

the **Practical Farmer**

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Cover: *That's Rich*, oil on canvas, by new member/new
farmer Lyndsay Nissen.

Lyndsay: "This is what I think about when I look over Iowa,
black soil I've never seen anywhere else."



www.practicalfarmers.org

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PFI in the Springtime

We're very excited to announce the launch of PFI's Savings Incentive Program! This program is a major commitment to the next generation of farmers on behalf of Practical Farmers of Iowa.

There is more on the Savings Incentive Program on page 18, but it will work like this: The beginning farmer accepted into the program saves an average of \$100 per month for two years (\$2,400 maximum). If she or he develops a business or whole farm plan, works with a PFI mentor, participates in PFI events, and checks in regularly with a PFI staffer, Practical Farmers of Iowa will match their \$2,400.

The beginning farmer gets help toward purchasing a farm asset. Iowa gets another beginning farmer better prepared to be our future generation of farmers.

We have a lot of money to raise to make this program a reality. Our goal is to raise \$250,000 over the next year. If we meet our goal, we will be able to serve 90 beginning farmers with this program through 2016. Please give generously to this campaign when you're asked!

We have had a fantastic committee helping staff develop the rules for this program. Thanks to beginning farmers Tyler Franzenburg, Heather Holcomb, Ethan Book, Cheryl Ness, Brian Ness, and Beth Wilber Kemp, and to seasoned PFI members Harn Soper, Jerry Peckumn, Gail Hickenbottom, and Tim Landgraf. Tim, Gail and Tyler also serve on the PFI Board of Directors, which is fully committed to this effort.

Some other recent highlights around the PFI office:

- ❖ Welcome to Kevin Dietzel, PFI's new Grazing Coordinator, and to Christina Klinge, our new Communications Assistant. They'll be eager to meet you at Field Days this summer.
- ❖ Sarah helped organize a meeting of the Midwest Cover Crop Council, held in Ames in March with 125 attending. Half of the attendees were farmers. A highlight was a



Featured farm dog: Reba, member of Charlotte Shivers' and Bob Baker's family, is quite happy that spring has arrived in Iowa.

The beginning farmer gets help toward purchasing a farm asset. Iowa gets another beginning farmer better prepared to be our future generation of farmers.

presentation that included PFI farmers Steve Berger, Ron Rosmann, and Gary Guthrie.

- ❖ Sarah Carlson and PFI members Wade Dooley and Jerry Peckumn attended Drake University's Beginning Farmer Conference in Washington, D.C., in March. The conference was a success in large part because of Matt Russell's organization skills. Matt is a PFI farmer and employee of Drake University.
- ❖ We've received a new grant from the Ceres Foundation, so Sally Worley is ramping up to offer a full slate of programming on season extension, including another high tunnel building session this summer at the farm of Rob and Tammy Faux. She's also arranging for field days on energy efficiencies with walk-in coolers, commercial-scale root cellars, and more.
- ❖ PFI, led by Luke Gran, held 16 Farminars this fall and winter, and tech-savvy Luke has run the numbers: 713 people participated live, and archives of the Farminars were viewed 3,386 times. 60 percent of the participants were not PFI members, and 20 percent were not from Iowa—reminding us that PFI is a national leader.
- ❖ PFI has more than 20 grants that help us provide the amount of programming that we do—and all of them require management help. Suzi Bernhard, our Finance and Benefits Manager, takes care of a lot of the important details that keep our office running efficiently. Renee Thompson (when she's not keeping kids in line through her substitute teaching) has taken over some of Suzi's office tasks. Both are lifesavers around the office.

Thank you for being a part of the PFI community!

Teresa Ophelm
Executive Director



Cooperators' Program



Andrew and Melissa Dunham explain why recordkeeping is important to their operation

125 farmers attended Practical Farmers of Iowa's 2010 Cooperators' meeting. This year's meeting included new Thursday morning workshops. In these sessions: Melissa and Andrew Dunham of Grinnell Heritage Farm shared their impressive recordkeeping system that keeps things organized on their diversified farm; Doug Gunnink spoke about how to improve your grazing system; and Linda Pollak and Sarah Carlson gave an update on the non-GMO and organic seed project.

Thursday afternoon, farmers reported results from their 2009 cooperator projects. Gary Guthrie, Growing Harmony Farms, Nevada, enjoyed hearing results from fellow farmers: "It's remarkable to see farmers being encouraged to do investigation on their farms. To have information well mapped out, researched, and supported by PFI, that's real cooperation. You do the research and share information learned with others so everyone can improve their farming practices—that's the beauty of PFI's Cooperators' Program."

Friday, farmers reviewed priorities for their program areas and set top project ideas for 2010.

Top 2010 Project Ideas

Grazing

- ❖ Low-cost in-pasture handling facilities
- ❖ Monitor forage quality, animal and environmental improvement with pasture renovation
- ❖ Forage mixes for grazing, season extension
- ❖ Grazing cover crops
- ❖ Measure seedbank distribution in the soil
- ❖ Mob grazing's effect on animal/pasture performance

Field Crops

- ❖ How can cover crops be used to improve weed

management?

- ❖ How can I scale up the size of my machinery in a diversified farming system?
- ❖ How can I improve the design of my farming system to improve time/labor management? How can I substitute more August hours for April hours?

Poultry

- ❖ How does the nutritional composition of chickens compare to "store-bought" birds?
- ❖ How is the nutritional content of poultry affected by breed, feed, and pasture?



Don't eat the M&Ms! Brother and sister duo Nathan Anderson and Amber Anderson Mba participate in a statistic exercise at lunch



Linda Grice visits with Mike Natvig after he presents on ecosystems his farm provides

Horticulture Crops

Pest control

- ❖ Flea beetle control in eggplant
 - ◆ Surround (slurry @ planting, spray until fruit are 1/4 size)
 - ◆ Row cover
 - ◆ Control
- ❖ Cabbage moth control in brassicas
 - ◆ Dipel
 - ◆ Surround
 - ◆ Row cover
- ❖ Flea beetle control in arugula
 - ◆ Row covers
 - ◆ Control

Marketing ecofootprint

- ❖ Miles traveled to provide local
- ❖ Brix readings of local produce (vs. grocery store)
- ❖ What motivates Iowa consumers to purchase local? (survey)

Season extension

- ❖ Low tunnels in high tunnels-optimize heat gain vs. light loss
- ❖ Long term fertility tracking in high tunnel systems
- ❖ Low tunnel technology options in the field

Soil health

- ❖ Replicated trials of cover crops
 - ◆ Throughout the state
 - ◆ For conversion to hort use
 - ◆ Loosen soil, ease compaction
 - ◆ Increase fertility, organic matter, and soil biology
- ❖ Simulating extreme weather in hoophouse
 - ◆ Effects on plant varieties, soil compaction
- ❖ Switch to permanent raised beds from narrow, temporary rows
 - ◆ Double digging?
 - ◆ Layered beds?
 - ◆ 3-5 year project

Top 2010 Priorities

Grazing

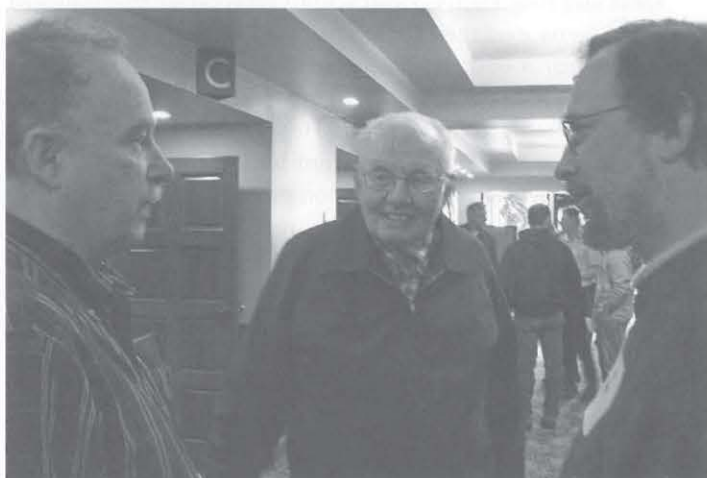
1. How do we improve pastures to extend the grazing season and reduce hay feeding?
2. How do we improve animal performance in grazing systems (weight gain, efficiencies)?
3. How do we conduct successful mentoring/outreach projects to get young people involved?
4. What are the ecosystem benefits of grazing systems (i.e. water quality, runoff, wildlife, soil biology, carbon sequestration)?
5. What facilities will help me handle my cattle better?

Field Crops

1. Can I be profitable while adding cover crops/living mulch/rotations to my system?
2. When is the proper time/equipment to plant a cover crop?
3. How do cover crops affect the following crop yield?
4. What cover crops can be grazed? How many grazing days per acre?
5. How much carbon is sequestered with the addition of a cover crop in a rotation?

Horticulture

1. What are effective pest control methods in a chemical-free fruit and vegetable system?
2. How do I control weeds in my fruit and vegetable system without using synthetic chemicals?
3. How can I successfully extend my season?
4. How do I maintain and increase soil health on my fruit and vegetable farm?
5. How do I investigate and market the ecological benefits of local produce?



PFI events are networking havens: Tom Frantzen, Dick Thompson, and Jeff Klinge converse between sessions



Ben Saunders and Sophie Ryan discuss vegetables and flowers over lunch

Cooperators' Program

2009 Research Results

Here are abstracts for some of Practical Farmers of Iowa's 2009 On-Farm Research and Demonstration projects. For complete reports, visit www.practicalfarmers.org/resources.

