

the **Practical Farmer**

**PFI Field Day Guide
Coming Soon**
See calendar on
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A Newsletter of Practical Farmers of Iowa | Vol. 18, #1 | Summer 2003



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Cover photo by Rick Exner: Michael Natvig gives a tour of his Cresco farm at a 1995 PFI field day. See cooperator profile on page 21. Greens illustrations: *From Asparagus to Zucchini: A Guide to Farm-Fresh, Seasonal Produce*, Copyright 1996 by MACSAC

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Member contributions to *the Practical Farmer* are welcome and will be reviewed by the editor and executive director.

Newsletter Editor: Todd Kimm

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Letter from the Director

Dear members and friends:

Welcome to the first issue of the new PFI newsletter! A lot of thought and brainstorming have gone into these changes; we hope our efforts meet with your approval. You will notice several new elements inside these pages, including:

- A member profile that will be featured in each newsletter.
- A new “food” section penned by guest writers; this issue features Carol Hunt on greens.
- A new way of presenting on-farm research; check it out starting on page 20.
- A new calendar of events that we hope more of you will begin to make use of to share interesting upcoming events with other PFI members.
- A PFI cartoon!
- A new layout that we hope makes the newsletter more enjoyable to read and makes it easier to find your favorite sections.

Several new sections will also make their debut in the upcoming Fall issue, including:

- A *Resources* section listing the latest and most useful sustainable ag publications from SARE, ATTRA, ISU Extension, and other organizations.
- A *Board Update* section describing the current work of the PFI Board.

Several other new things might catch your attention in this newsletter, including:

New membership levels and fees: After 18 years of having a one-size-fits-all membership fee, we decided it was time to honor the diversity of our members and potential members. With discounts at the annual conference and other events, the Farm/Household membership is still a steal at \$35. You will also notice that you can now use a credit card to pay your membership fee or make a donation to PFI; what a concept! See page 26 for the full scoop.

New PFI merchandise: Why go to the trouble of creating a new logo and tagline if we can't spread it around a little—or a lot! Hats, shirts, shopping bags, posters...be a proud PFI member! Check it all out on page 27.

New PFI Staff: Several new staff members and associates have recently come on board and I encourage you to read about them on page 12. One particular change I will mention here is that for the next eight months, starting July 1, I will be cutting back to three-fourths time as PFI executive director in order to work at finishing a master's degree that was interrupted five years ago by full-time work at PFI.

During this period I am pleased to announce that Rich Pirog will become a part-time associate director at PFI. Rich currently works for the Leopold Center as food systems and marketing program leader, and he will maintain these responsibilities while working for PFI. Surely, most of you are familiar with Rich and his many fine qualities. We are extremely pleased that Rich is coming on board to share his talents yet more fully with PFI.

Have a great summer!



PFI Launches 'Buy Fresh, Buy Local' Campaign

By Colleen Rogers

PFI has launched a new initiative in Black Hawk County to support local farmers and help consumers find their products. Called "Buy Fresh, Buy Local," the campaign is a partnership between PFI and the University of Northern Iowa's Center for Energy and Environmental Education (CEEE).

Project coordinator Kamyar Enshayan said the main goal of the campaign, which debuted in May, is to "build more relationships between the people who eat the food, grow the food and process it." Kamyar hopes the project will encourage residents in the Black Hawk County area to support its "local treasures"—farmers markets, orchards, meat lockers and the businesses that serve or sell locally grown food. Plans are in the works to eventually take the project statewide.

Since 1998, PFI and the CEEE have worked in Black Hawk County to reduce food miles and support the local economy by helping restaurants and institutional food buyers purchase a greater portion of their food from local farms and family-owned processors. This has resulted in more than \$800,000 spent on locally grown fruits, vegetables and meats. For example, Rudy's Tacos in Waterloo now spends \$143,000 yearly on locally raised food. The "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" campaign will build on this success.

PFI was one of 10 organizations across the nation selected to receive assistance from the Food Routes Network, a national organization that provides technical support to non-profit organizations to strengthen regional markets for locally grown foods using state-of-the-art communications techniques. With help from Food Routes, market research was undertaken in the Black Hawk County area that suggests there is interest from consumers in buying more food from local farms and businesses.

Partnering grocery stores are offering locally produced products featuring the "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" logo. Several restaurants have also joined the campaign. These groceries and restaurants will receive a weekly update of which local foods are available and in what quantities. PFI and CEEE will also continue their work with institutional food buyers.

"Buy Fresh, Buy Local" directories being distributed to area residents contain lists of farmers, farm stands, farmers markets, CSAs, meat lockers and businesses in Black Hawk and neighboring counties that grow or sell local foods.



A statewide web directory will eventually be available through PFI's website where consumers will be able to click on a county and locate direct marketing farms and the businesses that buy from them.

A true form of economic development

The campaign will help the county retain more of the \$350 million spent yearly by Black Hawk County residents on food and eating out.

Enshayan called the campaign "a true form of economic development that will strengthen the viability of independent farms and businesses." He figures that if half the households in Black Hawk County were committed to spending \$10 a week on locally grown food, a million dollars would be invested in the local economy every month.

Enshayan said the campaign will also encourage crop diversification. Corn and soybeans currently make up about 96 percent of the crops grown in Iowa. Enshayan would like to see Iowa bring back what he calls the "heavenly" agricultural diversity it displayed in the 1940s and 1950s when the state was a leading apple and grape producer and boasted a diversity of businesses including canneries, creameries and meat lockers. Back then, he said, there were also "so many connections between producers and consumers."

For more information contact Kamyar Enshayan at 319-273-7575 or kamyar.enshayan@uni.edu or visit www.practicalfarmers.org.

New Board Member Profile:

Angela Tedesco

The balance found in growing good food

By Todd Kimm

For the past eight years, Angela Tedesco has owned and operated Turtle Farm, a 20-acre organic fruit and vegetable farm near Granger. Angela markets the majority of her fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers through a 100-member CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) but also operates a farm stand and offers U-pick strawberries and raspberries.

Angela grew up on farms in Oklahoma. “We always had a big garden and I got to help with the harvest and preserving/freezing,” she says. “That brought with it an appreciation for how good food should taste.”

Because Angela was born between two brothers who did most of the outdoor work, she didn’t learn how to drive a tractor until a few years ago. Now she’s proud to be the only sibling, of five, still driving one.

Angela received a BS from Oklahoma University in chemistry and then worked for several years in research laboratories. After raising her children (Amy, 28, Denver, Co., and Kristin, 26, San Francisco, Cal.), she served as director of religious education at the First Unitarian Church in Des Moines.

Organic farming has allowed Angela to integrate her interests in science and spirituality. “The science training, which I was drawn to by my love of the outdoors, was a little too sterile a dissection of nature, and the years I got to focus more on religion and spirituality helped bring back the ‘sacred’ that I think had been missing since I left the farm,” she says. “Being a chemistry major and working in research labs, I was cognizant of the dangers of working with chemicals, and that certainly steered my course toward organic agriculture as well.”

Angela earned an MS in horticulture from Iowa State University, which, she says, “helped solidify thoughts of



Photo by Helen Gunderson

an organic farm.”

A PFI member for the past eight years, Angela says she values PFI for “the people, networking with colleagues with similar value systems, the PFI staff, and, of course, the food.” Of her reasons for deciding to serve on the board, she says, “I value what PFI stands for. I appreciate what PFI has done for me, and thought I could give something back. It doesn’t hurt that there are very nice people involved.”

Angela is married to John Tedesco, a child psychologist. In addition to raising and marketing food, she is active in speaking about food—its cultivation and nurture, its many uses and importance in community, and how eating is a moral act. ♡



Corn, Soybeans and Herbs

For new PFI board member Eric Franzenburg, growing herbs is full of learning, hard work and good smells

By Todd Kimm

Farming as a get-rich-quick scheme? Crazy idea, right? But a few years back, news of the big premiums being paid out for exotic-sounding herbs like ginseng and echinacea lured many with the promise of easy money.

Eric Franzenburg obviously wasn't one of those people. Why? Because the 38-year-old Benton County farmer is still at it, growing certified organic herbs like skullcap, comfrey and mugwort. Most of those bandwagon-jumpers got weeded out early by the hard realities of growing and marketing the stuff. Eric, on the other hand, now dedicates 25 of a 500-acre operation to herbs, after starting with just three in 1994. Herbs now provide a quarter of his net income. But don't ever think that success came easy.

