

the Practical Farmer

Practical Farmers of Iowa Newsletter

Vol. 5, #2
Summer 1990

HERBS AND SPICES CONFERENCE SET FOR SEPT.

Diversification is a goal of many Iowa farmers. Alternative enterprises can be a profitable way to use some extra time around the farm, a good 4-H project for the kids - or they can develop into a major source of farm income.

Herbs as a Cash Crop, a conference exploring commercial herb production, will take place Saturday, Sept. 8, in Cedar Rapids. The event is co-sponsored by Practical Farmers of Iowa and the Rural Development Center of Kirkwood Community College. Featured on the program will be Richard Allen Miller, herb grower and broker from Grants Pass, Oregon. Richard Miller is reported to be a charismatic and fascinating speaker on the subject of herbs and spices. He has worked with farmers around the country and internationally to form marketing, growing and processing organizations. Several Iowa farmers have gotten into the herb business with help from Miller, including PFI board member Bob Graaf (see sidebar on page 2).

Richard Miller will lead three sessions: *The Potential of Herbs as a Cash Crop*, *Getting Started*, and *Marketing Your Product*. There

(continued)



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also will be a workshop session offering the following:

- Creative advertising (Judy Strotman, CAP-AD, a marketing and advertising consulting service for small business);
- Drying, storing and handling (Sue Kershner, Tender Top Herb and Water Garden, W. Burlington, Ia.);
- Value adding (Malinda Brisbane, Spice of Iowa, Iowa City);
- Herb crafting (Jean Volesky, Frontier Cooperative Herbs); and
- Dried ornamentals (Nancy Painter, The Gathering Basket, Coralville).

In addition to the talks, there will be a trade show featuring displays and demonstrations of alternative enterprises, herb marketing, and sustainable agriculture. Businesses and organizations from around the Midwest will be represented, as will Iowa groups.

BOB GRAAF ON RICHARD ALLEN MILLER

I learned about Richard Miller in 1986. In January of 1987, my wife Diane and I flew to Grants Pass, Oregon, for a meeting with him. We toured a farm where several herbs were grown and also saw a hops kiln that was being used to dry some of the herb crops. In addition, we toured a warehouse used for storing and processing the crop.

In 1988, we grew three small plots of herbs and ½ acre of commercial tomatoes. Subsequently we discontinued the herb plots in favor of tomato production. Our corn and soybeans didn't leave enough time for both alternative crops.

We are now in the process of establishing a three-acre plot of red clover, which will be harvested for the flowers. Mr. Miller reportedly has an excellent market for the flowers, and he also is involved with a project to build a flower harvester. The basic machine is already in use with other flower crops, and a red clover head is being designed.

Also worth mentioning is the herbal lunch and break refreshments that will be served. Included on the noon menu are: Golden Corn Soup with roasted pepper strips and epazote (a Mexican cooking green); Fiesta Fish (tilapia); and Herb Spiral Bread. The morning and afternoon breaks will provide herb teas with cheese biscuits or rosemary muffins. All these dishes will be prepared using locally raised herbs, fish and produce. The meal and refreshments are included in the cost of registration, which is \$15 for PFI members and \$25 for nonmembers. Nonmembers can choose to have \$10 of their registration go to membership in Practical Farmers of Iowa.

The program begins at 9:00 am, at the Iowa Hall, Kirkwood Community College, Cedar Rapids, with registration starting at 8:30. The program ends at 5:00 pm, but Mr. Miller has been known to go into the night with interested individuals. **Preregistration by Tuesday, August 31**, is necessary so that meal preparations can be made. (The brochure, which you may have received, lists August 24 as the registration deadline.) Contact the Rural Development Center, Kirkwood Community College, P.O. Box 2068, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406 (319) 398-5699. The Center will also send you information on area motels, if you wish.

Herbs as a Cash Crop should be an enjoyable and informative day. Who knows - maybe it will plant some seeds.

A Quote:

Long-term adaptability is more important to prosperity than short-term profitability.

Frederick Kirschenman, 1988

IT'S SUMMER, HAVE A FIELD DAY!