Aphid Resistance in Organic Soybean Production

Soybean aphids can negatively impact yields for farmers in conventional and organic farming systems. New soybean varieties have become available that might resist aphids. In this one-year trial, the non-resistant soybean variety yielded more compared to the resistant variety. However, fewer aphids were observed on the resistant variety. Future research is needed to test new soybean varieties under aphid pressure. Farm cooperator: Ron Rosmann.

Essential Oils for Seed Treatment

Can edible essential oils be practical seed treatments to give organic farmers earlier and more vigorous seedling emergence? A two-year study by PFI and ISU evaluated a blend of essential oils used to treat corn, soybean, and garden pea on PFI cooperators' farms and ISU research stations. Essential oil increased pea seedling emergence in some cases, suggesting that such a treatment may have most potential in crops that are planted in the cold, wet conditions of early spring. Farm cooperators: Susan Jutz, Norm McCoy, Ron Dunphy, Ken Choquette, Laura Krouse, Jeff and Gayle Olson, Earl and Ronda Hafner, and Gary Guthrie.

Comparison of Poultry Breeds

Producers like the Cornish Cross poultry variety because they have been bred for fast production and high feed efficiency. However, they don't perform well on pasture, so producers are looking for an efficient breed alternative to the Cornish.

In this trial, the growth rates of Cornish Cross, Freedom Ranger, and Black Broilers were tested in both Tractor and Day Range systems. The Freedom Ranger and Black Broiler did not grow as fast as the Cornish Cross in either system. Farm cooperators: Dana Foster, Rob and Tammy Faux, and Tim Daley.



Rob Faux and wife Tammy participated in the 2009 Comparison of Poultry Breeds Trial

Bioenergy and Diversity from Sustainable Systems and Crops

Farmers want to know about 1) actions they can take that will make their own farms and communities more energy secure, and 2) how they can participate in bioenergy industries without sacrificing either the farm's resource base or the range of enterprises that characterize diversified farms. Dordt College and Ellsworth Community College are implementing, side-by-side in replicated blocks, a continuous-corn system and a three-year "gateway to sustainability" rotation of corn, soybeans, and a winter-or-spring small grain/forage with legume underseeding. In 2009, the first year of data, the three-crop system at Dordt College used about 12% as much energy to grow as did continuous corn, with only slightly lower bioenergy potential. Preliminary analysis of the first year of data indicates the three-crop rotation, even with loss of the oat grain harvest, was more profitable than continuous corn. Farm cooperators: Chris Goedhart, Dordt College, and Kevin Butt, Ellsworth Community College.

Heirloom Tomato Grafting

Heirloom tomatoes are in high demand in local food markets and bring in a premium price. However, heirloom tomatoes often are disease prone and can produce inconsistent yields, reducing their reliability and efficiency for many growers.

The trial compared heirloom tomato variety Cherokee purple to Cherokee purple grafted to Maxifort. Maxifort is a rootstock that has good disease resistance and high vigor.

Non-grafted tomatoes yielded higher overall than the grafted tomatoes. Grafted tomatoes showed good yield potential before frost. The cool growing season caused late and low yields for all tomatoes on the participating farm in 2009. Farm cooperators: Andrew and Melissa Dunham.

Season Extension in a Wood-Heated Structure

Dean and Judy Henry constructed a greenhouse that is heated by a wood furnace on their farm. Their initial purpose was to grow raspberries year round, but they were also interested in trying out other crops to determine which crops produced well and were profitable in their greenhouse. The Henrys grew several crops in winter/spring of 2009 to identify promising crops to grow in their greenhouse. This initial demonstration project identified tomatoes and lettuce as good growers in the greenhouse. The raspberries didn't perform as hoped, but Dean would like to modify his schedule and expectations and try again. The Henrys found that heating the greenhouse in January proved difficult, and they started growing their winter crops later in the season than originally planned. They decided it would have been advantageous to have installed a backup propane heater in the structure.

Blue Gate Farm High Tunnels Take 2

Jill Beebout and Sean Skeeahan of Blue Gate Farm constructed

Cooperators' Program

two high tunnels on their land. They recorded cultural and sales data in the fall of 2008 and spring and summer of 2009 to help determine if the high tunnels were paying back the cost of construction and providing potential to generate additional profit for the farm. Fall 2008 data report is available at the web link to the left. This report summarizes their spring and summer 2009 data. Revenue generated from their high tunnels paid back the initial investment. Blue Gate Farm looks to gain significant profit from their high tunnels, and the structures proved vital in 2009 when their outdoor crops performed poorly due to adverse weather conditions.

Cover Crops' Effect on Cash Crop Yield

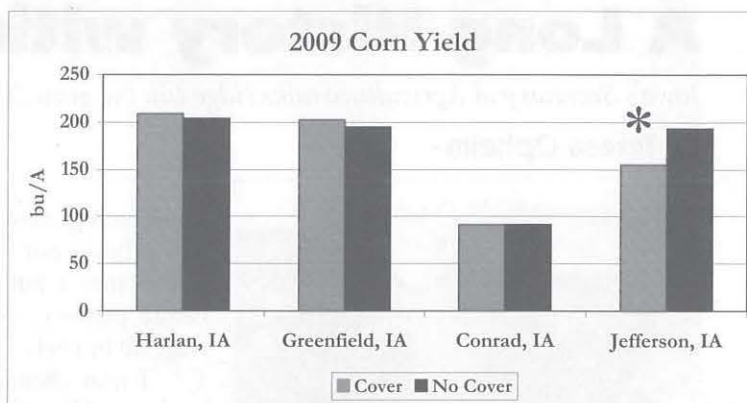
Cover crops are an important tool farmers may use to retain nitrogen and soil on their farm fields. However, many farmers are concerned about the negative effects of this cultural practice on their cash grain yields. After year one of this 5-year study, a winter cover crop only negatively affected cash crop yield at one location. Poor control of the cover crop by the herbicide Liberty caused a decreased yield in corn grain at one location. At three of the six locations, cover crop biomass measured more than 500lbs/A. An earlier fall planting date and later spring termination date increased the growing degree days available to establish the cover crop. Farm cooperators: Bill Buman, Devan Green, Jim Funcke, Randy Caviness, Rick Juchems, and Larry Ness, Whiterock Conservancy.

Establishing Red Clover, Hairy Vetch and Turnips at Last Cultivation of Corn

Hairy vetch yielded significantly more above-ground biomass when planted at last cultivation of corn as compared to turnip and red clover. It is important for farmers to increase protein available to cattle grazing cornstalks and also provide nitrogen to a following cash crop in a long-term organic rotation. Farm cooperator: Ron Rosmann.

Subsoil Heat in a Greenhouse

Eric and Ann Franzenburg of Pheasant Run Farm near Van Horne constructed three greenhouses on their farm in 2008. In 2009 they took data on crops grown in these greenhouse to determine if heating the soil was cost effective, and to determine if they could gain a longer period of production profitably. Results of this data collection indicate bottom growing over a longer season does make sense for this farm, and season extension is lucrative for their operation. They learned information from recording data over 2009 that will help them tailor their growing plan to maximize profit potential.



From Cover Crops Effect on Cash Crop Yield: Figure 1. 2009 Corn yield in bu/A at 15.5% harvested from plots planted with and without a rye cover crop.



Ann Franzenburg at market with cut flowers she raised during her 2009 on-farm research project

Five-Year Rotation

Excerpt from Thompson Agriculture Alternatives, 2009 Research Report.

The average labor and management returns since 1988 are displayed in tabular form by individual crop and systems in Figure 7-1, 7-1a, and Table 7-6. Government programs or premiums have not been included in any of the systems. Labor and management returns per acre were \$139.98 for the five-year rotation. The conventional Boone County C-SB system lost \$35.53 per acre producing an average difference of \$174.52 per acre.

Labor & Management Return \$/A.

Boone County C-SB vs. Thompson C-SB-C-O-H System

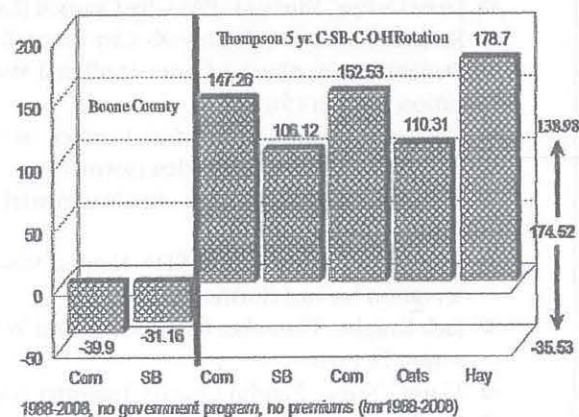


Fig 7-1a

A Long History with PFI

Iowa's Secretary of Agriculture talks ridge till, the growth of PFI, and what's next for agriculture

By Teresa Opheim



Ridge till was the reason Practical Farmers of Iowa first caught the attention of Bill Northey. Back in 1985, he had a fresh degree in agriculture business and had just returned to Spirit Lake to farm with his grandfather.

"I was moldboard plowing then, but looking for ideas," Bill says. He went to one of the first Practical Farmers of Iowa meetings, in Denison, and joined PFI in October 1985. He watched the early tillage

trials coming out of the young organization, especially on ridge till, in which plants are seeded into a hill of soil with no tillage before planting. He made the switch to ridge till in 1991.

"I read [Boone farmer] Ernie Behn's book on ridge till and consider him and Dick Thompson as influences. It is a different animal, though."

Bill also learned from the late spring nitrate testing that PFI and others have facilitated. "I did spring nitrate trials that showed no additional nitrogen needed to be applied. On-farm research like PFI does is really valuable. It engages the producer, and then engages other producers as a result. Research doesn't do you any good if it doesn't get used. It doesn't have to be original research on the farm, but farmers need to use it and confirm it in on-farm trials."