"If I knew then what I know now, I think I would have probably considered not even getting started in it," Eric admits, standing in his 2,880-square-foot greenhouse surrounded by 140,000 plugs of skullcap, a medicinal herb valued for its calming effect.

"Don't get me wrong," he continues. "I love working with plants. But we've put a lot of time into this out here. It's hard work."

In 1992, Eric left his job with the ISU Agronomy Department to come home and work with his father on the farm where he grew up.

Father and son got started growing herbs through a program spearheaded

"I wasn't interested in becoming a farmer to farm 10,000 acres of corn and soybeans. So I had to start looking for ways we could change the operation so we didn't have to fit into that treadmill."

by the Benton Development Group. Eric recalls an early informational meeting: "There was a guy saying, 'This is it, this is what I'm going to make a million on.' That spring he took 160 acres that he'd just inherited and basically planted it all to herbs. The guy just kept dumping money into it and by July it was a total mess. He sold all of the equipment in the fall. He went out of business just like that and was done with it in about four months."

A cautious approach

Eric decided to take a more cautious approach, ease into it slowly. He and his father, Don, continue to plant no-till corn and beans. A 120-head farrow-to-finish hog operation provides additional income and fertilizer for both the conventional and non-conventional crops.

"After about two years of farming with my father I could see that agriculture was evolving quickly to a get-large-or-get-out mentality, which I had no desire to do," Eric says. "I wasn't interested in becoming a farmer to farm 10,000 acres of corn and soybeans. So I had to start looking for ways we could change the operation so we didn't have to fit into that treadmill."

He says of growing herbs, "You're able to work on just 20 acres versus 2,000. You just have more of an understanding of what you're doing on 20 acres. That's just the way I like to farm. I don't like to sit on a big tractor and pull a 40-foot field cultivator. That's not what I came back to farm for. You've got to be able to be happy with what you're doing."

Eric's philosophy of not putting his eggs all in one basket means that he straddles two very different worlds of farming. While he has no problem with that, his hope is eventually to go whole hog on herbs.

"If I could just farm 100 acres, grow herbs on a 100 acres, make a good living, or even on five acres, yeah, I'd do that," he says. "That's the goal. But I'm just trying to be realistic about it. I'm not trying to jump off the cliff doing it. We just kind of gradually get into it more and more. We learn a heck of a lot every year, try not to repeat the same mistakes."

Getting off on the right foot

Early on, the Franzenburgs participated in a comprehensive study on growing herbs in Iowa through a SARE grant awarded to the Benton Development Group. Through the grant, they also gained the expertise of a professor at Purdue University.

"While we learned a lot from the study," Eric says, "it truly was the foundation of a steep learning curve with still a long way to go."

A fellow Benton County herb grower, Leroy Ballard, has been another asset—and an invaluable one at that. Eric and Leroy compare notes on what works each year and what doesn't. They also cooperate in their marketing efforts and coordinate what they plant. Leroy, for example, grows lots of echinacea, while Eric is planting 80 percent of his herb crop to skullcap this year to fill a big contract. Both dabbled in the high-premium ginseng, but found that the plant doesn't seem to like Benton County's rich soil.

Eric and Leroy work through brokers to market the herbs to customers

Herb resources

Information about growing herbs on a larger scale than gardens is scarce. Eric recommends *The Potential of Herbs as a Cash Crop: How to Make a Living in the Country* by Richard Allan Miller, Ten Speed Press.

A good resource guide on herb gardening can be found at www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/AFSIC_pubs/srb9606.htm. A good resource guide for growing medicinal herbs: www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/AFSIC_pubs/mherb.htm

More good resources on herb growing, cooking with herbs and herbs in general:

Your Backyard Herb Garden: A Gardener's Guide to Growing Over 50 Herbs Plus How to Use Them in Cooking, Crafts, Companion Planting and More, by Miranda Smith, Rodale Press.

Medicinal Herbs in the Garden, Field & Marketplace, by Lee Sturdivant & Tom Traunfeld, Scribner.

Herbs for Sale: Growing and Marketing Herbs, Herbal Products, and Herbal Know-How, by Lee Sturdivant, San Juan Naturals, 800-770-9070.

The Business of Herbs, bimonthly newsletter, email: doliver@minerva.polaristel.net.

Member Profile

throughout the U.S. and Europe. Eric markets a quarter of his herb crop within the county to Frontier Natural Products Co-op near Norway. (Early interest from the Ankeny-based Tones dried up when the brothers who owned the company sold it to a multinational corporation a few years back).

Marketing is the key, says Eric: "It's 50 percent of the battle to know where the markets are and develop a working relationship with them. Then you have to prove yourself and develop reliability."

Herbs are basically divided into two categories: medicinal and culinary. The Franzenburgs, like most growers, favor the more lucrative medicinals. While Eric's an avid student of how to grow the plants, their actual uses don't interest him deeply—although he and his family use the popular echinacea to ward off colds.

In addition to the herbs mentioned above, this year the Franzenburgs are planting motherwort, heal-all, milk thistle, lobelia, peppermint, sheepsorrel, dill, parsley, cilantro, and basil.

Eric's favorite is basil. "I like being in the fields with basil," he says. "The smell of basil in the field, it's intoxicating."

Coming home to farm

"I was just ready to farm," Eric says of his decision to leave the herbicide evaluation program at ISU, a job he took shortly after earning a double major in agronomy and pest management at the school.

"I wanted to raise my family on a farm; that was really probably the biggest thing," he says. "I wasn't too excited about having them grow up in

town and not experience some of the things I did when I was a kid."

Eric and his wife Ann have three children: Ellen, 11; Calvin, 9; and Grant, 4. Ann grew up on a farm in Northwest Iowa and missed that life as well.

"I always enjoyed working on the farm," Eric adds. "I liked being outside, working with equipment and livestock. I always enjoyed putting in a good day's work." He pauses, smiles. "If I didn't, I wouldn't be doing this."

The qualities of a good herb farmer

Growing herbs requires at least three things of a grower: hard work, a willingness to take risks, and an ability to roll with the punches and learn from your mistakes.

The process starts in mid-February when the herbs are planted to flats inside the greenhouse. Around May, the plugs are transplanted to the field. A piece of machinery called a transplanter is hitched behind a tractor and two people ride the contraption. They place the plugs in revolving paddles that plant the herbs into the ground, two rows at a time.

First comes the fresh harvest, when certain herbs are harvested for the medicinal qualities found in their flowers, leaves or roots. Fresh harvesting is done by hand. The material, which can reach buyers within hours after harvest, will eventually be turned into oils for use in tinctures and other treatments.

Later on in the season, the remaining plants are harvested—some with a tractor-drawn root digger; others are cut with a sickle bar mower and gathered by hand. The material is then dried. Drying can account for as much

as 35 percent of an herb grower's total expense. Eric and Leroy have done lots of experimenting with ways to lower their drying costs.

While herbs offer the potential for greater returns than conventional crops, a variety of factors throughout the growing season make them a fairly risky proposition.

"One crop can be very good," Eric explains, "and there can be a couple others you lose money on."

War on Weeds

Weeds are probably the biggest problem, as well as the source of some of the hardest work. "It's got to be a weed-free environment," Eric explains. "That's hard to do, especially in an organic situation. With vegetables, you can go out and harvest a tomato and have velvet leaf every so often, but with this stuff you cannot have a single weed out there because it will get harvested. It's darn near impossible once you harvest it to pull the weeds out of it. It's just too time consuming."

One year there were so many weeds in one field, the Franzenburgs had to cut the whole crop down and hope for a second growth. Because the plants are so fragile, much of the weeding has to be done by hand.

Other variables a grower must carefully maneuver are the tricky dormancy periods of some of the herbs, choosing the right time to harvest, and knowing when and how much to till.

Markets are also volatile. "The price of something starts out at \$4 a pound at the beginning of the season and all of a sudden it drops to \$2 a pound when you go to sell it because there's overproduction or the demand has dropped off," Eric says. "Then you start to wonder why you even do this."

In the end, though, these challenges are the very thing that keeps Eric coming back for more.