Field days are in full swing, and Practical Farmers of Iowa is holding its share of on-farm events. Dick and Sharon Thompson got a jump on the season with a spring field day May 7. It featured soil microbiologist John Doran (Agricultural Research Service, Lincoln) and a demonstration of ridge-till planting into a cover crop. The crowd of about 150 included Leopold Center Director Dennis Keeney and Iowa Agriculture Secretary Dale Cochran.



After the planter — a demonstration of ridge-till planting without herbicides into a cover crop at the Thompson spring field day.

In June, PFI followed the crowd to the Farm Progress Hay Expo, in the southwest Iowa town of Randolph. That same month, the Thompsons hosted three busloads of bankers and bank examiners, whose visit was facilitated by ISU economist Robert Jolly.



Dueling windrowers at the Farm Progress Hay Expo.

PFI summer field days began on August 2, with visits to the Hartsock, Graaf and Grau farms, in northwest Iowa. A June hailstorm had mowed down Bob Graaf's soybeans, so the visit to that farm focused on the successful hothouse tomato operation. Elsewhere around Iowa, flooding has wiped out some on-farm trials. On the brighter side, field days are scheduled by six cooperators who have never held them before, and three of these cooperators are new to PFI.

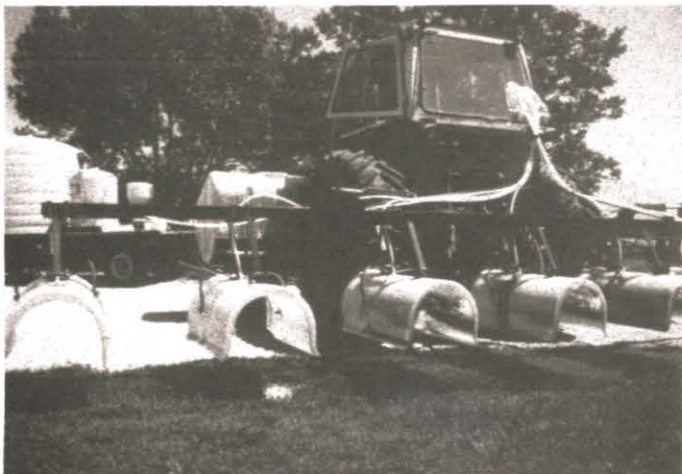
The 1990 field days feature several cooperative efforts involving other organizations:

- Tom and Irene Frantzen, New Hampton, have conducted a comparison of nitrogen rates in oats in cooperation with Hunting Elevator, of Cresco.
- John and Pam Cowles, new PFI cooperators from Bloomfield, are combining their intensive grazing field tour August 27 with a visit to the nearby farm of Alan and Brenda Henderson. The Henderson



visit was arranged by Fred Hainline, of the Bloomfield office of the Soil Conservation Service.

- Jeff and Gayle Olson, of Winfield, will hold their Sept. 4 field day in conjunction with the Henry County Extension Service. After the Olson farm, the tour will move to Mt. Pleasant, where Richard Godke of Henry County Extension is demonstrating field application of municipal yard waste.
- Alan Britten, Benton County Extension, is helping Dick and Mary Jane Svoboda with their field comparison of manure and purchased nitrogen. Alan provided the manure analysis, and he will be on hand for the Svoboda's field day, August 18.
- Two cooperators are participating in the expanded Model Farms project of the Extension Service. Reps from the project will be on hand at the field days of Ted and Donna Bauer and Dordt College.
- Tom and Marcia Hanks, Ackworth, hold the final PFI field day of the season, Sept. 12. Representatives from Laverty Elevator will be on hand to demonstrate calibration of spray equipment.



Tom Hanks says the hooded sprayer uses herbicide more efficiently. This rig is used by Doyle and Lowell Wilson, cooperators from Primghar.

The field days are the best time to see sustainable farming practices "first hand." Don't miss the opportunity to tour a few farms and visit with the cooperators. Additional copies of the *PFI 1990 Farm Field Days* brochure may be obtained from Rick Exner, 2104 Agronomy Hall, ISU, Ames, IA 50011, (515) 294-1923. We'll see you there!