Since then, Bill has watched PFI grow and change. "There's more of a marketing focus now; how to gain value out of production. And there's more of a focus on fruit and vegetable production. In some ways, fruits and vegetables are the new hog

"I did spring nitrate trials that showed no additional nitrogen needed to be applied. On-farm research like PFI does is really valuable. It engages the producer, and then engages other producers as a result."

Bill Northey

industry: If you can direct-market, you can turn your sweat equity into value.

"I'd love to see more of all types of farmers as part of PFI. There's been some breaking down of barriers between organic and conventional farmers. Iowa offers room for producers to farm the way they want to. There's a growing goat population, egg production, more farmer's markets.

PFI members are leaders

Members of Practical Farmers of Iowa serve in so many ways! Here are some of our members and the public offices for which they have run for and/or served.

- ❖ Jerry DePew, Fairfield (PA) City Council (former)
- ❖ Kamyar Enshayan, Cedar Falls City Council
- ❖ Dwight Ensor, Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District (former)
- ❖ Helen Gunderson, Gilbert City Council (former)
- ❖ Earl Hafner, Mayor of Linden (former)
- ❖ Charlotte Hubbell, Iowa Environmental Protection Commission
- ❖ Paul Johnson, Director, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (former)
- ❖ Jack Knight, Allamakee County Soil and Water Conservation District
- ❖ Marian Kuper, Hardin County Treasurer (running)
- ❖ Ray Meyer, Chariton City Council
- ❖ Denise O'Brien, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture (ran)

- ❖ Joe Olsen, Independence School Board
- ❖ Jerry Peckumn, Iowa Environmental Protection Commission
- ❖ Justin Petersen, Marion County Soil and Water Conservation District
- ❖ Merlin Pfannkuch, Ames City Council (ran)
- ❖ Carol Prescott, Ventura School Board
- ❖ Ron Rosmann, Iowa House of Representatives (ran)
- ❖ Matt Russell, Farm Service Agency Commission
- ❖ George Schaeffer, Mid-Prairie School Board
- ❖ Chad Steenhoek, Iowa House of Representatives (running)
- ❖ Francis Thicke, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture (running) and Iowa Environmental Protection Commission (former)
- ❖ Mark Tjelmeland, Story County Soil and Water Conservation District

If you aren't on the list and should be: Please let Teresa Opheim know. We will include you in a future newsletter!

Farmers need to figure out how to fit in all the pieces without disrupting neighbors' lives."

When asked about PFI organic members' problems with chemical spray contamination, Bill says, "You need to call our pesticide investigators quickly, so we can do follow up. We want to find the problems; those folks need to learn to be careful."

Career Choices Cause Changes

Like many Iowa farmers, Bill's operation has become less diversified over the years. Gone now are his cow-calf operation and his hog operation, with finishing in outdoor pens with feeders. "The hog operation worked, but I was gone a lot," he says. "And it wasn't the most profitable in the late 1990s. But hogs were very helpful to me; a good mortgage lifter. They were more labor, but I didn't have to buy equipment and I didn't want to build buildings."

Animals vanished from the farm as Northey increased his involvement in the Iowa Corn Growers Association, in which he rose to become president of both the Iowa and national associations. He was elected Iowa Secretary of Agriculture in 2006, narrowly defeating Denise O'Brien. Today, Bill alternates beans and corn in his 600-acre operation, although he'd also like to experiment with cover crops. These days, he hires a part-time farm worker and heads back to Spirit Lake only for planting and harvest. The rest of the time, he lives in a townhouse in Urbandale with his wife, Cindy, who is a part-time nurse and part-time babysitter for the couple's

"I'd love to see more of all types of farmers as part of PFI. There's been some breaking down of barriers between organic and conventional farmers. Iowa offers room for producers to farm the way they want to. There's a growing goat population, egg production, more farmer's markets. Farmers need to figure out how to fit in all the pieces without disrupting neighbors' lives."

Bill Northey

first grandchild. When he leaves the Iowa Department of Agriculture, he's not sure he'll return to the farm, and he hasn't done a lot of thinking about a succession plan, other than that his nephews may be interested in taking over.

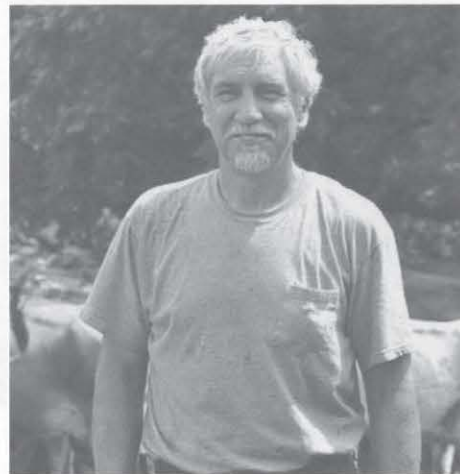
Looking Ahead

Bill sees major challenges for Iowa agriculture in the works. His look into a crystal ball includes these predictions:

- ❖ Energy availability and cost will be challenges. The ability to create energy on the farm with trees and grass production will be important.
- ❖ Fertilizer and steel prices will rise.
- ❖ Farmers will be paid for new products/services, such as carbon sequestration.
- ❖ Farmers will be paid for benefits rather than straight production.

This may, for example, make grass-based farming more valuable.

- ❖ Within 25 years, we'll have a greater sense of the impact of climate change. We will need more adaptable crops. Certainly grass is more resilient than crops, and cows provide value year-round.
- ❖ We need to better prepare for flooding.
- ❖ No-till will get a closer look. Before folks felt they had to have bare ground, now they're realizing they can leave residue.
- ❖ We need to find more value for longer rotations—for hay, oats, and wheat. In organic systems, you can find value. In conventional, it's harder.



The PFI membership is full of leaders. Denise O'Brien (Bill's challenger in 2006), Bill Northey, and one of Bill's upcoming challengers, Francis Thicke, are all PFI members.

Growing Under Cover

Low tunnels—small hoops covered by plastic or woven fabric and constructed in-field over crops—are an effective way to protect plants from insect and frost damage. However this low technology, low cost farm technique does pose problems in the wind, especially when farmers attempt to harvest or cultivate ground beneath the structures. Here are two farmers' approaches to successful low tunnel implementation.

Jill Beebout, Blue Gate Farm, Chariton:

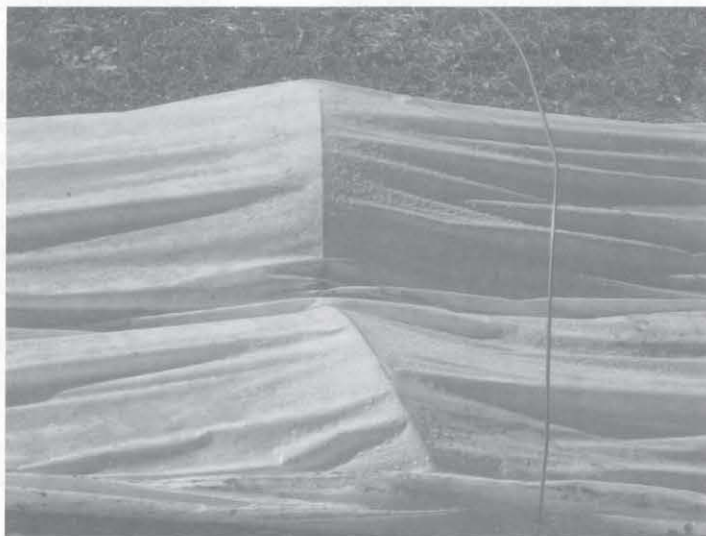
In our system, we set up a series of 9-gauge wire hoops 10 feet apart. We put fabric, usually Agribon 19, over the hoops. We then put a second row of hoops on top of the cover, a couple of inches away from the lower hoop layer. The outside has a staggered look, a bit like a stretched out version of the Sidney Opera House. We sink the top hoop a little deeper than the bottom hoop so there is a fair amount of pressure in the fabric. We gather the fabric at the end of the rows and staple it into the ground with 6-inch turf staples.

This system alone works in a low-wind setting. Since our farm is not in a low-wind situation, we take 10-foot-long rebar stakes and roll them under the cloth. We put two clothespins on each 10-foot-length to keep it from unrolling. The rods are key. We've tried different clamping systems on the rods and haven't been happy with anything but the clothespins. The clothespins, when you clip them on parallel to the ground, provide an outrigger. They press against the ground, so if the wind is trying to lift the cover, it pushes

against the clothespin and doesn't go anywhere. We've never had a cover release using this combination system.

To gain access under the hoops, we unclip the rods and unroll them. We then push the cloth off the ground to the top of the hoop. The tension between two sets of hoops holds the cloth in place. We push up one side at a time, then simply pull it back down and reposition the rebar and clothespins.

I find harvesting under low covers to be tedious, at best, but this method is the least obnoxious to work with and the covers stay on. Last year we harvested salad, spinach, kale, kohlrabi, broccoli raab, Swiss chard, mustards, and radishes outside under low tunnels until the first week of December. The covers also provide excellent protection for our summer crops from a serious flea beetle population on our farm. These advantages make the extra effort worth it.



This collapsed low tunnel overwintered voluntarily due to heavy snow cover. Jill was able to harvest out of the tunnel this spring.

Blue Gate uses two sets of hoops to keep their fabric in place. To accommodate wind at their farm, they secure rebar with a clothespin along the length of the tunnel. 6-inch turf staples secure the ends to the ground.