"I like learning and that's what you're doing," he says. "You're learning all the time. I'm an inquisitive person as a whole and that's what kind of drives me to keep doing this."

A PFI member since '94

Eric joined PFI in 1994 after learning of the organization through his work in bringing a CSA to Benton County. He says the opportunities offered by PFI are many, including "getting together with likeminded producers, learning from each other and sharing ideas." He replaces Michael Nash as PFI District 3 director.

After all is said and done, Eric is optimistic about the future of smaller-scale farming, even if he's realistic about the fact that most opportunity lies within niche markets.

"I still think there's opportunities out there for guys if they're really willing to work hard and develop that type of niche market," he says. And surveying the sea of skullcap plugs just a few days shy of having to be hauled out into the spring sunshine, he hits his favorite theme one more time: "But it won't happen without a lot of hard work. You have to be dedicated and really willing to work at it."*



Experience it yourself

Franzenburg Herb Field Day
Friday, Sept. 5, 10:30am-5pm

- Tour of Frontier Natural Products Co-op in Norway
- Herb-based lunch
- Tour of Franzenburg farm near Van Horne with info on growing, harvesting, drying and marketing herbs

See PFI Field Day Guide for more info, or
call 319-228-8758 or 515-232-5661

Conservation Security Program

It's Still Alive!

By Teresa Opheim, Regional Coordinator, MSAWG

This year, PFI members have had several opportunities to learn more about the Conservation Security Program (CSP), the innovative green payments program that was part of the most recent farm bill. Members will have additional opportunities to learn more at field days this summer. Until then, here are answers to some of the questions we've been hearing about the program...

I heard the funding for the CPS was eliminated. Is this true?

No! The CSP is alive and funded, just not open for enrollment yet. The program is currently marked for \$3.77 billion over the next 10 years—a significant pot of money.

What did happen was this: The U.S. Congress capped the program in its budget bill passed in February, shifting the money to pay for emergency disaster aid. Both Republican and Democrat Senate leaders publicly committed at that time to restore full funding (estimated at \$7.77 billion) later this year.

Should I talk to my local NRCS office about CSP?

Yes. You cannot sign a contract yet for the program, but it is a good idea to communicate with your local NRCS staff about your interest.

The Midwest Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (MSAWG) now estimates that the program will be available early in fiscal year 2004, which begins in October 2003. It has been one year since the program was

signed into law, and is high time that the U.S. Department of Agriculture got this going.

Many of you responded to the USDA's call for comments on the program earlier this year. (In fact, more Iowa farmers responded than farmers from any other state!) Likely this summer, the proposed rules for the program will be released. These proposed rules will tell us a lot about where USDA plans to go with the program. Your comments on the proposed rules will be crucial.

How much will I get paid under the program?

Everyone wants to know, and of course, there are no concrete answers yet. However, here are some general points to keep in mind:

- ❖ The maximum any producer can get under the program is \$45,000 per year; we anticipate few will reach this maximum. However, the program is designed to provide a nice level of support for farmers practicing high levels of conservation.
- ❖ This is a program for those serious about conservation. To even qualify for the lowest tier, you must commit to solve a resource problem, which may take some work!
- ❖ If you are implementing or will commit to implement a whole farm plan—addressing all resource problems, including soil, water, air, and wildlife considerations, that NRCS identifies for your area—then you will qualify for the higher level of payments.
- ❖ A particular benefit for PFI members: If you participate in PFI's on-farm research and education programs, you will help boost your payment in the CSP program if the on-farm work involves critical conservation concerns.

Do you have more questions?

Send an email to Teresa Opheim at teresa@msawg.org
Phone # 319-354-0258

I have already done a lot of conservation on my farm. I don't see how this program will help me.

This is the program you and other “good actors” have been requesting for a long time!

Under CSP, payments to farmers will be based on conservation results provided by farmers. Only a small portion of the total payment will be for “cost share” for implementing new practices. If you have already achieved a high level of resource protection in your farming system, you are achieving conservation results and will be compensated for that through CSP.

Take the Mike Natvig and Amy Miller farm near Cresco. These PFI members were featured in the annual conference workshop on the CSP. Mike and Amy already have an impressive array of conservation measures in place on their farm—resource-conserving crop rotations, woodland and prairie restorations, erosion controls, etc. The Minnesota Project estimates that the Natvig-Miller farm may be eligible for a payment of around \$20,000 per year—this for farmers who are already doing it right!

What's so different about this program from other conservation programs?

This program is innovative for many reasons. Here are a few:

- ❖ The Conservation Security Program has a rigorous natural resource screen. It is the first conservation program ever that requires that resource concerns be solved to a sustainable level. This means, for example, that if soil erosion is the concern, it must be solved below the soil loss tolerance level, or “T.”

- ❖ The program provides the most rewards to those thinking most holistically about conservation on their farms.
- ❖ The program has entitlement status, meaning if you qualify, you get a payment. There are no ranking criteria, signup waits, etc. With the cap Congress put in place, there will, however, be a limit to the number of producers who will get in, so it will pay to enroll in the first year or two the program is available. In the meantime, many are working to lift the cap so all qualified farmers can participate over the next decade.✱

Join PFI's CSP Farmer Advisory Committee

PFI is forming a Farmer Advisory Committee on the CSP. The group will meet two to four times over the next year to gather feedback and analysis on the implementation of the program. Your feedback will be conveyed directly to those in Des Moines and Washington who are in charge of this program. As you become knowledgeable of the program we will in turn ask you to help us in educating other farmers and stakeholders about the program. Dave Williams will chair the committee and Teresa Opheim of MSAWG will help coordinate the effort. PFI will provide stipends to cover your time and travel. If you are interested in being part of this committee, contact Robert Karp at 515-232-5661 ext. 102, or robert@practicalfarmers.org.

Staff and Program Updates

New PFI Staff

Several new staff and associates have recently joined the PFI team:

A new field day coordinator: We are piloting several day-long field days this year and putting more effort into our field days in general. Your field day guide should arrive any day now. This effort requires some extra help and we are pleased to announce that Del Christensen will be our field day coordinator for 2003, working closely with Rick Exner and the rest of the PFI staff. Del has worked with Trees Forever as program director for many years and has been coordinating one of our food systems projects the past year. We are fortunate to have Del involved with PFI. Welcome, Del!

A new camp coordinator: Shelly Gradwell has left and we are all sad, but Cynthia Tallman has joined us and given us all good reason to cheer up! Cynthia is an Ames native with a degree in elementary education from ISU and has been working as youth coordinator for the Hardin County 4-H. She has jumped into a big job at a late date with lots of verve and courage. Welcome, Cynthia!

Food systems program assistant: Andrea Woldridge joins PFI as part-time program assistant in our food systems program. Andrea currently splits her time between PFI and pursuing a degree in Public Service in Agriculture at Iowa State University. Welcome aboard, Andrea!

Life in Iowa intern: And finally, we're happy to welcome David Rosmann as Life in Iowa intern. David is the son of longtime PFI members and sustainable ag stars Ron and Maria Rosmann.

PFI is co-recipient of Kellogg grant

PFI, in partnership with several organizations, recently received a \$559,990 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to help build new food supply networks for sustainably raised Iowa foods.

The grant, part of the Kellogg Foundation's Food and Society Initiative, will continue PFI's work in developing new niche markets for Iowa pork through the Pork Niche Market Working Group (PNMWG). Grant funds will also launch research and development activities to market local and regional foods as well as products for a new bio-based economy in Iowa.

The project, "Value Chain Partnerships for a Sustainable Agriculture," is being directed by the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Other partners include Iowa State University Extension, ISU College of Agriculture and the Henry A. Wallace Endowed Chair for Sustainable Agriculture at ISU.

New Farm Apprenticeship Program

As of this spring, Iowa has its very own sustainable ag apprenticeship program. PFI's "Learning the Farmer Way" connects people looking for hands-on experience in sustainable ag with farmers who can provide that experience.

Farmers and potential apprentices each send in applications and then contact each other to set up working relationships, including hours of work, compensation and lodging.

The program is open to anyone 18 years of age or older and farm experience is not required. Applicants should contact apprenticeship coordinator Kamyar Enshayan at 319-273-7575, or kamyar.enshayan@uni.edu.

