of angles, including the social and ethical issues involved. Invited contributors include representatives from the Environmental Defense Fund, the Humane Society of the U.S., and the ISU Bioethics Committee, as well as government and industry.

After May 1, conference registration will be \$40 for ISU personnel. Non-ISU people will pay \$120, which includes noon and evening meals. Payment and any questions should

be directed to: Walter R. Fehr, Conference Chair, 1010 Agronomy Building, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, 50011-1010. The phone number for that office is (515)-294-9818. If you can't attend the whole conference, you might inquire whether you could attend just the keynote speeches without charge.

REFERENCES ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE: PART II

The references listed here have to do mainly with sustainable, low-input regenerative agriculture; land stewardship; taking care of the soil and protecting the environment. Part I appeared in the last issue of *The Practical Farmer*. These reading materials are part of the personal collection of Harold Wright, member of Practical Farmers of Iowa, and were displayed for browsing at the annual meeting of Practical Farmers of Iowa at Starlite Village, Ames, on December 14, 1988.

Editors' Note: Practical Farmers of Iowa is not promoting the following materials, nor does it necessarily endorse the ideas in them. We are providing this list as a service to our readers. The previous issue contained books. This issue: magazines and other publications.

Periodicals:

Center for Rural Affairs, P.O.Box 405, Walthill, NE 68067. Monthly newsletter. 1983 to present.

Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society, P.O.Box 736, Hartington, NE 68739. Newsletter published 6 times each year. 1985 through present.

Land Stewardship Letter. Published quarterly by Land Stewardship Project, 512 W. Elm St., Stillwater, MN 55082. 1986 to present.

Alternative Agriculture News. Published monthly by Institute for Alternative Agriculture, 9200 Edmouston Rd., Suite 117, Greenbelt, MD 20770. 1983 to present.

Wisconsin Rural Development Center—Newsletter for Friends of the Family Farm and the Rural Community. Published 10 times each year. Also publishes *Plowsharing—Sustainable Agriculture News of the Wisconsin Farmers' Research Network*. Address for both newsletters: Wisconsin Rural Development Center, P.O.Box 504, Black Earth, WI 53515. 1988 to present.

American Journal of Alternative Agriculture. Published quarterly by Institute of Alternative Agriculture, 9200 Edmouston Rd., Suite 117, Greenbelt, MD 20770. 1986 to present.

The Land Report. Published 3 times each year by The Land Institute, 2440 E. Water Well Rd., Salina, KS 67401.

The New Farm—Magazine of Regenerative Agriculture. Published 7 times each year. 222 Main St., Emmaus, PA 18099-0014.

Booklets:

Warm Season Grasses in Northeast and Southern Corn Belt. 1986. Soil Conservation Society of America, 7515 NE Ankeny Rd., Ankeny, IA 50021.

Frederick Kirschenmann. 1988. *Switching to a Sustainable System from Conventional/Chemical System*. The Northern Plains Sustainable Agriculture Society. RR 1, Box 73, Windsor, ND 58424.

Farmland—A Community Issue. 1987. Concern Inc., 1794 Columbia Rd., Washington, D.C. 20009.

Beyond Oil: The Threat to Food and Fuel in the Coming Decades. 1986. [This is a summary report of the book by the same name.] Carrying Capacity Inc., 1325 G Street NW, Suite 1003, Washington, D.C. 20005.

Reports:

Mary Bruns. 1986. *Sustainable Agriculture in Nebraska: A Status Report*. Center for Rural Affairs, P.O.Box 405, Walthill, NE 68067.

Kenneth A. Cook. 1985. *Agriculture and Conservation*. [about a merger of agriculture and conservation into regenerative production systems] Soil and Water Conservation Society of America, 7515 NE Ankeny Rd., Ankeny, IA 50021.

Michel Cavigelli and Juli Kois. 1988. *Sustainable Agriculture in Kansas: Case Studies of Five Organic Farms*. Kansas Rural Center, P.O.Box 133, Whiting, KS 66552.

Margaret Krome. 1988. *The Southwest Wisconsin Farmers' Research Network—1986-1987*. [A case history of an on-farm research project] Wisconsin Rural Development Center, P.O.Box 504. Black Earth, WI 53515.

W. C. Lowdermilk. *Conquest of the Land through 7000 Years—A Study of Agriculture in Countries Where Land Has Been under Cultivation for up to Thousands of Years. What Were Soil Erosion Problems?* Soil Conservation Service Bulletin No. 99, USDA. reprinted 1986.