Susan Jutz, ZJ Farms, Solon:

We have used many low tunnel methods, and all failed except this one. For us, putting hoops directly in the ground has not worked. If the ground is wet, they fall over. If there is too much wind pressure, they topple and the fabric acts like a kite. We pound 1.5-foot anchor stakes made out of rebar into the ground. The rough edge of rebar holds in the ground nicely.

Then we put bent conduit over rebar staked 6 to 8 feet apart. We bend our own electrical conduit with a pipe bender I got from an electrician friend. Johnny's Selected Seeds is now offering a pipe bender for low tunnels that should make bending pipe a piece of cake.

Next we place fabric over the bent conduit, and attach the fabric to the pipe using "Labor Saver Fabric Clips" from FarmTek. You need strong fingers and fingernails to get the clips off. You can also pop the clips off if you are proficient with a screwdriver and take care to not rip the fabric. We use two clips per hoop, one on

each side. The hoops at the end of the row have four to five clips on them, and the fabric on the ends is drilled into the ground with an anchor stake. We don't use any other anchoring on the fabric.

To harvest and weed under the hoops, we do not always remove the clips. The more often you take the clips off, the more likely you'll rip the fabric. With the endwall unanchored, two people can lift a section of the hoop structure off the rebar stake and lean it up against the next hooped section. Once done working, we replace the hoop. It's a pain, but effective in our high-wind setting. If we're in the middle of a 50-foot bed that we need to harvest, we'll remove the clips from one side, get down on our hands and knees, and harvest under the tunnel. On windy days, we have to be careful and don't unclip a large section.

With this system, the fabric is reusable and in better shape than in past systems we've tried. This also provides good deer protection for us. We inspect the hoops often to make sure they are in good shape, especially after windy days.



ZJ low tunnel construction photo spread

1) Rebar, anchor stake, and part of hoop; 2) Bent conduit; 3) Pounding rebar into ground; 4) Placing conduit over rebar; 5) Tying fabric end; 6) Placing fabric over conduit; 7) Close up of securing clip over fabric; 8) Attaching clip to conduit; 9) Turning end anchor stake into ground; 10) End fabric tied to end ground anchor; 11) Completed low tunnel

Beginning Farmer Profile

Niche Pork: Path to a Family's Future

How one beginning farmer started—and sticks with—a niche pork operation

Sally Worley



"You can raise pigs, get started farming, and actually make money at it."

Scott Sibbel

hogs to Niman Ranch annually, is raising feeder cattle with his dad and father-in-law, and farms the family farmland in partnership with his dad.

Path to Progress

Resourcefulness is a good attribute for a beginning farmer to have. Scott is good at making use of what's available and what he can build or borrow.

The farm's pre-existing buildings have been converted to animal housing. Some had housed pigs in the past, others had stored beans, but most were sitting empty when he moved in. "A lot of these buildings are older, nothing fancy. You don't need to put a lot of money into new and state-of-the-art. You can make it go with standard old-style buildings. I retrofitted an old cattle building for hogs."

Scott purchased a few used farrowing pens from a farmer getting out of raising pigs and constructed the rest himself. "They're fairly cheap to make. It's a free-stall 8×6-foot pen. The sow can come and go out of the pen any time she wants to. The roller keeps the baby pigs in. Once they're ten days to two weeks old, they start jumping out. That's when I take the pens out."

An initial investment in expensive machinery was not necessary for Scott to start farming: "I gradually got into my machinery. First I borrowed machinery, now I'm starting to own more stuff."

The value of a good banker became clear through his early experiences. "When I started, the market was good. I thought, 'Boy, this will work out.' About a year later, I got hit with the bad prices and had a lot of farm loans. I had to switch banks because my first banker didn't believe in me. He just knew big pork and didn't see the value in my niche operation. My current banker knows that my system is going to work."

Good gene selection is crucial in his operation. According to Scott, "If you're going to farrow, select good mothers, ones that fit the system. Some don't know how to farrow in a free stall—they're used to being locked up. Pick those that don't lie on their pigs, milk well, and have a good mothering ability." The genetic diversity Scott has bred comes through in colorful lineages in Scott's herd. "I used

What does being a new niche pork farmer mean to Scott Sibbel? Family values, a guaranteed market, hard work, and plenty of room for growth.

Farm Snapshot

Scott and his wife Martha moved to a 240-acre farm near Carroll four years ago after college. The farm is located seven miles from where Scott grew up, on land that is owned by his grandmother and has been in his family since 1919.

Scott's farming practices invoke reminiscence of his childhood. "Growing up, we used raised decks when we farrowed. Everything else was on an outdoor lot with an inside barn with straw. I see a lot of value in that way of raising hogs," Scott says.

Scott started out by purchasing 100 feeder pigs. He sorted out the females he wanted to keep into two bunches of sows and marketed the rest to Niman Ranch. Scott's operation has gradually and continually grown and diversified. He now markets 400–500

Scott Sibbel's tips for beginning niche pork farmers:

- ❖ Be willing to work hard.
- ❖ Start small and increase gradually.
- ❖ Network with other niche pork producers.
- ❖ Don't be afraid of not giving antibiotics.
- ❖ Have a good vaccination program.
- ❖ Take good care of the pigs and implement good husbandry practices.
- ❖ Find a good banker who understands what you're doing.



to have all white pigs when I had white boars. Now I have Berkshire boars and get pigs of all of colors. That's because the mothers are half Chester White and half Hampshire and Duroc, the red and belted sows."

Niche pork is a lucrative enterprise for Scott, but success does not come easy. "It's a lot more work raising hogs this way than raising them in confinement. You've got to know your pigs and take good care of them. It's more hands on; you've got to manage bedding, and make sure you keep them vaccinated."

Scott adheres to strict farming practices, providing his hogs:

- ❖ Open access to the outdoors
- ❖ Deep straw bedding
- ❖ No antibiotics
- ❖ Vegetarian diets
- ❖ Older weaning age of six weeks
- ❖ No growth hormones

Scott's compassion for his animals is apparent in his husbandry. He provides roomy farrowing pens for the sows and babies, and constructs a board in his calving pens so young calves have a clean area to lie. He provides straw bedding to young calves and pigs. "Some of my favorite parts of raising animals are seeing the little pigs running around doing well, and the calves."

Niche Pork Pays

Hard work and making good decisions have paid off. Scott markets his pork through Niman Ranch as well as direct to consumer. Niman Ranch has been a reliable customer, providing steady sales and income despite a turbulent pork market. "Niman Ranch offers a premium and has a floor price. No matter what the market does, you always at minimum break even. It keeps guys in business. You even make a little money off floor price if you do it right with feed efficiency and a combination of things. Right now the market is creeping up and starting to be profitable for niche

"Not a lot of people winter farrow. Farrowing more in the winter will help get more numbers in the summer. That's one thing that will help you out—you get more of a premium."

Scott Sibbel

pork."

Scott sees winter farrowing as one way to gain market advantage. "Not a lot of people winter farrow. Farrowing more in the winter will help get more numbers in the summer. That's one thing that will help you out—you get more of a premium."

There is a big demand for niche pork, enough that Niman Ranch is looking for more farmers, he says. "Niman Ranch has been turning customers away because there is not enough supply. I know they will purchase my product. That's a good feeling."

There Is a Future in Farming

Scott is optimistic about his farming future. "It is important to me that my kids are raised on a family farm like I was. This farm came back to life after we moved in." For others who are considering pork as a path to begin farming, Scott's message is, "You can raise pigs, get started farming, and actually make money at it."



Is the "New" Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Worth It?

Sarah Carlson

In January, I sent a message through the PFI email listserv asking those members who had signed up for and received a contract for the 2009 Conservation Stewardship Program if the time spent to sign up was worth it. Several of you responded with great information and insight about the time spent, the potential payment you will receive, and other observations about the CSP effectiveness at increasing stewardship farming.

The CSP was part of both the 2002 and 2008 farm bills. The original intent of the program was to reward farmers achieving high levels of stewardship on their farms. Many PFI members entered the program when it was determined by tiers and only made available in selected watersheds each year. In 2009, both the watersheds and tier structure were changed, and all U.S. farmers became eligible for the program.

The final rules for the 2010 program are being written, and USDA hasn't yet initiated a sign-up period. When sign-up is announced, look for information on the PFI website (www.practicalfarmers.org), through our listservs, and in newspapers and on radio stations.

In the meantime, take a few minutes to review observations by other PFI members; what they have to say may help you determine whether CSP is the right program for your farm. Here are the responses I received after my request for information:

Time Spent

- ❖ I spent 10–12 hours in prep work for this program, so yes, I think it was worth it.
- ❖ Probably took 1/2 hour in all to fill out the paperwork.
- ❖ I think the paperwork was so simple for me as I am organic



Jeff Klinge (pictured here at Dan Specht's field day) uses CSP to implement conservation practices on his farm

The 2008 farm bill is working well in an integrated way with what we are doing on our farm. No complaints here about government interference. And we can't say enough good things about our county NRCS office.

and had all the records at my fingertips.

- ❖ Yes was worth my time.
- ❖ For me it was worth the 5–6 hours for application completion and record gathering.
- ❖ Only needed 3–4 hrs of paperwork.
- ❖ We probably spent 3–4 hours on signing up.

Payment

- ❖ A nice payment for doing what I intended to do already.
- ❖ I am very happy with my payment for existing ways of doing things and some new ways that I wanted to do.
- ❖ It is the easiest money I've ever earned.
- ❖ I will continue doing all I have been doing, and I will get someone to help me "burn the woods" (my special "improvement" project).
- ❖ Our payments are estimated to be about \$31.77/acre/year. We are a small, primarily vegetable farm.
- ❖ Got CSP approval for 600 acres at around \$20/acre. Am very happy with the payment level for practices I'm doing and planned to do anyway.
- ❖ I'm thinking about 90 acres of our 107 acres are included and our payment will be about \$17 an acre.
- ❖ The extra \$7,500 over the five-year contract is appreciated and will help us continue to be good stewards of our farm.
- ❖ \$42.58 per acre. The payment is good, but it sounds like it will require me to submit lots of supporting paperwork to the NRCS to prove that I did what I signed up for.