SARE grant funds herd health study

The North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE) Program has approved funding to address the health issues of young pigs in alternative production systems. The proposal grew out of an issue team of the Pork Niche Market Working Group (PNMWG), a collaboration of producers, industry groups, commodity organizations, and agricultural scientists coordinated by PFI and the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. PFI/ISU Extension Farming Systems Coordinator Rick Exner will lead the project.

The project, funded at nearly the maximum allowable \$150,000, will help farmers, field veterinarians, and ISU scientists—working together as a “research alliance”—collect information, respond to problems, and evaluate structural changes.

PFI listserv in the works

PFI members will soon have a new way of connecting with one another. The PFI Listserv will encourage and facilitate communication among our membership. Pose questions and share information about sustainable agriculture and local food systems. Compare research trial results. Organize a marketing group. Publicize events. Swap recipes. Help make the PFI community even more of a buzzing beehive of communication and support. If you don't have access to email at home, consider utilizing your local public library's free Internet access.

Current members with an email address on file with PFI will soon receive an email on how to join the listserv. If we don't have your current email address and you are interested in participating, please send your current email address to communications@practicalfarmers.org.

Iowa Writers' Circle Launched

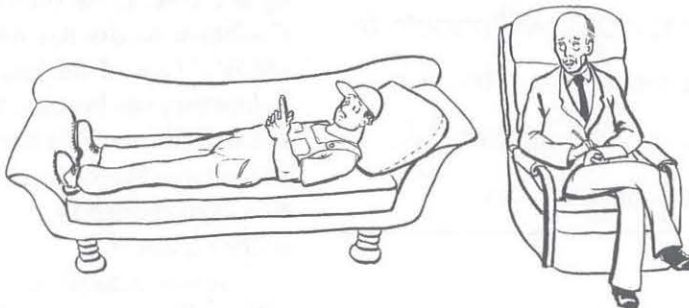
PFI is part of a joint project with the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and Women, Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN) to raise the profile of sustainable agriculture in the state. A workshop was held at the PFI annual conference in January to discuss possibilities and gauge support. The fledgling Iowa Writers'

Circle for Sustainable Agriculture (IWCSA) is at present an electronic mailing list (or listserv) coordinating the efforts of writers in the state who want feedback on original writings about sustainable agriculture and food systems. The listserv will also provide an arena for discussion about current news media reports on sustainable ag-related topics, as well as provide some support for writers who want to get their pieces placed as commentary in newspapers and magazines, radio and television programs, or other news media. Organizers seek more writers and editors to become involved. For more information, email Todd Kimm at communications@practicalfarmers.org or call 515-232-5661, ext. 108.

The Farmer Funny

Art by Kevin de Laplante

Sustainable Ag Therapy



So, when did you first think about growing something other than corn and soybeans?

Mr. Rosmann Goes to Washington



Harlan PFI member Ron Rosmann's visit to Washington, D.C., in February was a bona fide whirlwind tour. First, he spoke at a joint fundraiser for the Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRE) and the Pesticide Action Network (PAN). The subject of his address: organic agriculture from an Iowa farmer's perspective.

The event was held at Restaurant Nora's, the first fully organic restaurant in the U.S. Also speaking was Ignacio Chapela, the U.C. Berkeley professor who first detected GMO contamination of rare native corns in the remote mountain areas of Mexico.

Ron then met with Senator Charles Grassley to discuss the Fieldale Amendment, which allows non-organic grains to be fed to chickens and other organic livestock if the price for organic corn proves to be twice that of conventional feed in the buyer's market area.

"This was a very fruitful discussion in which Senator Grassley pledged his support to repeal that amendment," Ron said, making Grassley one of the first Republicans to join in the repeal effort, which has proved successful. Other issues discussed included the Conservation Security Act, the ban on packer ownership of livestock, and the payment limitations on government subsidies. Ron was accompanied by Bob Scrowcroft, executive director of OFRE, and Brise Tencer, acting policy coordinator for OFRE.

Ron next attended a meeting of the Economic Research Service to listen and respond to progress made on better reporting of organic marketing data by the USDA. He then attended a session of the Sustainable Agriculture Coalition to discuss needed changes in the National Organic Program (NOP). "One of the greatest needs is for peer review of certification bodies before they can become licensed under the NOP," Ron said. "This is a requirement of the new rule but has not yet been implemented. It is the main reason why a large Massachusetts organic egg producer was able to obtain certification even though he was not in compliance with the organic rules for access to the outdoors."

"It was certainly a trip well spent and well worth the effort," Ron added. "We really can make a difference by our willingness to speak out on issues affecting us as organic and sustainable farmers here in Iowa."

"We really can make a difference by our willingness to speak out on issues affecting us as organic and sustainable farmers here in Iowa."

Dick and Sharon Thompson named Master Farmers

Dick and Sharon Thompson were named 2002 Iowa Master Farmers by *Wallaces' Farmer* magazine. They were honored along with three other Iowa families at a March 20 luncheon. The award program has recognized 390 Iowans since Henry A. Wallace established it in 1926.

A profile in the March issue of *Wallaces' Farmer* outlined the history of the couple's involvement with sustainable agriculture, from their first on-farm trials in 1979, to co-founding PFI in 1985, to examples of cost-saving practices they've shared with PFI members. Asked by *Wallaces'* where he thinks farming will be in 10 years, Dick replied, "We're not going to change the world, but at least there's an alternative out there for people who want it."

Struthers honored as Master Pork Producers

Story County PFI members Dave and Becky Struthers were named 2002 Master Pork Producers at the Iowa Pork Congress in January. They were one of 14 operations honored for innovation, quality, efficiency and production records. Neighbors, peers and fellow pork producers nominate farmers for the award each year.

The Struthers manage a 900-sow farrow-to-finish operation near Collins. They employ confinement, outdoor concrete lot facilities and hoop structures in their production system and also tend to a 100-head ewe flock and 700 tillable acres. Manure is their primary fertilizer source with only minimal amounts of purchased nitrogen. Their on-farm research for PFI has covered adjustment of nitrogen rates and different hoop house manure applications.

Naylor elected NFFC president

PFI member George Naylor was elected president of The National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) at its annual meeting Feb. 17 in Washington, D.C. Naylor represents Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (Iowa CCI) on NFFC's executive committee.

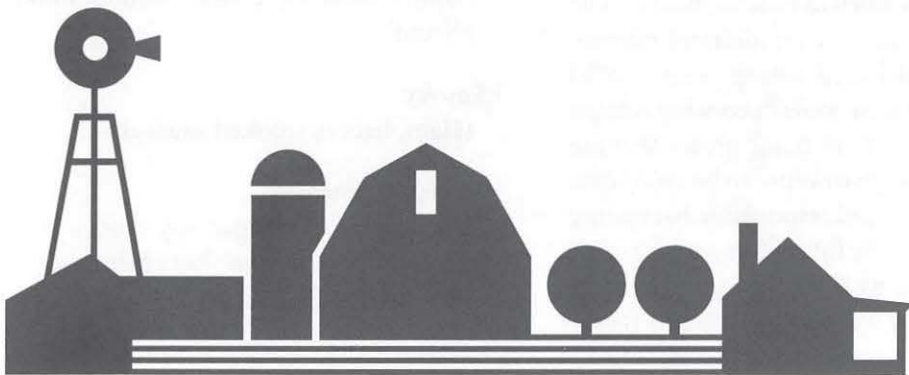
He succeeds five-year president Bill Christison, a grain and cattle farmer from Chillicothe, Mo.

"It's been said that the solutions for democracy simply involve more democracy," Naylor said. "And whether it's the U.S. Congress or the World Trade Organization (WTO), family farmers and consumers must elevate their voices over the din of big business lobbyists."

Naylor farms with his wife Peggy and sons Dylan, 12, and Jackson, 10, near Churdan, Iowa.

Founded in 1986, NFFC brings together farmers and others to organize national projects focused on preserving and strengthening family farms. The organization's mission is to serve as a national link for grassroots organizations working on family farm issues. NFFC membership currently consists of 34 grassroots farm, resource conservation, and rural advocacy groups from 32 states.

Have you or another PFI member won an award or done something interesting? Let us know about it! Send news items or tips to Todd Kimm at PFI, Box 349, Ames, IA 50010, email communications@practicalfarmers.org or call 515-232-5661 ext. 108.