OATS COOPERATORS SOUGHT BY TILTH LAB

Steve Corak,
research associate, National Soil Tilth Laboratory

PFI members are needed for a new research study funded by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and the USDA National Soil Tilth Laboratory. The title of this project is "Fall-planted Spring Oats: A Low-Risk Cover Crop to Reduce Erosion Following Soybean." Preliminary tests conducted near Ames indicate that when oats are planted in the fall, they can produce enough surface cover prior to a killing freeze to significantly reduce the erosion potential following soybeans. Furthermore, because oats do not overwinter, they will not deplete soil moisture during the spring, and they will not need to be killed with herbicides or tillage.

The major objective of the proposed study is to conduct on-farm trials of this alternative cover cropping system in farmer-managed fields at several locations across Iowa. At present, we hope to line up at least six cooperators for fall 1990. Ideally, we are looking for about one acre of land in easily accessible fields that will be rotating out of soybeans after this summer. We will lay out the research plots and drill in oats immediately after you harvest soybeans. We plan to visit each location periodically to monitor such things as the growth of oats, the rate of surface residue decomposition, and subsequent effects on the next corn crop.

Your responsibilities as a cooperator would be fairly minimal. Monetary compensation for the use of your land will be provided. Please contact me, Steve Corak, (515 294-9602), or Tom Kaspar (515 294-8873), at the National Soil Tilth Laboratory (2150 Pammel Drive, Ames, IA 50011) if you are interested in cooperating with us in this project. *We need to hear from you before the end of August.* Thank you.

RAIN TURNS THE TABLES

By the Fourth of July, parts of Iowa had received more rainfall than they got all year in either 1988 or 1989. In north central Iowa, ducks and herons were seen in wet spots of several acres that had persisted since May 9. In the eastern part of the state, torrential rain raised flood water that took everything in its path. Southwestern Iowa showed the scars of water on the loess hills. Northwest Iowa looked good – except where hail and 80 mph wind had mowed down the crops.

The experience left many people a little philosophical. Even though some tillage systems and some rotations fared better than others, *every* row crop field lost an unacceptable amount of soil in the heaviest rains.

The late spring soil nitrate test is being put to the test this year. Critics of the test have suggested it will fail to predict yields in years of heavy rainfall. The test seems to be holding its own, but the proof will come at harvest.

In 1989, PFI cooperators saved more than \$5 per acre with the test. The savings were in nitrogen costs. Whereas last year, nitrate-N readings were often in the 20s and 30s (parts per million, or "ppm"), this year those readings have frequently been in the low teens. As 21 ppm is the approximate sufficiency level, many people have applied more nitrogen this year than they have in some time.



These fields near Wilton received seven inches of rain in four hours, Saturday, June 16.

In general, the nitrate numbers seem to have held up better in corn after manure or alfalfa than in corn receiving mineral fertilizer last fall or early this spring. Whether the test is giving full credit to those biological sources of nitrogen is a question ISU researchers are now examining.

PFI cooperator Tom Hanks, of Ackworth, showed his hired man how to sample fields for nitrate in the approved manner. The results appear in the table.

Late spring soil nitrate results – Hanks' farm.

Previous Crop	Nitrate ppm	Normal rate	Test rate	Savings
soybeans	26	50	0	\$9.50
soybeans	10	50	159	-\$20.63
soybeans	15	50	95	-\$8.58
soybeans	15	50	95	-\$8.58
soybeans	17	50	63	-\$2.55
soybeans	15	50	95	-\$8.58
soybeans	19	50	32	\$3.47
soybeans	13	50	95	-\$8.58
soybeans	15	50	95	-\$8.58
soybeans	17	50	63	-\$2.55
corn	15	120	95	\$4.72
corn	18	120	63	\$10.75
corn	16	120	63	\$10.75
soybeans	24	50	0	\$9.50
soybeans	29	50	0	\$9.50
soybeans	22	50	0	\$9.50
corn	21	120	0	\$22.80
average				\$1.29

Overall, the test recommended using about the same amount of N that Tom would customarily apply. In some fields, the test indicated he could save money on nitrogen. But in other fields, the test told him he could *make* money by applying *additional* nitrogen. These are the kind of fields where the test could really win converts.