Lawrence Woodward and Pat Burge, eds. 1982. *Green Manures. A Practical Handbook Series.* Elm Farm Research Centre, Hamstead Marshall, near Newbury, Berkshire RG15 OHR, Great Britain.

NOTES AND NOTICES

POSITIONS, INTERNSHIPS

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture has advertised for an additional sustainable agriculture on-farm research coordinator. The person hired will work with farmers and prepare educational materials. Required is a bachelor's degree in an agriculture-related discipline and two years of relevant experience. Salary is \$22-27,000. The bad news is that the application deadline was May 1. The good news is that they will probably soon be hiring for a similar position. Contact Richard Gauger, Director, Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Project, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, 90 W. Plato Blvd., St. Paul, Minnesota, 55107, (612)-297-1320.

The Center for Rural Affairs, a sustainable farming and rural advocacy organization in eastern Nebraska, is seeking 15-month interns. These interns will assist farmers in Cedar County, Nebraska, in conducting on-farm demonstrations, help develop a video for use in farmer workshops, work with sustainable agriculture organizations around the midwest, and help develop papers on policy issues in sustainable agriculture. For more information, contact Chuck Hassbrook, Box 405, Walthill, Nebraska, 68067, (402)-846-5428.

The Meadowcreek Project provides individuals with interest in the areas of sustainable agriculture/horticulture, applied ecology, alternative energy and/or environmental education with internship opportunities. A 10-week course of work and study begins in September. There are also a

limited number of internships for a 27-week extension of the work/study program. There is a tuition charge, but full- and partial scholarships are available. Contact Pat Muntz, Meadowcreek Project, Fox, Arkansas, 72051, (501)-363-4500.

LEAVE YOUR MARK ON HISTORY

The Department of Special Collections in the Iowa State University Library has established The Archives of American Agriculture. This Archive has an active program of collecting unpublished materials relating to all aspects of American agriculture. In recent years the AAA has sought out with some success materials from persons and organizations active in alternative agriculture. In order to strengthen its resources in this increasingly important part of agriculture, the AAA would like to invite any members of the Practical Farmers of Iowa to consider depositing their own papers in the Archives. Of particular interest would be records of any tests or projects undertaken to evaluate various methods of implementing alternative or sustainable agriculture.

For further information please contact:

Stanley Yates
Curator, AAA
Department of Special Collections
The Parks Library
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa 50011 (515)294-6672

PRESIDENT'S BEEF

Those who followed the trade difficulties between the USDA and the Europeans on the subject of meat from animals treated with growth hormones may be interested to know where former president, Ronald Reagan, and his family got their meat. Mark Dowie has reported ("Reagan: Hold the Steroids", Mother Jones 9(8):9, October, 1984) that Reagan did not buy his meat from a USDA-inspected grocery store. Instead, carefully selected calves were brought to his ranch where they were raised as steers, without using hormones (such as anabolic steroids). These animals were slaughtered by Reagan's personal butcher, and the meat was distributed to all the family members, except for one daughter who is a vegetarian.