Greens:

Savoring the Taste of Summer

By Carol Hunt
Local Food Systems Coordinator,
Johnson County Soil and Water Conservation District

Greens resources

Greens Glorious Greens!: More Than 140 Ways to Prepare All Those Great-Tasting, Super-Healthy, Beautiful Leafy Greens, by Johnna Albi, St. Martin's Press.

The Harrowsmith Salad Garden: A Complete Guide to Growing and Dressing Fresh Vegetables and Greens, by Turid Forsyth, Marilyn Simonds Mohr, Camden House

Soliva: How to Grow \$500,000 on One Acre and Peace on Earth, by Anna Edey, Trailblazer Press. The author's solar greenhouse produces salad greens all winter for restaurants.

For more on growing greens year-round, check out www.newfarm.org/depts/beginning_farmers/0503/greens.shtml

The word “greens” covers a lot of territory. It can refer to both salad greens and to leafy plants suitable for cooking. Greens are among the first cultivated plants to be harvested in the spring; they are generally quite cold-hardy, and even in Iowa, many varieties will over-winter with only minimal protection. Greens are full of flavor, versatile, and easy to prepare. Greens also have a lot to recommend them nutritionally. They are rich in dietary fiber, and in vitamins and minerals such as Vitamins A and C, calcium, iron, potassium, and folate, but are very low in calories.

Wild greens

Greens have been cultivated for centuries, but wild greens have always been an important part of the human diet, and are still gathered in many communities. In Mediterranean countries, young edible leaves and shoots are gathered in spring and are served raw, perhaps with a simple dressing of olive oil, salt and lemon juice or vinegar. The restaurant-trendy baby salad mix known as *mesclun* has humble origins; in Provence it's a traditional mixture of wild and cultivated young greens. Wild greens are also eaten cooked; cooking softens the texture and taste of many greens that are otherwise too tough or bitter to be enjoyable.

The cautious and responsible harvesting of wild greens can be lots of fun, and is a great way to get to know the outdoors. There are many books and websites devoted to foraging for wild greens and other plants.

Cooked greens

Cultivated greens are generally milder-tasting than wild ones, but they still have plenty of flavor, and of course are much more convenient to obtain! Your local farmers market will have a number of varieties to choose from in the spring and early summer, and again in the fall. Greens suitable for cooking range from milder, quick-cooking varieties like spinach, chard and beet greens (all closely related) to stronger-tasting, sturdier greens that can be cooked longer, like collards, kale, mustard and even leaves from turnips and kohlrabi. Hearty greens like collards and kale taste too “strong” for many people, and can be toned down by long, slow cooking. This produces a softer texture, as well. Hearty greens can also be seasoned with other ingredients that either complement or soften their flavor. Here are some types of flavors that marry well with greens (and often with each other):

- **Rich and fat-based**
(Butter, olive oil, cream, coconut milk, cheese)
- **Smoky**
(Ham, bacon, smoked sausage)
- **Sharp or powerful**
(Lemon juice, vinegar, soy sauce, garlic, onions, ginger, hot chile peppers, other spices)

Cooked greens: basic preparation

Discard leaves that are yellowing or damaged. Brown edges can be trimmed off if the rest of the leaf looks good. Soak greens 5-10 minutes in a big sink or tub of water with a handful of salt—the salt helps repel dirt. Then change the water one or more times, until no more dirt or debris is noticeable. Drain leaves, but don't dry them unless you plan to store them for more than a day (in that case, spin or blot them dry and store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator produce crisper). Remove tough center ribs from the leaves by tearing or cutting. You can cook the leaves whole or cut up, depending on the recipe.

Put the greens (with wash water still clinging to the leaves) into a big pot with a couple of tablespoons of oil or butter in the bottom. Really pack them in; sprinkle with a little salt as you pack (don't omit this step; salt brings out flavor). If greens are dry, add half a cup of water. Cover the pot and turn it on medium-high heat. In a few minutes, take the lid off and toss the greens; they should be starting to steam and wilt. Put the lid back on. Every minute or two take the lid off and toss the greens. As soon as they are all wilted and have turned a darker green (5-10 minutes), they're ready to eat, but you can cook them even longer if you want (30-45 minutes on medium-low; add more water so the pot doesn't cook dry), they'll get softer in texture and milder. Cooked greens freeze well, so make a lot.

Dressing raw (salad) greens

Spring and early summer bring us a wealth of vibrant locally grown lettuces and salad greens. Many people who won't eat cooked greens will happily eat a salad of raw greens. In general, the darker the salad green, the more flavor (and vitamins) it has. For some of us, "salad" means pale green iceberg lettuce, which doesn't have a lot of flavor or nutrients but is full of cool, juicy crunch. A wedge of iceberg lettuce topped with creamy

dressing (like the Maytag Blue Cheese Dressing on the next page) can be just the thing on a hot summer night. On the other end of the spectrum, hearty spinach pairs beautifully with the robust tang of Hot Bacon Dressing. In general, dressings with a sharper flavor are best with dark, flavorful greens like spinach and arugula, or those that are slightly bitter (regardless of color) like frisee (curly endive), escarole, and radicchio. Very delicate lettuce, like Bibb, is best with a light dressing. Most lettuces and salad greens will taste great no matter what kind of dressing you use, and a mixture of varieties and colors adds beauty to your salad bowl as well as flavor. Freshness is everything when it comes to salads (and produce in general), so don't buy greens that are limp or yellowing.

The most basic ingredients for dressing a salad are simply oil and vinegar, with salt and pepper in supporting roles. The kind and amount of oil and vinegar you use can make a dressing lighter or sharper/more robust in flavor. Three parts oil to one part vinegar makes a tangier dressing, while a four-to-one ration gives a milder flavor. Neutral vegetable oil—I like Hain™ sunflower oil; many people use canola oil—is best for a light dressing, while olive oil (extra-virgin) is more robust. Walnut or hazelnut oil adds a great flavor. Different types of oil can be mixed, of course, to your taste. For a hearty dressing, use red wine vinegar or sherry vinegar. White wine vinegar (including champagne vinegar) is lighter in taste, and rice vinegar is very delicate and can add an Asian touch, especially if you add other Asian ingredients like soy sauce instead of salt, a little toasted sesame oil, and a bit of ginger.*

Resources cont'd

"1997—Year of the Mesclun," good info on a mixture of greens that are grown and harvested together for instant mixed salad, *Horticulture and Home Pest News*, Feb. 28, 1997, www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews/1997/2-28-1997/mesclun.html.

"Specialty Lettuce & Greens: Organic Production," an excellent primer from ATTRA on growing greens, <http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/lettuce.html>.

"Lettuce and Other Salad Greens," discusses different salad greens, their uses and nutritional value, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/Horticulture/g1268.htm.

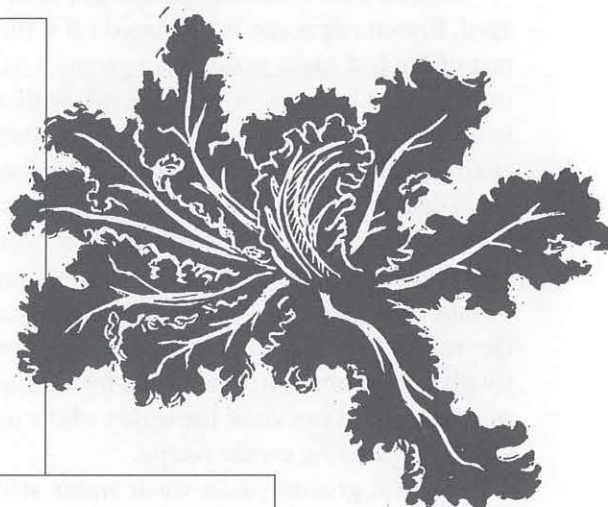
"Commercial Production and Management of Cabbage and Leafy Greens," not just for Georgians, includes marketing info, University of Georgia, www.ces.uga.edu/pubcd/b1181.htm.

"Greens Production," Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, <http://pearl.agcomm.okstate.edu/hort/vegetables/f-6031.pdf>.