LISA BEEF AND FORAGE CONFERENCE REPORT

Ron Vos, Dordt College Ag Stewardship Center

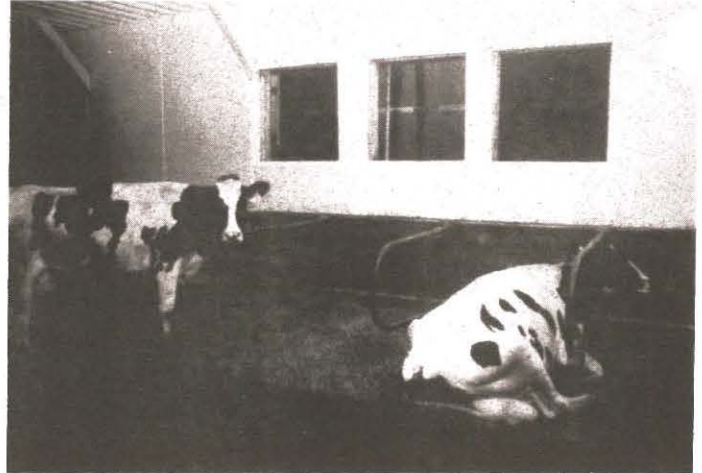
People who attended the Low Input Sustainable Agriculture (LISA) Beef and Forage conference in Omaha, Nebraska, June 13-14 were reminded that the beef animal is a ruminant and can convert roughage into high quality protein for human consumption. This is truly a remarkable characteristic of ruminants that we often forget - especially when corn prices are relatively low, as they have been the past few years.

Conference topics ranged from calving to finishing animals in low input systems, and the presenters ranged from economists to nutritionists. Especially interesting were the producers' panels and the discussion periods. Topics ranged from fencing requirements to endophyte infested fescues.

Those who participated in the conference received a broad education into how beef can be raised economically on non-row crop forages. Less soil erosion tends to occur in these cropping systems. Beef animals can also do well on excess row crop residue while leaving enough residue behind to stop erosion.



Would you look at this grass! Like many farmers practicing intensive grazing management, John Cowles is having trouble keeping up with forage growth this year.



LISA dairy? These holsteins at the Dordt College Ag Stewardship Center enjoy evaporative cooling (units on wall) and bedding made of shredded cobs and newspaper.

The new farm bill will likely include some provisions for flexibility. It may allow farmers who implement approved "sustainable" farm plans - those which protect soil and water and limit use of farm chemicals - to plant conserving crops such as small grain-legume mixtures on base acres ordinarily planted to program crops. Grazing on these acres would probably be permitted. This would protect crop bases, and farmers would continue to receive program payments while they diversified. In such a scenario ruminants such as beef animals could play a greater role than they do today. The information covered at the LISA Beef and Forage conference is even more timely in light of these proposed changes.

ALTERNATIVE FARMING INFORMATION AVAILABLE THROUGH THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY

Jerry DeWitt, ISU Cooperative Extension

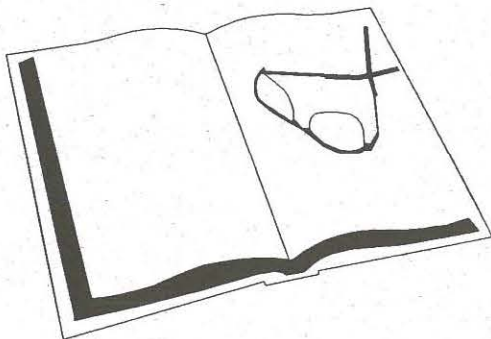
PFI members may be interested in a new information center available from the National Agricultural Library in Beltsville. The new information center is *Alternative Farming Systems*, an addition to the National Ag Library, funded in part by LISA.

The new Alternative Farming Systems Information Center provides a ready source of specialized information – quick bibliographies, special reference briefs, many miscellaneous publications and some video tapes.