Effectiveness

- ❖ I thought the questions helped fit my farm to the program. Or should I say fit the program to my farm. You could on paper understand my farming operation. For a nationwide program to be able to analyze my conservation efforts and my shortcomings, questions and answer choices were well thought out. NRCS people at the local level were great at helping my wife and me fill out the paperwork.
- ❖ I think I ranked 434 points. So pretty high as far as numbers are concerned. I think I was highest in my county.

- ❖ We'll see how it goes ... this first year will be a learning experience for all parties.
- ❖ We added two new practices that fit with our plans and goals. Our NRCS office suggested that we not get carried away on the enhancements.
- ❖ So mostly we're getting paid to be good stewards. One additional benefit is that because we signed up for CSP, our produce acres were measured by the Farm Service Agency and thus we are now set up to apply for the high tunnel project under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The 2008 farm bill is working well in an integrated way with what we are doing on our farm. No complaints here about government interference. And we can't say enough good things about our county NRCS office.
- ❖ From the new CSP, I hope to achieve better conservation on my farm since the payment I'll receive will help to offset some of my implementation costs. I don't remember the whole list of enhancements ... but I'm doing whatever I can on my corn/soybean row crop farm to enhance my nutrient and pest management as well as enhance soil quality and residue management. My acres are already in EQIP for the next 2 years. CSP ignores the things I'm already doing under EQIP so I can't get double-paid for what's already covered under EQIP.

Concerns

- ❖ I hope guys with resource-conserving crop rotations and graziers can do at least as well or better.
- ❖ [Our] west farm is in a different county, and my Dad went many times to the office and came home confused each time. If I had done the numbers it would have scored higher for sure.
- ❖ My opinion: More subsidy for farming. Now I'm apparently bound to no-till practices that may be counterproductive in certain situations. I am resigned to more red tape.
- ❖ I agree with you that CSP should reward past/ongoing practices and am not comfortable with at least my understanding of needing to add new practices to stay in. However when I talked to Senator Harkin and his staff (including Dave White) during the period that Senator Harkin was working on the new Conservation Stewardship Program, I understood it to be an expansion and that the program was being designed to both reward the past efforts, but also act as a means to change agriculture to a more sustainable model. I agree with you on the idea that EQIP should be used by farmers to try new, innovative practices; there is a real need for that.
- ❖ Payments should be changed from 60% for change and 40% for existing practices, to 40% for change and 60% for existing practices.
- ❖ More emphasis is being put on change. We need to be careful about what kind of change is being directly or

More emphasis is being put on change.

We need to be careful about what kind of change is being directly or indirectly promoted with taxpayer money.

indirectly promoted with taxpayer money. In the two sign-ups for the old CSP, the highest ranking applications were often continuous no-till row crop producers. With the emphasis on change, those applicants who are changing to no-till will rank quite high. The original idea for CSP was to reward farmers for existing practices. The focus was on the farmers who don't put every available acre into row crop production. This plan was put together to promote both good conservation practices and diversification. Promoting continuous row crop production was never the intent.

Do you want to be part of Practical Farmers of Iowa's listserv community? If so, email Renee Thompson, renee@practicalfarmers.org to sign up.



PFI members voices are heard: Wade Dooley, Jerry Peckurn (pictured here), and Sarah Carlson participated in a DC Fly-in to educate lawmakers about beginning farmer issues.

Iowa Icons

Barns symbolize rural life in Iowa. They house not only farm equipment and critters, but stories of generations of farm families.



The historic River House Barn sits next to the Middle Raccoon River near Coon Rapids. The barn is part of the property of Liz Garst (pictured here), who is a granddaughter of agricultural innovator and citizen diplomat Roswell Garst. She and her family are in the process of donating this barn and 5000 acres to Whiterock Conservancy. The barn was converted from a working barn to a place of celebration in the time of prohibition, and has hosted many gatherings since.



The barn at Rolling Acres Farm was built around the turn of the century. Larry, Denise, granddaughter Molly and farm dog Brandy stand in front of the barn that received a new steel roof in December. Larry and Denise milked cows for nearly twenty years. The barn is now used for cleaning and packing CSA boxes.



Harlan Grau of Newell stands in front of his barn that was built in 1932 to house workhorses. Over the years it's been used to farrow hogs, and now stores farm implements and supplies. Through the years, the swing installed in the hay mount has been a favorite for many children.



PFI supporters Bill and Susan Knapp purchased this beautiful old brick barn near Van Meter five years ago and proceeded to restore the outside and turn the inside into a second home. The previous owner was raising chickens in the barn, which then had all dirt floors and old stalls for livestock.



Taylor Hill Lodge near Audubon is an English barn built in the early 1890's. Ted and Donna Bauer remodeled the barn into a modern lodge while retaining its original design.



Corn cribs hold a significant place in Iowa's landscape. This corn crib on Eric and Ann Franzenburg's farm near Van Horn stored shell corn until ten years ago when Eric and Ann started to combine their corn. Now this corn crib stores supplies for the Franzenburg's flower business.



Mark Runquist's and Linda Barnes' "Raeder Barn" near Marshalltown was constructed in 1911. The barn features unique rafter construction and an alley along the horse stalls with red bricks laid with the narrow facing up. Today the barn is used to house sheep, lamb and goats, and a small amount of hay. The loft serves as a great place to cure garlic and some of the stalls have been converted to a workplace to arrange flowers.

Savings Incentive Program

In honor of our Jubilee, PFI's new program to jumpstart beginners

Luke Gran

After the two-year program period, program participants will have up to \$4,800 to put toward the farm asset they've been saving for.

Getting the next generation of farmers started is our members' top priority, according to our December 2009 Member Survey. As PFI celebrates its 25th anniversary, it is time to take bold action to serve our farmer leaders for the next 25 years. As we announced at the Annual Conference, in 2010 we are introducing a Savings Incentive Program (SIP). This program will allow beginning farmers to save \$100 a month for two years; After two years, PFI will match that amount 1:1. The beginning farmer can then use their savings match (up to \$2,400) towards the purchase of a productive farm asset (like machinery, land, or livestock).

This Jubilee Campaign—along with our Next Generation programming (visioning, planning, networking, and production skills)—provides a way to help beginning farmers along the road to success with education, mentoring, and some additional funding.

SIP Objectives:

- ❖ Help beginners develop a business plan
- ❖ Increase participation in PFI programming



The Savings Incentive Program will provide beginning farmers like Ellen Walsh and Daniel Rosmann tools to create business plans as well as a mentor matched to their farming interests.

- ❖ Match participants with a PFI mentor
- ❖ Offer quarterly check-ins to help beginning farmers keep on track
- ❖ Provide an incentive for saving

Jubilee Campaign Details

To pay for the SIP program and its savings match for enrolled farms our goal is to raise \$250,000 in 2010. All unrestricted donations given between May and December 2010 will go toward the Savings Incentive Program—a major commitment on behalf of the PFI Board of Directors and membership.

We believe our goal is achievable. In a single fundraising year, similar programs in Michigan raised \$75,000 from small grants and another in California raised \$75,000 from a handful of banks. In 2010, if every family donated just \$30 per month, we could raise more than \$250,000 from our membership alone.

SIP Steps

PFI will invest the \$250,000 wisely for two years, while the beginning farmers are saving their own (farm or off-farm) earned income. If Jubilee campaign fundraising is on track, PFI will enroll ten beginning farmers in 2010, with payout in 2012. In 2011–2014, PFI will add 80 more beginners to the program, with payouts scheduled for 2013–2016. Ninety Iowa beginning farmers will benefit from this program by 2016.

Additional Details

Here are answers to questions you might have about SIP:

Q: What is a Savings Incentive Program?

A: The Next Generation Savings Incentive Program is based on the Individual Development Account (IDA) model. IDAs are a proven method to help families and individuals establish a pattern of regular savings and, ultimately, purchase a “productive asset.” A productive asset is something of value that is likely to return substantial long-term benefits to its owner – benefits like security, stability, and opportunities for more income. SIP differs from an IDA in that it does not restrict applicants to low income earning beginning farmers only. Enrollees will be from a broad range of agricultural enterprises from farmer members around the State of Iowa.

Q: What is a “savings match?”

A: A savings match is a promise to award a participant's business

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What If? Glimpses of a Future That You Can Help Shape

Heather Holcomb evaluates a tech-focused future

Teresa Opheim

At the 2010 annual conference, PFI member Helen Gunderson provided us with a wonderful video reflection on PFI's first 25 years (view this online at www.practicalfarmers.org). Also during the conference, about 50 people came together for a session that looked ahead 25 years as well. The lively and thoughtful group discussed three potential scenarios for the year 2035: What they liked about the scenarios, what was missing, what they would change. Many mentioned that they would like to continue the discussion on the scenarios, and they wished others would take time to

reflect on our future as well.

One of the scenarios, "Tech-Mix," is printed here, followed by some comments from PFI member Heather Holcomb. What is your reaction to this scenario or to Heather's comments? Send your comments to Teresa Opheim at the PFI office. Next issue, we'll run your comments and also the second scenario: "Back to the Basics."

We have so much thinking and work to do to realize a positive future! We will take your comments and conversations to the PFI Board of Directors, to help guide our organization's planning for a challenging future.