Greens

Greens with olive oil and lemon juice

Prepare mixed greens according to basic instructions on previous page. Small leaves can be left whole, larger ones cut or torn into bite-sized pieces. If using spinach, cook 3-5 minutes. If using other greens, cook 5-10 minutes. Drain if there's a lot of liquid (this liquid is good to drink or add to soups). Toss with olive oil, a squeeze of lemon, salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm or at room temperature. This is very similar to a Greek dish called "Horta," made with wild greens gathered in spring. [Approximate quantities: For 1 pound of greens, use 2 tablespoons lemon juice, 4 tablespoons olive oil.]



Maytag Blue Cheese Dressing

4 ounces Maytag blue cheese (produced in Newton by the same Maytag family of appliance fame)

1 tablespoon white wine vinegar

1/2 cup sour cream or plain yogurt

1/2 cup mayonnaise (*not* salad dressing)

(Optional: 1 tablespoon minced chives and/or 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper)

Place all ingredients in a blender or food processor and blend until smooth.

Great for dipping potato chips, spicy chicken wings and raw veggies, too.

Basic oil and vinegar dressing

1/2 teaspoon salt (sea salt has the best flavor)

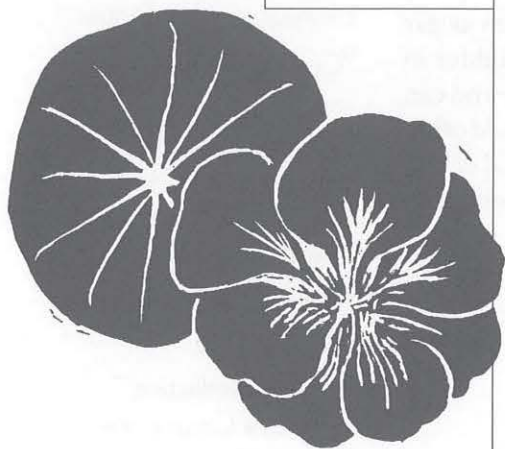
1/8 teaspoon ground pepper

1/4 cup vinegar or lemon juice

3/4-1 cup oil

Place all ingredients in a jar with a tightly fitting lid, close the lid, and shake vigorously. Make sure to shake again before using. This amount of vinaigrette should be enough to dress two large heads of lettuce. Lettuce for salads should always be washed well and dried thoroughly, and should be crisp and free from wilted or brown leaves.

Fresh herbs (dill, mint, tarragon, basil and chives are good choices) or garlic can be added to the dressing, but should be removed from the jar after 24 hours for the best flavor.



JUNE

- ❖ **INCA Field Day**, June 21, 2-7pm, starts at Bountiful Harvest near Brayton. Traveling field day to spotlight participants in INCA's Growing Food & Profit program. Contact Jan Libbey, 641-495-6367, libland@frontiernet.net.
- ❖ **2003 Farm Progress Hay Expo**, June 25 (rain date, June 26), 8:30-4:30pm, Fredericksburg. Displays and demonstrations of the latest in hay-making technology, www.hayexpo.com.
- ❖ **Local Community Action Conversations**, various dates in June and July. A presentation about the food and farming crisis and its effects in Iowa communities by Fr. Marvin Boes of Iowa Rural Advocacy 2003. For a list of dates and locations, contact Boes, 712-277-2046.

JULY

- ❖ **Iowa Prairie Conference**, July 11-13, Iowa State Center Scheman Building, ISU campus, Ames. For info and registration forms, visit www.iowaprairienetwork.org or contact Inger Lamb, 515-963-7681 or 515-240-4358.
- ❖ **PFI Field Day**, July 19, 1:30-4:30pm, Mike Natvig/Amy Miller, Protivin, 563-569-8358, northriver@iowatelecom.net.
- ❖ **One Step at a Time Gardens CSA Celebration**, July 19, 4pm. INCA event. Contact Jan Libbey at 641-495-6367, libland@frontiernet.net.
- ❖ **PFI Field Day/Twilight Tour**, July 23, 6:30-8:30pm, Laura Krouse farm, Mt. Vernon, 319-895-6924.

AUGUST

- ❖ **PFI Field Day**, Aug. 19, 4-9pm, Neely-Kinyon Research Farm, Greenfield, call Deb Hall, 641-743-8412.
- ❖ **ISU Extension Value-added Forum**, Aug. 21, 10am-2pm, Hawthorn Court, Ames, Sara Duhrkopf, sduhrkop@iastate.edu.
- ❖ **PFI Field Day**, August 22, 10am-8pm, Paul Mugge, Sutherland, 712-446-2414, pmugge@midlands.net.
- ❖ **PFI Field Day**, Aug. 23, 9:30am-1pm, Dordt College, Sioux Center, 712-722-6220, rdehaan@dordt.edu.
- ❖ **Iowa Farm & Field Fest**, Ames, Aug. 26-28, www.farmshows.com.
- ❖ **Value-added Niche Marketing Conference**, Aug. 27, 9am-5pm, Scheman Building, ISU Center, Ames. Speakers from across the country address a wide range of topics, including developing sound business plans, grant opportunities, certification and labeling requirements, processor relationships and marketing opportunities. For more info, 515-225-7675 or jhoppe@iowapork.org.
- ❖ **2003 Farm, Food, and Future Conference**, Aug. 28, 8am-5pm, Scheman Building, Ames. Contact Sara Duhrkopf, 515-294-0588, sduhrkop@iastate.edu.

SEPTEMBER

- ❖ **The National Workshop for Local and State Food Policy Councils**, Sept. 4-5, Drake University, Des Moines. Held in conjunction with

the Second Annual Iowa Food Policy Conference, www.statefoodpolicy.org/sfpc_conference.htm.

- ❖ **PFI Field Day**, Sept. 5, 10:30am-5pm, Eric Franzenburg, Shellsburg, 319-228-8758, eafran@netins.net.
- ❖ **PFI Field Day**, Sept. 13, 10am-3pm, Tom Wahl and Kathy Dice, Wapello, 319-729-5905, redfernfarm@lisco.com.
- ❖ **"The Fall Perennial Divide,"** Sept. 13, 9am-1pm, Des Moines Botanical Center. Donate plant divisions to community garden groups who plan, plant and maintain community vegetable and ornamental gardens. Contact Teva Dawson, 515-323-8907, tldawson@dmgov.org.
- ❖ **PFI Field Day**, Sept. 19, 9am-4pm, Francis Thicke, Fairfield. Organic dairy processing workshop (pre-registration required, limited to 20), 9am-noon. Afternoon controlled grazing presentation, and more. Call 515-232-5661 to register and/or for more info.
- ❖ **PFI Field Day**, Sept. 23, 10am-4pm, Steve Reinart, Glidden, 712-656-2563.
- ❖ **PFI Field Day**, Sept. 27, 1:30-4:30pm, Henry A. Wallace Center, Orient, 641-337-5019, haw@mddc.com.
- ❖ **PFI Field Day**, Oct. 4, 9am-4pm, Don Adams/Nan Bonfils, Madrid, 515-795-3288, fullcirclefarm@opencominc.com. Preregistration required for morning workshops. Call 515-232-5661 ext. 120.

Background

Most livestock production systems, even sustainable ones, have evolved within the framework of synthetic chemicals for treatment of internal parasites (worms). Without those “magic bullet” treatments, producers can experience production losses and even livestock deaths. Before those synthetic chemical treatments were developed, however, producers used a variety of naturally derived treatments.

Objective

PFI cooperators wanted to evaluate natural treatments for worms that were cited in some of the older veterinary literature. These treatments would potentially be compatible with organic production.

Cooperators

Mike Natvig and Amy Miller, Protivin (hogs); Tom and Irene Frantzen, New Hampton (hogs); Walt and Gartha Ebert, Plainfield (sheep); Frances, Susan, and Jeff Zacharakis-Jutz, Solon (sheep).

Results

Several trials comparing commercial herbal mixtures to synthetic wormers – negative results. Several trials with *Chenopodium ambrosioides* and with pumpkin seeds – inconclusive. Some of these trials were ended early because of parasite pressure, or they lacked a no-treatment control for the same reason. Results were also inconsistent, suggesting problems in the methods of sampling.

Conclusions

We need to concentrate on improving the design and methods for doing on-farm parasite trials. We also need to better explore the potential role of the whole farming system in parasite control.