The quick bibliographies may be of interest to PFI members. Each quick bibliography lists recent articles and publications concerning a variety of topics – alternative crops, allelopathy, forage legumes, rotational grazing, alternative farming systems, etc. More than 30 quick bibliographies are available ranging in length from 12 to 45 pages long. Each quick bibliography provides references to articles that may be of importance in your farming system. By following up on these references, you may find the type of information/research that is needed. The National Ag Library will provide quick bibliographies at no cost. Copies of the actual reprints are available at cost from the National Ag Library.

Those members of PFI identified as farmers have been provided information on this new center under special arrangements with the National Ag Library. The NAL staff is interested in testing the applicability of the information available through this service. The PFI membership is being used in a pilot test of this new system. The response and inquiries from these Iowa farmers will provide input for the NAL staff to make changes and to judge how the system works.

I encourage you to take advantage of this new system and free service from the National Ag Library.



NOTES AND NOTICES

Maria Rosmann Selected for Leadership Program

Maria Rosmann, of Harlan, has been accepted in M/I LEAD, Minnesota/Iowa Leadership Empowerment for Agricultural Development. The program is sponsored by the Iowa and Minnesota Extension Services, the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, and private partners that include foundations, businesses, and farm organizations. M/I LEAD seeks to develop the leadership skills of younger men and women who are participants or newly elected leaders of rural organizations or businesses. The stated objective is to cultivate leaders who will "help create options, help clarify problems and alternatives, help build morale and coalitions, and work toward a common vision of an increasingly improved situation for agriculture and rural communities."

Over the course of the 18-month program, four week-long leadership institutes and three special sessions will be held. These will take place in Iowa, Minnesota, and Washington, D.C. The conference topics will include leadership styles and personal development, agricultural and international issues, rural development policy, and political and ethical leadership. During the period, participants will work toward both a personal and a community plan of action.

Maria has for more than a year used her journalistic skills to the benefit of Practical Farmers of Iowa. She writes most of the PFI press releases and directs publicity for PFI field days and other events. This spring, she led a workshop for other cooperators on how to use the news media for publicity. In addition, Maria and her husband Ron have helped formed an organization called Shelby County Organization to Protect the Environment (SCOPE), which addresses local issues such as the proposed medical waste incinerator. *Congratulations, Maria!*

Musk Thistle Weevils Found

Last year a number of farmers around the state released musk thistle weevils. The weevil, if it becomes established, can provide biological control of the musk thistle. Areas where weevils are released should have good stands of thistle, and they need to be managed to allow the weevils to get a start. That means leaving the musk thistles undisturbed for a year or two. Dean Grundman, Extension Integrated Pest Management coordinator, reports that signs of weevil activity have been found at last year's release sites. Watch for a hole near the back (stem end) of the seed pod. Plant resin and frass may also accumulate around the hole, indicating that adult weevils have been feeding on the seed pods.

Recycled Paper

The Practical Farmer is now printed on recycled paper. It is somewhat more expensive, but paper is a fairly small part of the overall newsletter cost. Available paper selection will improve over time. The State of Iowa has directed state agencies eventually to use *only* recycled paper.

According to the World Watch Institute, producing one ton of paper from discarded waste paper uses half the energy, half the water, results in 74 percent less water pollution, saves 17 pulp trees, reduces solid waste going to landfills, and creates five times more jobs compared to producing a ton of paper from virgin wood pulp.

Tomato Grower Wanted

I am looking for someone interested in growing greenhouse tomatoes. The tomatoes would be delivered to my Palmer farm twice a week. Call me for more information: Bob Graaf, RR 1, Palmer, IA 50571 712-359-7787.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IN IOWA, PART #3

Pete Korsching
Department of Sociology and Anthropology, ISU

Jim Malia
The Minnesota Project, Minneapolis, MN

This is the third and last of our reports on the sustainable farming practices used by members of Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI). Data for these reports were obtained from 168 farmer members of PFI who responded last year to our mail survey. In this report we look at how often farmers use a variety of information sources for assistance in farming with sustainable practices, and also PFI farmers' values and attitudes toward issues relating to agriculture, farming technology, the environment, and society.