Scenario 1: Tech-Mix

Mark and Mary pull out of the parking lot, full of information from the 2035 PFI conference. It was good to see old friends in the flesh, Mary says. So often now they get updates from everyone on their hand-held video-pods. They have easy online access to any technical information they need for their farming operation as well. Still, there is not substitute for actual contact with fellow farmers, so they make the yearly trek to the PFI conference.

As Mark pulls out onto an I-80 lined with wind turbines, he remembers their first PFI meeting in 2010. Everyone arrived in petroleum-powered cars. He shakes his head at the inefficiencies in his pickup and farm at that time. Today, he and Mary drive a battery and fuel cell vehicle, and their farm equipment has long been electric. It all runs cleanly and quietly with few breakdowns and no direct consumption of fossil fuel.

And it's a good thing too—without the efficiency increases of the last couple decades, he'd have trouble making his 45-mile commute to his job in Cedar Rapids, and he'd have trouble running his 1,200-acre corn and soybean operation.

Mary cares for their two children, who help her with the farm's 5,000 head farrow-to-finish hog operation (which is smell-free and complete with a methane digester that heats and cools their home). In

2010, she rarely used the Internet; today her virtually paperless world includes home-schooling on-line. The school materials she finds are first-rate; she uses neighborhood clubs and church for socializing the children.

The family grows its own fresh produce, and they eat their own pork. But most of her food dollar is spent through an online regional food ordering system. She enjoys reviewing the on-line data about the farms and their food emissions, emissions that have been carefully calculated down to the type of soil used to grow the food. She recalls the days when words like "natural" were slapped on to products with few standards and little science backing up the food claims.

Like others at the conference, Mark and Mary were hit with a drought in 2035, after intense rains in 2034. "Weird weather," everyone calls it, but can it be weird if it's now happening yearly? The corn and soybean seed of 2010 couldn't have handled this volatility; yet year to year Mark's losses have been mitigated by planting a mix of drought- and flood-tolerant corn and soybean seed. His corn gets an average of 220 bushels an acre during good years; his soybeans 75. He and Mary pay dearly for that seed, but they also have to admit that Monsanto's research power has really paid off in yields.

Weeds, though, are worrying them both. Despite the steadily improved "stacked" seed that Monsanto has sold through the years, the weeds are increasingly resistant and varied and require additional labor to control them. "We've got all of this technology," Mark told a fellow farmer at the conference, "yet we're back to hiring kids to walk corn and beans," just like they did 50 years ago.

Mark and Mary turn off the Interstate at the Williamsburg exit. They agree the 25 years since their first PFI conference have been ones of rapid technological change. Mark would rather be farming full-time and helping Mary more with the hog operation, but in general they have the life they want. We're lucky, Mark thinks. We have



Heather Holcomb

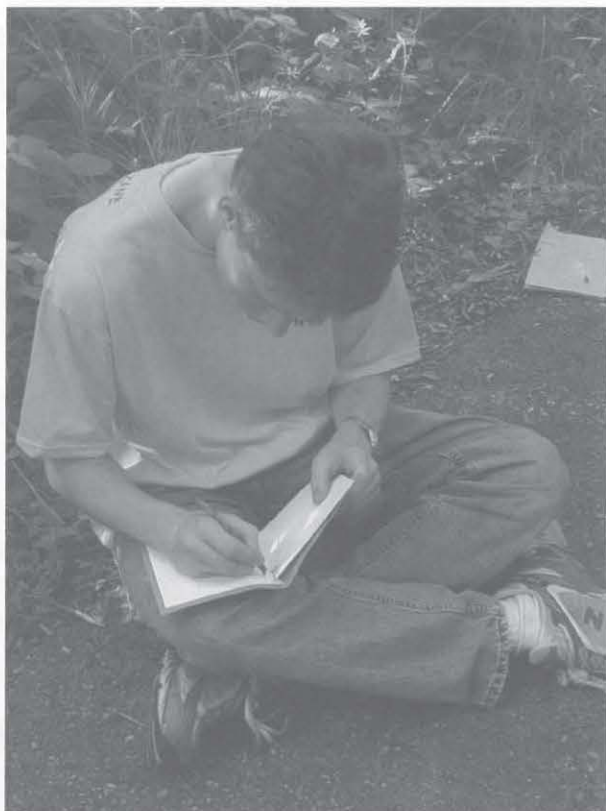
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Young Member Spotlight

Growing up Iowan

By Bryce T Bauer



Bryce manicures his writing skills during journaling time at PFI summer camp in 2003.

My apartment, half hour North of New York City and on the fifth floor, possesses just North- and East-facing windows. So far the only plant to survive has been a cactus; a basil plant went yellow-splotted and withered within a few weeks, a tiny rosemary shrub dried up when I went on a long vacation. Recently I stuck a few spinach seeds in a small container of soil and am now hoping, at least, for a few sprouts.

But since moving from Iowa, where I was raised on a family farm in Audubon County, to New York, where I am pursuing a graduate writing degree, my roots in the agricultural have only strengthened. As a kid my mom imbued me with a love of great food, my father with the knowledge that tortilla chips and steaks begin as corn and cows. As a committed PFI camp and conference-goer, I gained a passion for farming that's sustainable and produces wholesome food while protecting the environment and rural communities.

Those experiences not only helped give me the sense of individuality among the New York throng; I know why the tomato at farmer's market tastes so much more delicious than the one at the grocery store and understand the story about my favorite squash-farmers leaving at 3 a.m. and returning home at 9 p.m. is more than simple marketing splash. Growing up on an Iowa farm has also provided invaluable material for my writing. Anecdotes I draw on are sometimes comic details of raising poultry as a child, others are descriptions of the beauty of rural-Iowa's bountiful gardens during the spring, summer, and fall (winter, I despised).

Increasingly I've felt compelled to apply this agrarian upbringing to investigate and convey the important of sustainable agriculture in producing a healthful society. I love the urban atmosphere and loathe early mornings too much to probably ever return to a farm, but I plan to continue cultivating my passion for the delicious, responsibly produced food I came to love as a child.

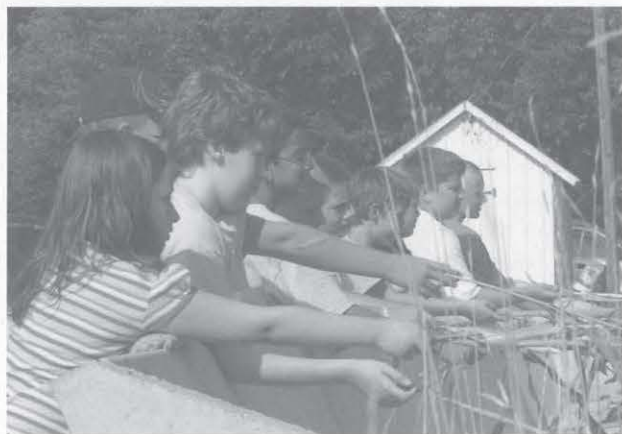
Know Your Farmer!

Youth Leadership Program

July 12-14, 2010

Summer Camp

July 14-17, 2010



This year's camp is at Scattergood Friends School, a working farm where youth have the opportunity to learn about farming hands-on while participating in many fun activities!

Registration is open through June 25. To find out more about PFI's Youth Leadership Program and Summer Camp, contact:

Suzi Bernhard
suzi@practicalfarmers.org
(515)232-5661

Member Book Review

Reviewed by Norm Engstrom, Paw Paw, Illinois

Tomorrow's Table: Organic Farming, Genetics, and the Future of Food, by Raoul Adamchak and Pam Ronald

"By the year 2050, the number of people on earth is expected to increase to 9.2 billion from the current 6.7 billion ([United Nations] Population Division, 2007). What is the best way to produce enough food to feed all these people?"

So begins *Tomorrow's Table: Organic Farming, Genetics, and the Future of Food*; co-authored by husband and wife team Raoul W. Adamchak, a successful organic grower who teaches organic farming/gardening at the University of California, Davis, and Pam C. Ronald, a plant genetics professor and rice genetic engineering researcher, also at U.C. Davis. The book plays on the tension of a marriage between organics and biotechnology and attempts to persuade the reader that both the authors and their subjects make happy and healthy partners.

Pam and Raoul both write in an engaging, chatty style, and establish their credentials as professionals and as likeable people. Pam begins most of her chapters with a personal story, so we learn that she rides her bike to work, she and a friend go to an annual yoga retreat, she and Raoul hike in the Sierra Nevadas with their children, and she and Raoul both enjoy cooking healthy vegetarian meals. They use mostly locally grown organic ingredients. Eleven recipes are sprinkled through the book.

The thin volume (167 pages of text including 21 blank pages, followed by 39 pages of references cited, glossary, and an index) summarizes the arguments favoring organic growing, yet also asserts that genetic engineering (GE) is completely safe and has

great potential to provide inexpensive, quickly developed, tailor-made adaptations to protect plants from diseases, insects, drought, flooding, etc., and to increase yields and enhance nutritional traits. Pam repeatedly points out that Americans already consume a diet laced with GE crops in soy sauce, canola oil, cornmeal, high fructose corn syrup, and hundreds of other ingredients, as well as eating beef, pork, poultry, and dairy produced from livestock fed GE corn and soybeans.

The narrative is often interrupted by boxes filled with detailed explanations of technical material, tables, or other information. For example, one lengthy box provides elementary-level project instructions for extracting DNA strands from organically grown strawberries using easily obtained materials. The point of this insert seems to be that genetic experiments are child's play, inexpensive, and safe. Reviewer's note: In contrast, I discovered information on the Monsanto website listing expenditures of \$2.6 million each day on research as justification for patenting genetic products and defending those patents aggressively. The authors of *Tomorrow's Table* acknowledge that patents are troubling and problematic, but think there are ways to provide open source seeds.