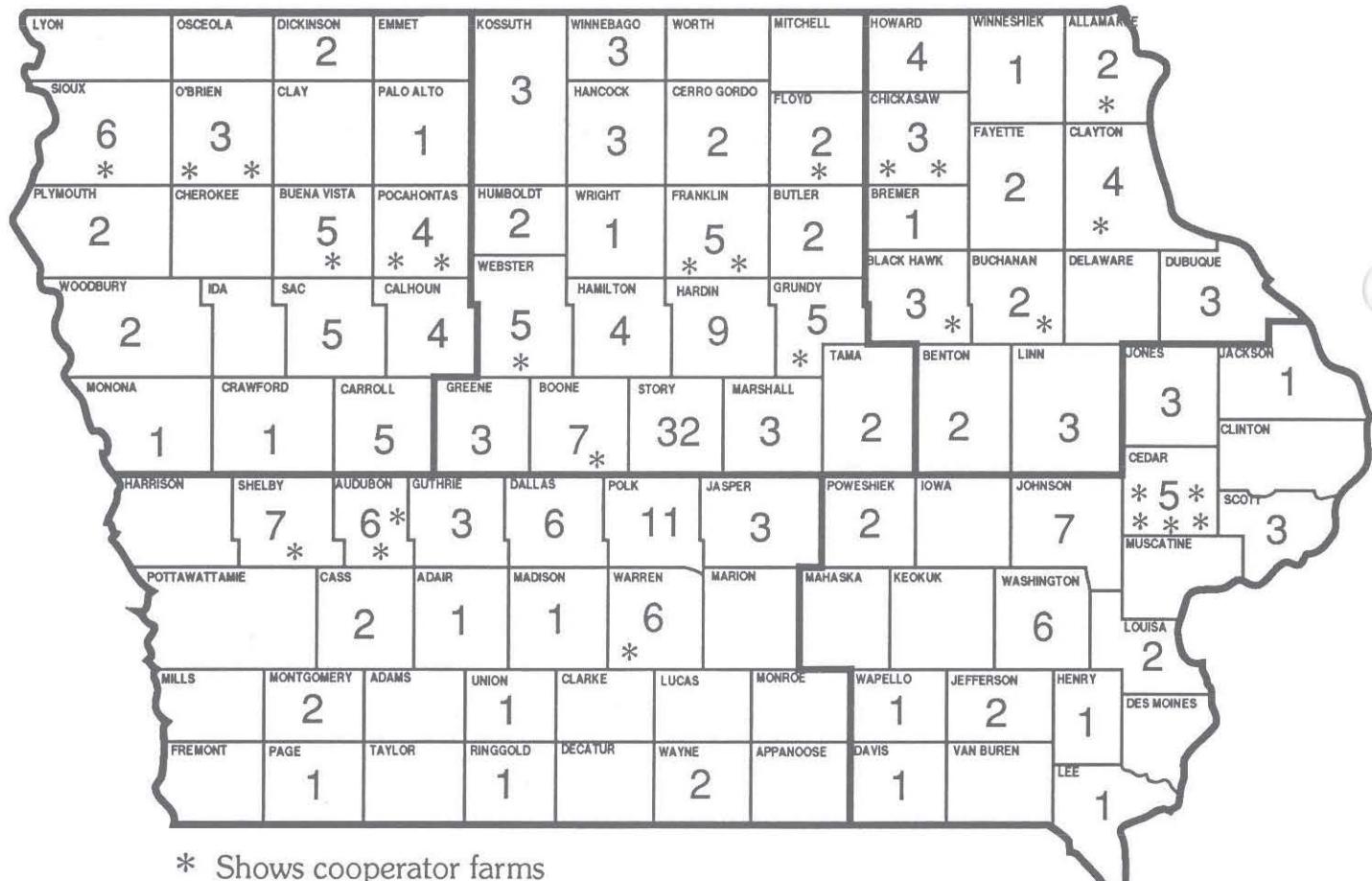
FROM THE COORDINATOR'S DESK

Have you ever felt as if you're the only PFI member in the county? You may be! Still, there are more than twice as many members as there were a year ago. From the number of references to Practical Farmers of Iowa and sustainable agriculture that you see in the news these days, you would think there are thousands of us. Actually, the number presently stands at 280. Maybe that doesn't seem like much, but I'm happy for every single one of those memberships!

The map shows in-state PFI members by county. PFI cooperator farms are marked with a star. As you can see, there are strong areas and weak ones. The southern part of

the state has not joined PFI in a big way. Maybe this is partly because our most visible activities are in row-cropping. If you have ideas for spreading the PFI message in southern Iowa, I'd like to hear them.

The map reminds me of the importance of "seeds". The enthusiasm of a single person is often contagious. One such member will draw the attention of others to the organization. In spite of all the recent publicity, I'm still convinced PFI's best advertising is word-of-mouth.



Practical Farmers of Iowa Members by County, April 1989

SONG IN A YEAR OF CATASTROPHE

I began to be followed by a voice saying:
 "It can't last. It can't last.
 Harden yourself. Harden yourself.
 Be ready. Be ready."

"Go look under the leaves,"
 it said, "for what is living there
 is long dead in your tongue."
 And it said, "Put your hands
 into the earth. Live close
 to the ground. Learn the darkness.
 Gather round you all
 the things that you love, name
 their names, prepare
 to lose them. It will be
 as if all you know were turned
 around within your body."

And I went and put my hands
 into the ground, and they took root
 and grew into a season's harvest.
 I looked behind the veil
 of the leaves, and heard voices
 that I knew had been dead
 in my tongue years before my birth.
 I learned the dark.