Information Sources

Sources of reliable and timely information are critical for any farmer whether farming with sustainable or conventional practices. For farmers practicing sustainable farming, however, identifying those sources and developing and maintaining information networks are even more important because conventional sources generally do not provide the information "sustainable" farmers need. Table 1, which provides information on how often PFI farmers use several sources of information, confirms that sustainable farmers do have a limited number of information sources that they regularly use.

The sources of information least used by PFI farmers were conventional farmers, conventional farm supply dealers, organic farm suppliers and consultants, popular farm magazines and the extension service. Except for the organic farm supplier and consultants, these are the businesses and organizations that cater primarily to conventional farmers. The lack of use of organic farm suppliers and consultants may indicate that organic agriculture is something different from

Table 1. Percentage of PFI respondents indicating how often they use specified information sources.

Information Sources	Never Use	Sometimes Use	Often Use
	- Percent -		
Other low input farmers	8	45	47
Conventional farmers	49	48	3
Own experience	1	14	85
Organic/sustainable/alternative farm magazines	9	44	47
Popular farm magazines	30	60	10
Organic farm supply dealers or consultants	54	35	11
Conventional farm supply dealers	47	47	6
County extension agents/extension specialists or their publications	34	53	13

sustainable agriculture, or that currently there are few such suppliers in Iowa. Although not many farmers stated they used extension often, over half said they sometimes used extension. Extension in Iowa is making a strong effort to serve sustainable farmers, and much information extension has for conventional farming is also relevant to sustainable farming.

As expected, other sustainable farmers and alternative farm magazines were important sources of information. But the most important source of information for PFI members was the farmer's own experience. This undoubtedly reflects the lack of good information networks on sustainable farming in this early stage of the development and diffusion of sustainable agriculture in Iowa.

Values and Attitudes

How farmers react to situations they are facing and whether they become serious proponents of sustainable farming depends in part on their values and attitudes toward agriculture, farming technology, the environment and society. PFI members' responses to some issues in these areas are presented in Table 2.

PFI members strongly adhere to agrarian values as shown by the high agreement with the statement that agriculture is the most basic occupation (Statement 1) and that farmers should be independent in making decisions about their farms (Statement 2). The federal government should only intervene to help farmers with forces beyond their own control (Statement 3), although agreement with this statement is not as strong. Although in basic agreement with agrarian ideals, the respondents had a balanced view of farming as both a way of life and a business (Statements 4 and 5). There was also a strong sentiment that farmers might solve some of their problems if they would strive for self sufficiency (Statement 6). There was, in fact, fairly strong sentiment that self sufficiency is a desired goal not only for the farmer but also for the local community (Statement 7).

One way of increasing self sufficiency is to reduce off-farm inputs. PFI farmers were in strong agreement that farmers should reduce off-farm inputs such as fertilizer and energy (Statement 8). One reason for this response is that they don't feel chemical inputs can maintain agricultural production indefinitely

Table 2. PFI respondents' agreement with statements about agriculture, technology, the environment and society.

Statement	Agree	Undecided	Disagree
	- Percent -		
1 Agriculture is the most basic occupation in our society and almost all other occupations depend on it.	91	7	2
2 Farming should be an occupation where farmers can make their economic decisions independently.	76	15	9
3 Farmers need involvement of the federal government to help them with forces beyond their control, such as the economy, weather, etc.	50	22	27
4 Farming is a way of life as well as a business.	96	2	2
5 Farmers ought to appreciate farming as a good way of life and be less concerned about their cash income.	24	13	63
6 Farmers are better off if they strive for self sufficiency.	81	12	7
7 Local self sufficiency in producing and processing food is a desired goal.	72	11	11
8 Farmers should reduce their reliance on off-farm sources of inputs such as fertilizers and energy.	89	9	2
9 Chemical inputs can maintain good soil and agricultural production indefinitely.	7	17	76
10 It is acceptable to use technology to increase the productive capability of the natural environment.	75	18	7
11 Farming involves understanding and working with nature; therefore, it is a much more satisfying occupation than others.	78	15	7
12 Man-made farming systems should imitate the processes of the natural environment.	69	22	9
13 The control of land and other resources should be in the hands of those who can best use them to earn a profit.	22	17	61
14 Helping my neighbors with their farming problems is as satisfying to me as being a leader in production.	88	10	2

(Statement 9). They are not, however, against the use of technology to increase the productive capability of the natural environment (Statement 10).