Managing Parasites Organically

By Rick Exner

Organic livestock production can be a challenge. The Iowa Department of Agriculture’s *Directory of Iowa Organic Producers, Buyers and Processors* lists 13 pages of producers of organic field crops and only three pages of livestock producers. Yet Iowa organic farmers were among the first to market meat labeled organic, and the number of producers involved has steadily grown.

Nevertheless, the production challenges are real. PFI cooperators and ISU scientists are working to find solutions to some of these problems. For example, internal parasites are a problem that affects all types of livestock to some extent. These gastrointestinal pests, or “worms,” can attach themselves to the intestinal tract of an animal, compete for nutrients, damage the intestines, and migrate through the body causing damage to liver, brain and other organs as they go. Internal parasites are usually well-adapted to the farm environment, producing eggs (ova) that can persist for weeks-to-years in pastures and lots. Most vulnerable are young stock, who have not yet developed immune resistance to the parasites.

Management or Magic Bullets?

Over the past century, livestock producers have relied on a succession of increasingly effective medicines, or magic bullets, that are supposed to target the pest and not harm the animal. These treatments contributed to the development of intensive production systems that allow animals to live close together in buildings or pens without becoming infected. While organic producers use their own versions of such intensive production systems (hoop houses, for example), they are precluded from using these synthetic medicines and thus are searching for alternative ways to address their parasite problems.

The PFI website lists dozens of plant-based treatments once employed by farmers to rid their livestock of worms. But these “wormers” had their limitations and are no longer used in this part of the world. Doses had to be carefully calibrated so as not to injure the livestock, and they only killed the parasite during one stage of its life cycle inside the animal.

The 1942 USDA Yearbook of Agriculture described another approach altogether—management. McLean County, Ill., became famous for managing livestock so as to limit transmission of parasites. Animals were transported from one field to another rather than allowing them to walk down ova-infested lanes.

(continued on pg 22)

Cooperator Profile:

Mike Natvig and Amy Miller

By Rick Exner

If it's a hot day in Northeast Iowa, the cool shade of the old oak trees around the Natvig homestead will be particularly welcome. Likewise, if a January wind is whipping through the hazelnut hedges, there is an oasis of quieter air there. This story starts before Amy Miller and her son, Jacob, joined the family in 2001; it even starts before Michael Natvig was born. Godfrey and Theodora, Michael's parents, had for years planted trees and excavated ponds on the farm, and their care for the land is evident today. Godfrey still lives in the grand old farmhouse on the place, while Mike, Amy and Jacob live in a smaller house not more than a stone's throw away.

Godfrey Natvig is of the same generation as a former neighbor—the famous Dr. Norman Borlaug, “father of the Green Revolution.” The Borlaug home place is just across the fence, and in the last 10 years Mike has farmed most of the land. One of his projects, reported here, has been to monitor the environmental effects of intensive rotational grazing on a sensitive pasture and creek. Tracking “indicator species” of stream invertebrates and the mix of plants in the pasture, Mike has shown that rare prairie species and water quality can be maintained under grazing.

In 1994, Mike's interest in prairie drew him into a project with Dr. Laura Jackson, of the University of Northern Iowa. Laura worked with Mike and several other PFI farmers to see if native prairie species can be established in rotational grazing systems.

The oak savannah (mixed trees and grass) land of Mike's trial now grows many species of prairie grass and some native forbs and supports occasional grazing.

Although Northeast Iowa is one of the most forested parts of the state, raising trees is only marginally profitable for diversified farms. Responding to this,

(continued on pg 23)



Managing Parasites Organically (continued from pg 20)

Young stock were kept separate from older, infected animals. And facilities were cleaned and sterilized. These and other management solutions are another tool in the organic producer's arsenal. While plant-based medicines may not be as effective as magic bullets, they could be used in conjunction with such creative management techniques to effectively address the problem.

PFI is committed to helping producers find effective alternatives. In the last few years, we've focused on testing some of these plant-based medicines.

Research Results

Cooperator trials began in 1999 with comparisons of commercial herbal mixtures to synthetic wormers. Two years of trials by Susan and Jeff Zacharakis-Jutz and their daughter Frances (Solon) convinced those cooperators to test individual botanical materials instead of mixtures. In 2001 and 2002, trials of individual materials were carried out by sheep producers Zacharakis-Jutz, Walt and Gartha Ebert (Plainfield), and by swine producers Tom and Irene Frantzen (New Hampton), and Mike Natvig and Amy Miller (Protivin, see accompanying article).

Trials in 2001 and 2002 touched on three plant-derived materials: pumpkin seeds, tobacco and "chenopodium." (*Chenopodium ambrosioides* is an aromatic relative of the common weed lambsquarters.) Figure 1 shows that in 2001, the effect of Chenopodium was variable at best. The same can be said for Walt Ebert's 2002

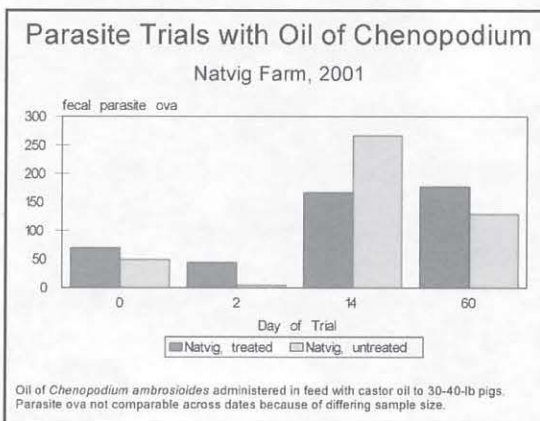
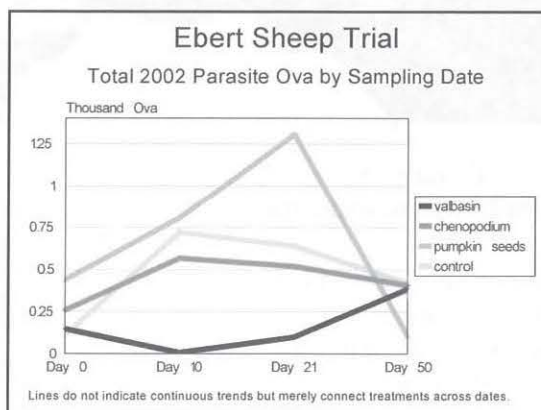


Figure 1. Mike Natvig's 2001 parasite trial with young pigs was typical in showing inconsistent results.

Figure 2. In 2002, Walt and Gartha Ebert measured big differences in parasites even before the sheep received the different treatments. By the end of the trial ova counts had declined.



sheep trial in Figure 2. The Ebert trial also shows big differences among treatment groups on day zero—before any treatments were applied. This makes us question our experimental design. If we aren't getting reliable numbers, it may be because we aren't collecting enough samples, the samples are contaminated, or we don't have enough animals in the trial. The graph also suggests that by the end of the trial, in mid-August, parasite pressure was cooling off for all animals, whether they were treated or not.

What Now?

Certainly this work would be aided immensely by laboratory assays of the effectiveness of the many botanical wormers listed in the literature. Until that should happen, do we give up and say that this research can't be carried out on farms? PFI cooperators, in collaboration with ISU veterinary microbiologist George Beran, have decided to address the questions of methodology in 2003. We will use more animals, collect fecal samples directly from the animals instead of from the ground, and collect livestock weights. In this way, we hope to generate clearer answers on the treatments and also on our methods of evaluating them.

In addition, over the next three years, PFI swine producers will explore the role of the farming system in the health of young pigs as part of the Farrowing Alliance project reported on page 13. PFI parasite research has helped build the network of farmers and scientists who proposed the farrowing project. Through closer working relationships among farmers, vets and ISU scientists, the Farrowing Alliance project may lead to improved parasite management as well. The saga continues.

Cooperator Profile (continued from pg 21)

in 1999, farmers in the region formed the Prairie's Edge Sustainable Woods Forestry Cooperative. Members meet bimonthly to share their experiences and skills. Mike was one of the founding board members.

Mike joined the movement of many sustainable farmers toward organic production in the '90s, certifying his first fields as organic in 1998. In 1999, he joined the Organic Valley Cooperative to raise organic pork. The production challenges associated with raising organic pigs have led Mike to conduct on-farm research trials on management of gastrointestinal parasites (see accompanying story). Mike is continuing the parasite research in 2003, and he plans to construct a hoop greenhouse for farrowing.