And still the voice stayed with me.
 Waking in the early mornings,
 I could hear it, like a bird
 bemused among the leaves,
 a mocking bird idly singing
 in the autumn of catastrophe:
 "Be ready. Be ready.
 Harden yourself. Harden yourself."

And I heard the sound
 of a great engine pounding
 in the air, and a voice asking:
 "Change or slavery?
 Hardship or slavery?"
 and voices answering:
 "Slavery! Slavery!"
 And I was afraid, loving
 what I knew would be lost.

Then the voice following me said:
 "You have not yet come close enough.
 Come nearer the ground. Learn
 from the woodcock in the woods
 whose feathering is a ritual
 of the fallen leaves,
 and from the nesting quail
 whose speckling makes her hard to see
 in the long grass.
 Study the coat of the mole.
 For the farmer shall wear
 the greenery and the furrows
 of his fields, and bear
 the long standing of the woods."

And I asked: "You mean a death, then?"
 "Yes," the voice said. "Die
 into what the earth requires of you."
 Then I let go all holds, and sank
 like a hopeless swimmer into the earth,
 and at last came fully into the ease
 and the joy of that place,
 all my lost ones returning.

— Wendell Berry
 from *Farming: A Hand Book* 1970
 Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, N.Y.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Name _____

Organization of affiliation _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Phone Number () -

This is a _____ new membership

_____ renewal

Do you derive a significant part of
 your income from farming?

Yes _____

No _____

Suggested by: (name of person)

Please enclose check or money order
 for \$10.00 payable to "Practical
 Farmers of Iowa" and mail to:

Practical Farmers
 RR2, Box 132
 Boone, Iowa, 50036

CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence to the PFI directors' addresses is always welcome.

District 1 (Northwest) Bob Graaf, RR 1, Palmer, 50571. 712-359-7787.

District 2 (North Central) Dick Thompson, RR 2, Box 132, Boone, 50036. 515-432-1560.

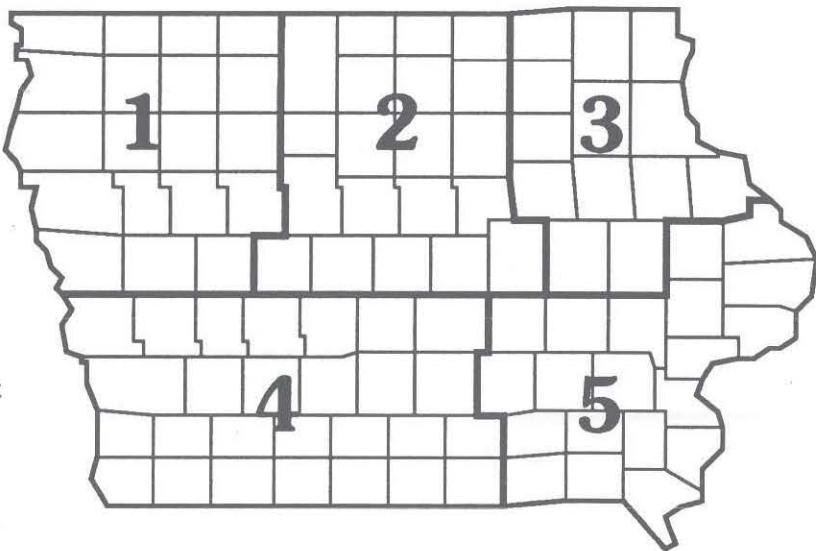
District 3 (Northeast) Tom Frantzen, RR 2, New Hampton, 50659. 515-364-6426.

District 4 (Southwest) Ron Rosmann, Rt. 1, Box 177, Harlan, 51537. 712-627-4653.

District 5 (Southeast) Mark Mays, RR 2, Box 45, Wilton, 52778. 319-732-2040.

Coordinator: Rick Exner, Room 2401, Agronomy Hall, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011. 515-294-1923.

PRACTICAL FARMERS OF IOWA MEMBERSHIP DISTRICTS



Acknowledgement:

The Practical Farmer and the PFI on-farm demonstrations are supported, in part, by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa State University, and the Integrated Farm Management Demonstration Project of the Agricultural Energy Management Fund, State of Iowa, through the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, with appropriations from the Iowa Groundwater Protection Fund.

Practical Farmers of Iowa

Rt. 2, Box 132 Boone, Iowa 50036

**Forwarding and Address
Correction Requested**