In relation to the natural environment, the respondents felt that farming, more than any other occupation works with nature (Statement 11), and that farming systems should imitate the processes of the natural environment (Statement 12). Even with this concern for the environment, a majority agreed that the control of the land should be in the hands of those who can use it to make a profit (Statement 13).

Finally, a large percentage of PFI members feel they have a responsibility to the larger community as well as doing a good job of farming on their own operation. Almost all of the farmers sampled derived as much satisfaction from helping their neighbors with farming as being good farmers themselves (Statement 14).

MINNESOTA SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE GRANTS

Farming practices that benefit the environment can perform as well as, or better than, conventional practices. This conclusion was suggested by the first year results of 17 on-farm demonstrations sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture in 1989. The Minnesota Legislature initiated the demonstration program in 1988 in response to concerns of farmers and others about the need to enhance farm profitability and environmental quality. The purpose of the program is to demonstrate and promote alternative practices that are energy efficient, environmentally sound, profitable and that enhance the self sufficiency of Minnesota farmers.

Fourteen projects will receive grants totalling \$190,000 as part of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Program for 1990. Eighty-five applicants from around the state requested over \$1.5 million to fund on-farm demonstrations. An independent review panel

evaluated each proposal for likely economic and environmental benefits for the farm, the reduction of off-farm inputs, the technical soundness of the project, the likelihood that other farms would be able to benefit from seeing the practice demonstrated, and the quality of the public information plan.

The amount of funding varies from \$4,375 for an experiment in double cropping oats and soybeans in Wright County to \$24,500 for a pasture improvement for beef production demonstration in Pipestone County. The projects will run for up to three years.

The new demonstrations cover a variety of enterprises in several areas of the state:

- A group of dairy farmers in the St. Cloud area will work with Stearns County extension agent Francis Januschka and university researchers to evaluate a rotational grazing system to improve pasture and animal performance.
- In Murray County in southwestern Minnesota, several farmers led by Rich Vander Ziel will compare compost with raw manure and commercial fertilizer. They will investigate how each builds soil structure and fertility and evaluate their effectiveness as part of a manure management strategy.
- Vegetable production and innovative direct marketing approaches will be introduced on 18 acres in McLeod County. Farmers Mark Schultz and Dan Guenther want to increase understanding between farmers and consumers. They also want to build community self sufficiency while showing the economic and ecological sustainability of the "French biointensive method" of vegetable production.

Intensive rotational grazing and livestock management are the major activities receiving grants this year. In addition to those mentioned above, projects will take place in McLeod, Houston and Traverse counties.

Several projects will demonstrate alternatives to herbicides and fertilizers such as crop rotation, double cropping, mulches, and composting manure before spreading. Raising annual alfalfa in a crop rotation and other alternatives to commercial fertilizer also will be examined on several farms.

"These projects show promise for being high quality, on-farm demonstrations of profitable and environmentally sound farming practices," said project director Rick Gauger. "The projects will all be demonstrated on farms and run by farmers with varying degrees of assistance from researchers, consultants and extension agents. On-farm demonstrations will provide hands-on experience with sustainable agriculture techniques and an opportunity for other farmers to benefit from this experience."

Anyone interested in further information about the Demonstration Grant Program should contact the Energy and Sustainable Agriculture Project, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, 90 West Plato Boulevard, St. Paul, Minnesota 55107, (612) 296-7673.