It is difficult to envision the perfect audience for this book. The science presentation is not detailed enough for professionals and the narrative is too cluttered for general readers. It is neither fish nor fowl. The illusion of a happy marriage between apparent opposites may be just an uncomfortable gimmick.

New PFI Members—Welcome!

District 1

Drew Lietz, *Alta*

Bill Michael, *Cedar Springs Farm, Akron*

District 2

Diane Ercse, *Iowa Falls*

Jamie Greiner, *McCallsburg*

Steven Gustafson, *Boone*

Heather Matusiak, *Bumpy Pastures Farm,*

Ames

Debra Metz, *Ames*

Jacob Myers, *Maxwell*

Carol Prescott, *Ventura*

Justin Ray, *Huxley*

Mary Swander, *Fairview School/Farm,*

Ames

Elwynn Taylor, *Taylor Technical Services,*

Ames

Darrin Vander Plas, *Ames*

George and Elizabeth Wormley, *Colo*

District 3

Craig Hoffman, *Mount Vernon*

Gordon Murray-John, *Maynard*

District 4

Lisa and Andy Bean, *Wauke*

Amanda Edsall, *Lamoni*

Chris Mills, *Murray*

Darwin Pierce, *Coon Rapids*

Sally Troxell, *Des Moines*

District 5

Travis Cameron, *Iowa City*

Susan Frye, *Iowa City*

Dennis Jennings,

Williamsburg

Roxane Mitte, *Iowa City*

Jennifer and Chuck Steffen,

Birmingham

District 6 (Outside of Iowa)

Virginia Andersen, *Kennard,*
NE

Carlson Enterprises Inc,
Battle Lake, MN

Traci Bruckner, *Center for Rural Affairs,*
Lyons, NE

Nelson Diaz, *Miami, FL*

David Grandel, *Truro, MA*

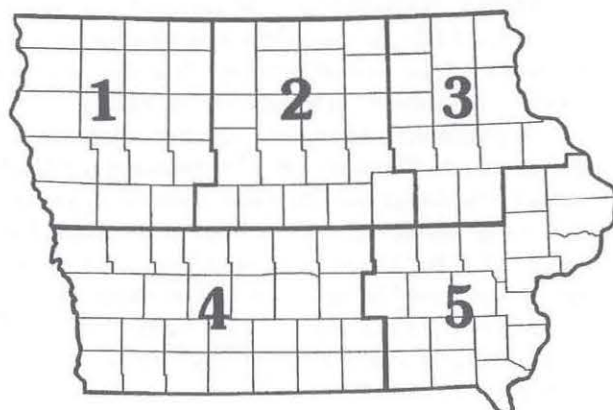
Melville Kennedy, *Davison, MI*

Liz Konstantinov, *Omaha, NE*

George Meyer, *New Prague, MN*

Les Miller, *Sioux Falls, SD*

Matthew Patterson, *North Bennington, VT*



Aspiring Farmer and Passionate Eater Joins PFI's Staff

An aspiring grass-based dairy farmer and cheese maker, I have joined PFI's staff to coordinate grazing programming. I did not even learn that **not** rotating pastures



was even a possibility until sometime in high school.

I originally hail from sunny Minnesota, where I spent most of my childhood in a small farm community where people lived and worked with mentally disabled adults on a diversified dairy, beef, crop, and vegetable farm called Camphill Village Minnesota. After high school, I spent three years working on organic dairy farms in Germany before heading to college at the University of Minnesota Morris, where I majored in biology and, more importantly, met my wife. Since then I have worked as a soils research technician, first at

Cornell University and then at Iowa State University, where I helped conduct multiple on-farm research projects about nutrient management topics, conservation practices, and soil quality characteristics.

When I am not coordinating ideas and programs for PFI graziers, I am working on my house, reading about farming, or planning my farm. I like to go canoeing and backpacking when I get a chance.

Kevin C. Dietzel

Kevin Dietzel
Grazing Coordinator

PFI Welcomes Christina Klinge

Hello PFI members! My name is Christina Klinge and I am the new Communications Assistant at Practical Farmers of Iowa. I specialize in coordinating events and media relations. My goal is to increase the public visibility of PFI and ensure strong communication ties with local and national media.

I live in Ankeny, where I spent most of my years growing up. I am originally from Farmersburg, Iowa. Many of you know my father and step-mother, Jeff Klinge and Deborah Tidwell. They are very active PFI members. I enjoy visiting the farm as often as I can. When I'm there we like to go hiking at Pike's Peak and boating on the Mississippi River. My dad has a fishing boat that has definitely seen better days...it is

very, very old but still seems to attract the fish.

My mother, Lindy, lives in Ankeny, and I have an older brother and sister. Noah is a banker and actor in Peoria, Arizona. Liz is a television news reporter on WHO Channel 13 in Des Moines.

I graduated from the University of Iowa in 2008 with a degree in Journalism and Mass Communications, and have been working in the public relations field since graduation. Through my work with Beecher Public Relations, I spent last summer coordinating media, managing website content, and publishing magazines at Iowa Speedway. I am excited to utilize my acquired skills, knowledge, and experience here at Practical Farmers of Iowa.



Christina Klinge

Christina Klinge
Communications Assistant

-What If?- continued from page 19-

time for our children, steady income, and the lifestyle we want.

Reflection

Heather Holcomb: "My gut reaction? Unease – but I freely admit that I have an unrealistic nostalgia for the Living History Farms 1900 Farm style of farming. --It is a lot easier to farm when you have an endowment to help pay the bills. ☺"

"I remember walking through the equipment collection at the Albert City Threshers Bee a few years ago and laughing when I saw a 1960s vintage baler that had an atomic symbol incorporated in the logo, along with a suitably space-age name. That baler was produced at the height of an era when, as a culture, we thought technology would be our savior and all technology was good. We still retain a heavy dose of that perspective, but are tempering it to some degree with the understanding that every technological 'solution' carries with it newly created problems. The trick is to mindfully consider these consequences and weigh the good against

the harm. The Amish have occasionally adopted new technologies, just not without first considering how their community and religious experience will be changed. I'm not suggesting we all become Amish, but their relationship with technology could provide food for thought.

"What do I like? The move away from fossil fuels, the mention of increased efficiency, personal food production coupled with regional food buying, the mention of a 1,200 acre farm rather than a 5,000+ acre farm

"What don't I like? The mention of a 1,200-acre farm rather than a 640- or even 80-acre farm. Monsanto is still in business. There is no mention of greater crop diversity and a continuing need for off-farm income, I wonder about rural depopulation and if there would be 'neighborhood clubs' to provide the children with social outlets.

"This is a very interesting exercise...."

Conversation with Tyler Franzenburg, New PFI Board Member for District 3

What is your farming involvement?

My "farm" consists of approximately 10 acres I rent from the town of Keystone, on which I grow conventional corn and soybeans. I'm working on renting 80 acres of organic cropland for this season.

I also work with my dad. We grow organic corn, soybeans, oats, barley, and hay. We also have a small cow herd. We rotational graze, finish the calves with grain, and do some limited direct marketing of beef to consumers. The beef is "natural" but not organic.

You're also involved in an ag business. Can you tell us about it?

Franzenburg Farm Consulting Enterprises (FFC), LLC, provides DNR Manure Management Plans, soil sampling, fertility recommendations, and custom manure application. FFC injected over 5.3 million gallons of liquid hog manure on over 1,500 acres in the fall of 2009. FFC also became a dealer for Albert Lea Seed and Welter Seed in 2009. We have about 25 organic seed customers spread over about a

50 mile radius.

What drew you to agriculture?

I don't think I ever had a choice of not being involved in agriculture. I was just born with the desire to farm and it's never left me. Every part-time job I've ever had has been ag-related.

Why did you become involved with PFI?

The first time I heard about PFI was in a Freshman agronomy learning community orientation. The instructor asked Daniel Rosman and me if we knew each other from PFI (because we both said our families farmed organic) and I asked, "What is PFI?" I learned more about Dick Thompson and PFI initially through classes, but my interest in organic crops and practices like ridge till, cover crops, etc., is what drew me further. I also love research, so PFI is a perfect fit.

What do you look forward to while serving on the PFI Board of Directors?

I know I will gain a better understanding of how organizations work. It's kind of

mind-boggling how some of the ideas I hear will come to fruition; the amazing part is PFI is capable of doing almost all of them. I want to support PFI and help ensure the success of the projects the members want to undertake. One of the best contributions I can offer to the Board is a beginning farmer's perspective.



Tyler listens in on a session at PFI's 2010 annual conference

PFI Board Updates

The Board met on February 11 at the Cooperator's Meeting in Ames. The Board reviewed a list of proposed updates to the Strategic Plan that had been suggested by the Staff. The Board decided to hold the updates until a written draft revision could be made to the Plan. We heard a progress report from Luke Gran summarizing the work from the Savings Incentive Program Committee. The Board agreed to let the Committee work through the details, update the Board regularly, and prepare a draft of the Program for Board approval. Several of the Board members had met with Teresa Opheim to review the District boundaries, as it had been quite a few years since this had been done. The Board approved their proposed revisions, which will become effective at the 2011 Annual Conference. We spent some time de-briefing on the Annual Meeting, and Teresa presented a summary of the attendee evaluations. The suggestion was made to move the keynote session to Friday night, and add another round of workshops on Saturday morning.