While Mike has been a well-known research cooperator with PFI for more than a decade, the farm recently gained a whole new dimension when he and Amy Miller were married. Amy brought her own skills as a CSA (Community-Supported Agriculture) fruit and vegetable grower. As director of the CSA garden at the Henry A. Wallace Country Life Center in Greenfield, Amy cooperated with PFI in 2001 to document the economics of greenhouse transplants. (Now her old 30'x96' hoop greenhouse from North River Produce in Prole is rising again in northeast Iowa as a new farrowing building.)

A member since 1996, Amy first heard about PFI in 1995 when the organization provided her information on cultural weed control for a weed science class project. Amy received her degree in horticulture from ISU in 1995. She now farms with Mike, choring and working with livestock, keeping track of paperwork, and helping some with fieldwork. Amy also does the gardening, home schools Jacob (9), and works part time at a local greenhouse. She has served on the coordinating committee for Women, Food and Agriculture Network since 2000.

Amy's recent and new projects include a 12'x24' wash shed in 2002 and a new 17'x48' greenhouse in 2003. She's currently raising over an acre of organic fruit and vegetables for family use and sale to friends and neighbors. Amy says that she'll see how this growing goes and get a sense of the potential for a CSA in the area.☺

Experience it yourself

Miller/Natvig Field Day

Saturday, July 19, 1:30-4:30pm, Cresco

- Conservation Security Program Update
- Prairie's Edge Sustainable Woods Forestry Cooperative
- Raising hogs for the Organic Valley Co-op
- Using a greenhouse in small-scale vegetable production

**See PFI Field Day Guide for more info, or
call 563-569-8358 or 515-232-5661**

Member Perspectives



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. Feel free to be as poetic or technical as you'd like. A free PFI hat to anyone who sends in a thoughtful response. Here's one from Grinnell PFI member **Robert (Barney) Bahrenfuse**, B & B Farms, to get the ball rolling.

What is Sustainable Agriculture?

I believe sustainable agriculture is mainly an attitude, an attitude of caring—caring for the land, caring for people, caring for communities.

Caring for the land means having a respect for the land's ability to produce. It means protecting and preserving the land's ability to support life for our generation and for our grandchildren's grandchildren.

Caring for people means having compassion for those who are less fortunate. It means having tolerance for different ideas. It means volunteering in some way that hopefully will make a difference in people's lives.

Caring for the community means supporting and promoting local business. It means becoming involved in local civic organizations. It means donating time and energy to give agriculture a face. I have found that in return, the community will then care about you.

Sustainable Agriculture is embodied in an old Gaelic saying I heard from poet/farmer Michael Carey, "If you should—you can." Sustainable Agriculture is PFI. PFI shows us that the culture of agriculture is still alive. It shows us that "neighbor helping neighbor" is still possible even if the neighbor lives across the state. PFI helps us to preserve knowledge from past generations and to open our eyes to new ideas.

In short,

- if only the farmer is sustained—no good
- if the farmer and his/her livestock are sustained—better
- if the farmer, his/her livestock, and the land are sustained—better yet
- if the farmer, his/her livestock, the land, and the community are sustained—we're accomplishing something!☺

— Barney Bahrenfuse

PFI Women's Winter Gathering

March 8-9, 2003

by Mary Doud

As I drove down the tree-lined, half-mile-long lane, I thought "what a beautiful place." This was the setting for the beginning of my first retreat with other women from Practical Farmers of Iowa. I won't go into detail about how my car got stuck along the snow-covered lane, but my hike into Diversity Farms was pleasant as I enjoyed the winter scenery and resident birds.

As I topped the last hill, of which my car would not, the lane curved on the top of a ridge and the farmsite came into view. The surrounding land was timber and prairie, and the farmstead had a 1900s appearance. There was one large building that looked strikingly new; this building would be the topic of our visit. It houses raptors, such as hawks, owls and eagles that have been injured or have some kind of ailment. Naturalist Kay Neumann, who manages this not-for-profit operation (SOAR—Save Our Avian Resources), gave us the history of how she got started in raptor rehabilitation and a full tour of the facilities. Her husband and partner, Jon Judson, spoke to us about the wetlands and prairie restoration they have been working on, then gave a walking tour of the farm. It was an interesting start to our weekend, and I hope to return some day.

We spent the evening at Taylor Hill Lodge near Audubon, a beautifully remodeled barn, with all the amenities for a relaxing weekend. Upon arrival, our host, Donna Bauer, had arranged for our choice of a massage or reflexology session. We enjoyed an excellent gourmet dinner prepared by Cyndy Hyde. We next listened to Nancy Dundatscheck's presentation about her trip to the World Social Forum in Brazil, which sparked much conversation about food systems, and social and environmental justice. The discussion took all sorts of tangents, from food and nutrition, school lunch programs and activities, to the impending war.

We did manage to get some sleep in our very comfortable private rooms, but it was way past my bedtime! The morning started at a relaxing pace with our first course of breakfast and then some stretching, yoga style. Back to more visiting while making the main breakfast. We ended the weekend by each sharing a favorite book we had read. Listed at left you will find our choices and perhaps enjoy one of these books yourself!

Sounds like a full 24 hours, doesn't it, but it was so relaxing and interesting to spend time with fellow PFI members. Being a non-farmer member, I thought it was a great opportunity to learn more about sustainable agriculture and how to become a better consumer. In years to come, I hope all PFI women will take advantage of this wonderful retreat and share with others their experiences in the world of agriculture...or just come to relax, listen and learn.☽

Book Selections:

Nourishing Traditions

by Sally Fallon

Coming Home to Eat

by Gary Paul Nabhan

The Last Prairie: A Sandhills Journal

by Stephen R. Jones

A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains

by Isabella L. Bird

Woman of the Boundary Waters

by Justine Kerfoot

A Sand County Almanac

by Aldo Leopold

Death of the Dream: Farmhouses in the Heartland

by William G. Gabler

Vein of Gold

by Julia Cameron

Poets Against the War Anthology

edited by Sam Hamill

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!

Shirts embroidered with PFI logo (by pre-order only)
Shirts with a PFI logo embroidered on the left breast are avail-
able by pre-order only. Place your order no later than July 30
to get your PFI shirts for 2003.

Denim Shirt – \$25

Long sleeved faded blue denim,
available in unisex sizes XS-4XL
100% cotton, 6.5 oz button-down shirt with patch pocket.

_____ QTY _____ SIZE _____ \$



Men's Polo – \$35

Slate blue polo shirt with contrasting collar and sleeve
welts in black. Sizes: S-5XL
Soft 100% cotton interlock, union made in the USA.

_____ QTY _____ SIZE _____ \$



Woman's Jewel Neck – \$28

Slate blue shirt with black contrasting
binding on the scoop neck and 2 pearl
button closure.
100% cotton interlock, union made in the USA.

_____ QTY _____ SIZE _____ \$

Hats embroidered with PFI logo

Bucket Hat – \$12

"Gilligan's Island" style cap with full
brim. Available in Khaki, Steel Blue,
Faded Denim, Berry (red), or White.

_____ QTY _____ \$



Cap – \$12

Casual style,
Union made in the USA.

_____ QTY _____ \$



Farmer Cap – \$12

Summer style farmer cap with light
denim cotton front and mesh back.
Union made in the USA.

_____ QTY _____ \$



T-shirt – \$14

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

_____ QTY _____ SIZE _____ \$



Grocery Tote – \$10

Sturdy 100% cotton canvas tote with
full color Buy Fresh, Buy Local logo.
Perfect for grocery shopping, or tak-
ing to the farmers market.

_____ QTY _____ \$



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

_____ QTY _____ \$

Apron – \$15

_____ QTY _____ \$

Sub-Total _____

Shipping & Handling _____

– \$5 for the first item, \$2 for each additional item

Poster Shipping & Handling

– \$1 for up to 5, \$1 extra for each additional 5 posters
Free shipping on orders placed no later than July 16!

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

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 _____

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

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 free PFI hat or other gift of PFI merchandise 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 \$_____

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E-mail: _____

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

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

Payment:

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

Credit Card Visa MasterCard

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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

P.O. Box 349

Ames, IA. 50010

Healthy Food, Diverse Farms, Vibrant Communities