FROM THE COORDINATOR'S DESK
- KEEPING TABS

Rick Exner, Extension/PFI Coordinator

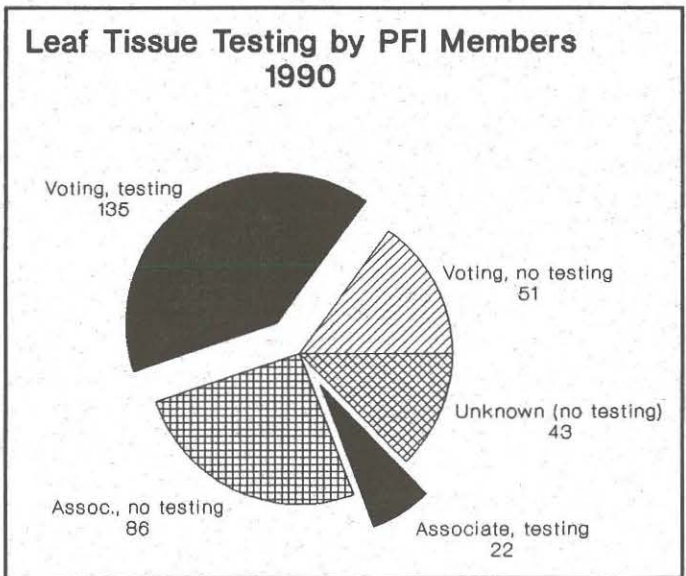
Part of my job is keeping the membership list for PFI. I am the one who sends you a *Membership Agreement and Information Form* each fall, and then I perspire waiting to see if you will remember to renew your membership in Practical Farmers of Iowa!

The information you supply on the form goes into the computer. Sometimes I even get some useful data back from this "database!" For example, last month we pulled out the names of members who have identified themselves as farming in order to send out the *Alternative Farming Systems* information from the National Agricultural Library (see the article in this issue). I thought I would share some of the PFI "stats" with you here.

If you joined PFI or renewed your membership this year, you had the opportunity to get a leaf tissue test

at no charge. This was a way to say "thanks" to our members and a way to introduce some people to a new nutrient management tool. The information on the test was mailed in June to those who indicated interest. One hundred fifty-six members asked for the test. The greatest interest, understandably, was among voting (farming) members. By the way, the table also shows that 13 percent of members have never told us whether they are farming or nonfarming members.

Total PFI members	337
Total voting members	186
Voting members requesting tissue test	135
(percentage requesting)	73%
Total associate members	108
Associate members requesting tissue test	22
(percentage requesting)	19%
Members not identified voting or assoc.	43
(percentage of total members)	13%



From the beginning, PFI has tried to keep a record of the kinds of farming practices used by members. You might be interested to know that 41 percent of PFI farmer members report using some ridge tillage, 14 percent use some no-till, 48 percent do some contour farming, and 40 percent say they have some terraces. Except for the high ridge-till number, those statistics are hard to interpret, because farming practices and land resources vary across the state.

CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence to the PFI directors' addresses is always welcome. Member contributions to *the Practical Farmer* are also welcome and will be reviewed by the PFI board of directors.

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.

Associate board member for District 2: Allyn Hagensick, RR 4, Box 57, Hampton, 50441. (515)-456-2945.

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

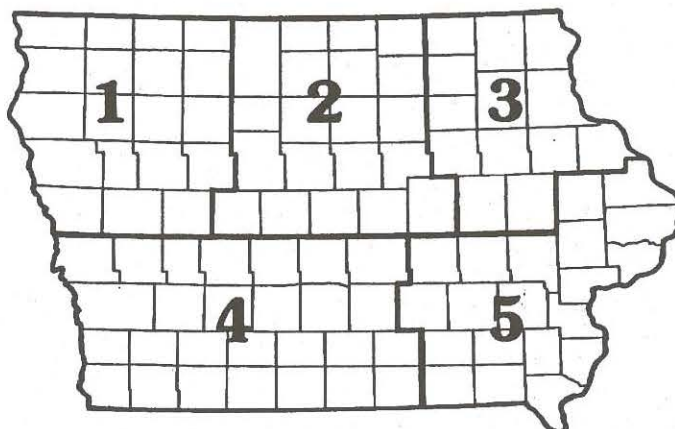
District 4 (Southwest): Ron Rosmann, RR 1, Box 177, Harlan, 51537. (712)-627-4653.

Associate board member for District 4: Vic Madsen, RR 3, Audubon, 50025. (712)-563-3044.

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

Coordinator: Rick Exner, Room 2104, Agronomy Hall, ISU, Ames, Iowa, 50011. (515)-294-1923.

PRACTICAL FARMERS OF IOWA MEMBERSHIP DISTRICTS



Acknowledgment:

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