The Board also met on March 9 and 10 in Ames for their annual Retreat and Board Meeting. Ora Grodsky facilitated the retreat on March 9, where the Board reflected on what inspired the

Board members about PFI, we reviewed the basic responsibilities of non-profit Boards and listed several things we are doing well as well as areas for improvement, we reviewed the Strategic Plan, and developed a workplan for 2010. The workplan included 13 action items - a full schedule for the Board to complete. On March, 10, the Board held a regular meeting, where we reviewed and approved a 'Whistleblower' Policy, discussed the results of a recent survey of PFI pork producers regarding their interest in additional programming support, another update from the Savings Incentive Program Committee, and a brainstorming of possible programming ideas to provide marketing and business plan development to PFI farmers. The Board also asked Teresa to survey the PFI membership regarding the "best" time of year to hold the Annual Conference. The winter weather has affected Conference attendance the last 2 years, and the membership may want to look at a different time of year.

Calendar

May

Pasture Walk: Dairy Grazing: May 4, 10:30 AM, 16551 Merry Hill Road, Viola, WI. Attend a pasture walk with topics on dairy grazing, new start up Grazier two to three year, and laying out paddocks on 40 acres of newly seeded pasture. For more information: Jean Stramel (608)647-8874 ext. 110.

Shepherd's Harvest Festival: May 8-9, Washington County Fairgrounds, MN. May 8 from 9am to 5pm and May 9 from 10am to 4pm. Parking and admission are free. Minnesota's largest sheep and wool festival. For more information: Heather Thorstensen, hthorstensen@agrinenews.com or www.agrinenews.com.

Garden Workshop—Planting Your Kitchen Garden: May 15, 9am-12pm, Seed Savers Heritage Farm, 3094 North Winn Road, Decorah, IA. Time your planting through observation of soil temperature and moisture and proper weather conditions. Give your plants what they need to thrive through companion planting and proper spacing. \$10/person, \$8/Seed Saver Member. For more

information: Kathy 563-382-5990 or www.seedsavers.org.

Launch of the ILF (Iowa Learning Farm) Conservation Station: May 20, 11am-2pm, Ada Hayden Park, Ames, IA. For more information: Carol Brown, (515) 294-8912, cbrown1@iastate.edu.

June

ILF Field Day: June 3 or June 10, Brian Hoffman farm, Laurens, IA. For more information: Carol Brown, (515) 294-8912, cbrown1@iastate.edu.

ILF Field Day: June 17, Tom Vaske farm, Manchester, IA. Beginning at 4:00pm. For more information: Carol Brown, (515) 294-8912, cbrown1@iastate.edu.

Garden Workshop—Fall Garden Care & Fall Garden Planting Ideas: June 26, 9am-12pm, Seed Savers Heritage Farm 3094 North Winn Road, Decorah, IA. Planting your fall garden, ensuring continuing soil health through successive plantings, understand seasonal maintenance for bountiful harvest. \$10/person, \$8/Seed Saver Member. For more information: Kathy,

(563)382-5990 or www.seedsavers.org.

ILF/CIG Field Day: June 30, ISU NW Research Farm, Sutherland, Midway. For more information: Carol Brown, (515) 294-8912, cbrown1@iastate.edu.

July

ILF/CIG Field Day: July 20 or 21, John Kielkopf farm, Hedrick. For more information: Carol Brown, (515) 294-8912, cbrown1@iastate.edu.

ILF/CIG Field Day: July 27, Smeltzer Trust Demonstration Farm, 4:30-8:00pm. For more information: Carol Brown, (515) 294-8912, cbrown1@iastate.edu.

All Horticulture Field Day: July 29, 9am-3pm, Iowa State University Research Station, Gilbert. Research and demonstration projects will be available on ornamental trees, turfgrass, herbaceous perennials, and annuals, sustainable landscapes, as well as conventional and organic fruit and vegetable production. For more information: www.hort.iastate.edu/news.

Field day season is approaching!

Look for your field day guide in the mail soon. In the meantime, check our calendar at www.practicalfarmers.org for details.

IOWA

MARKETMAKER™

Linking Agricultural Markets

Anyone who grows, sells, processes or eats food has a resource to help them. Market Maker® locates producers, businesses and markets of food products, providing an important link between producers and their buyers including end-consumers. The on-line information is provided on maps so that producers, businesses and markets can be visually located. Producers can use the web site to find processors, wholesalers, distributors, retailers, restaurants or farmers' markets who might buy their products. Producers who are registered on the site can be easily found by their potential buyers and end-consumers.

Registration and use of MarketMaker is **free**. Producers, processors, wholesalers, retailers, restaurants, farmers' markets and wineries can register by going to the website at <http://marketmakeriowa.com> and clicking on the link, "Register Your

Business."

"Consumers are increasingly interested in buying food that was produced closer to home. MarketMaker is an important tool to help all parts of the supply chain meet this consumer need," said Ray Hansen Iowa State University Extension - Value-Added Agriculture Program and coordinator for the Market Maker Iowa project.

Market Maker is part of a growing regional project that now has more than 17 state participating. The multi-state portal can be accessed through a link on the homepage of the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center - AgMRC at www.agmrc.org

For more information contact ISU-VAAP at marketmaker@iastate.edu or call (294) 294-3890.

Sustain the PFI Legacy

Remember Practical Farmers of Iowa in your will.



Practical Farmers of Iowa has flourished since its initial leaders came together in 1985. With your help, PFI will be around for generations to come.

A planned gift (such as a bequest or gift of stocks, bonds, cash, life insurance, or IRA) will:

- Direct your dollars to sustainable farmers, not taxes
- Simplify your estate plans
- Perhaps even increase your income.

Call Teresa Opheim at (515)232-5661 for more information.

-Savings Incentive Program- continued from page 18-

savings at a specific rate. A 1:1 savings match means that for every dollar a Next Generation Savings Incentive Program participant saves over 24 months in the program (up to \$2,400), Practical Farmers of Iowa will add \$1. This means that after the two-year program period, program participants will have up to \$4,800 to put toward the farm asset they've been saving for.

Q: Who is eligible to enroll?

A: Eligible applicants must be:

- ❖ Farming now
- ❖ Legal residents of Iowa
- ❖ PFI members

Q: What do enrollees need to do to receive their savings match funds?

A: SIP participants enrolled in the program must:

Open a separate SIP savings account at a bank of their choice and save their own money (up to \$100/month will be matched 1:1)

- ❖ Participate in at least 4 PFI events a year (online, on-farm, at conferences or workshops), including two Next Generation events

- ❖ Meet quarterly (phone or in person) with PFI staff or business consultant to check progress toward goals
- ❖ Engage with a matched farmer mentor at least 3 times in one year

Note: Additional detailed requirements may be determined by the Next Generation Savings Incentive Program Committee and the PFI Board of Directors.

Q: How do I participate in the SIP Program?

A: As soon as we raise the money, we'll call for applications! Our plan is to enroll beginning farmers in the program in the fall. For more information about applying for the Savings Incentive Program, contact Luke Gran, Next Generation Coordinator, luke@practicalfarmers.org (515)232-5661, ext 308.

Q: How can I help?

A: Please donate when you're asked. And pass on any donor leads you have to Luke, PFI Executive Director Teresa Opheim [teresa@practicalfarmers.org or (515)232-5661], or PFI President Tim Landgraf [libland@peconet.net] or by phone (641)495-6367.

PFI Merchandise

Be a proud PFI member!

Casual Cap—\$12

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

_____ QTY _____ \$



Farmer Cap—\$8

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

_____ QTY _____ \$



Notecards—\$6 for set of 8

Colorful, picturesque photos of Iowa's agricultural landscape by Jerry Dewitt

_____ QTY _____ \$



White PFI T-shirt, Size S-XL—\$15

PFI logo on front with tagline on back

_____ QTY _____ \$



Colored PFI T-shirt, available in gray, orange, and safety green, Size S-XL—\$15

Scenic landscape with Practical Farmers of Iowa caption on front of shirt

_____ QTY _____ \$



King Corn DVD—\$10

Learn about the fate of corn—and our food system

_____ QTY _____ \$



Subtotal: _____

S & H: * _____

Total: _____

***Shipping and Handling: \$3 for the first item, \$1 for each additional item**

Practical Farmers of Iowa
137 Lynn Ave., Suite 200
Ames, IA 50014
(515)232-5661

Payment

- ☐ Check Payable to:
Practical Farmers of Iowa
- ☐ Credit Card
- ☐ Mastercard
- ☐ Visa

Card Number: _____

Expiration Date: _____

Signature: _____

Support Our Efforts ~ Sustain Our Work

This annual membership is a:

- ☐ new membership
☐ renewal

I am joining at the level of:

- ☐ Student—\$15
☐ Individual—\$35
☐ Farm or Household—\$45
☐ Organization (including businesses, agencies, not-for-profit groups)—\$75

My interest in joining PFI is primarily as a:

- ☐ farmer/grower
☐ non-farmer (You will have the opportunity to expand upon this when you receive your membership information form.)

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.

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

- ☐ \$1,000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$_____

JOIN OUR GIFT OF THE MONTH CLUB

The Gift of the Month Club is an easy way to support Practical Farmers of Iowa! Send in your pledge with your credit card information, and we will automatically deduct your donation the first of each month.

YES! I would like to give _____ per month to PFI, to be automatically charged to my credit card the first of the month. (\$10 per month minimum)

Practical Farmers of Iowa is a 501©3 organization Your gift is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Thank you!

Individual or Farm or Organization Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Primary Phone (with area code): _____

Alternate Phone (with area code): _____

E-mail: _____

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

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

Payment:

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

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

☐ Credit Card ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard

Card Number _____

Expiration Date _____ Signature _____





Practical Farmers of Iowa

137 Lynn Avenue, Suite 200

Ames, IA 50014

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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

Healthy Food, Diverse Farms, Vibrant Communities