

the Practical Farmer

A quarterly publication of Practical Farmers of Iowa

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Everybody on board the hay wagon for a trip to the pasture to see the Yoder Family Farm egg mobile at a 2011 Field Day



In this issue

Ingredients for good buyer-seller relationships
PFI farmers turn “undercover” agents
Is marketing the “weak link” in your operation?
Looking to the future: PFI adopts new strategic plan
Special full-color photo spread: “Why I farm”

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the Practical Farmer

the Practical Farmer keeps farmers and friends of farmers in touch with one another and provides informative articles about the latest on-farm research, demonstration and observation to help all types of farming operations to become profitable, while caring for the land that sustains them. Provided as a member benefit to PFI supporters, **the Practical Farmer** also serves to update members on PFI programming.

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(Back issues are available upon request.)



LEOPOLD CENTER



The Prairie's Lessons

Five years ago, we planted a prairie in our front yard. It's only a small swatch, but the lessons it provides have been huge. Our prairie is a study in resiliency.

Three inches of rain in a night? The prairie thrives. No rain at all for months? The prairie thrives. Cloudiness and cool temps? No problem. Blazing heat? Bring it on. This little prairie has even survived the fall of the neighbor's 150-year oak (the grasses underneath battered but not even broken for the year).

What lessons does the prairie offer? The benefits of diversity. Conditions are always optimal for some of the four grasses and 15 forbs we planted. The prairie species grow and mature at different times and harvest solar energy from early May until well after frost.

Another lesson of the prairie: Perenniality. According to Laura Jackson, "Perennial means that the plants come up from roots year after year instead of from seed, and as a consequence, the physical structure of the vegetation—dry plant litter, crowns and roots—protects the soil from erosion." Laura, a PFI member and University of Northern Iowa biology professor, is co-author with her mother, Dana Jackson, of a wonderful book, *The Farm as Natural Habitat*.

Many of you are working to mimic the prairie's diversity and perenniality in your farming systems. Thirty-two percent of you report you have three-plus year rotations. Forty-five percent of you report you are using cover crops. Forty-one percent of you report you rotationally graze your livestock.

Part of Practical Farmers' work is to help you solve the challenges to making those longer rotations, cover crops and grazing systems work for your triple bottom line (profitability, stewardship and community).

We are always proud of Practical Farmers, but we were just beaming at a Leopold

Center conference in May. The centerpiece of the keynote speaker's talk on resiliency was PFI's own Gilbert Family and how their farm has withstood shocks that have included severe flooding, hail, low milk prices and escalating input costs.

The Gilberts, who own 800 acres near Iowa Falls, have a dairy herd, antibiotic-free hogs and corn, food-grade soybeans, alfalfa-grass hay, oats and a variety of annuals for forage. Among the Gilberts' strategies for resiliency:

- ◆ Working with nature to time when calves and pigs are born;
- ◆ Selecting livestock and crop varieties that are hardy with minimal inputs;
- ◆ Choosing breeding stock with calm dispositions for easier handling;
- ◆ Relying first on on-farm resources and skills;



Farm dog Rose, 12, belongs to humans John and Bev Gilbert. She is shown here relishing a good rubdown by PFI staffer Kevin Dietzel. Rose also enjoys tagging along on chores and riding in the truck. "She's a good companion with a real sweet disposition," says John.

From the Director



It's good to get away and experience other cultures! *My family had an opportunity to do that in June, when we spent two weeks in Germany. One of our stops: Domane Mechtildshausen, an operation that partners with the nearby town of Wiesbaden to grow vegetables, grains, meats and more. Here I'm talking with the farmer who runs their horticulture operation. Mmmm, wouldn't it be great if PFI had a travel fund for PFI farmers to meet farmers from other areas of the country and other nations? Such cultural exchanges can be life-changing. Farmer and board member Dan Wilson reports a cultural exchange with Sweden years ago on hoophouse hog production made a big difference for his operation.*

- ◆ Being financially cautious, and
- ◆ Managing risks with insurance whenever possible.

One last note: Sara Hanson put on a wonderful field day last week at her beginning farm near Wesley. Sara pulled in a variety of neighbors and townspeople to come out and view her hoophouse and rows of vegetables. A community celebration at its best!

See you at a Field Day this summer.

Thank you for your support,

P.S. The PFI Board has just approved a strategic plan! See pages 13-14 for more details.

Young farmer's path to owning her own farm Is paved with rich past experiences

by Sally Worley

For as long as she can remember, Sara Hanson has wanted to farm, but before purchasing 10 acres of family land in 2008, she armed herself with knowledge, experience and a strong network of supporters.

Sara's land purchase includes the three-acre homestead and house where her grandparents once lived and seven acres of tillable land. Her home is just three miles south of where she grew up and her parents still reside.

Sara did not purchase this farmland on a whim. For eight years prior to her land purchase, she worked on farms to learn the trade. She found out what enterprises were of most interest and profit to her, and how to align her skills to design her future farm.

Education is good foundation

Sara graduated from Iowa State University with degrees in biology and English. She has always been interested in agriculture. "People remind me now that even when I was young, I talked about returning to Iowa to farm," she says. During her college summers, she did prairie restoration work for the Iowa Chapter of the Nature Conservancy. She met Tony Thompson of Willow Lake Farm near Windom, Minnesota at a prairie conference in Nebraska. "Tony was farming ridge till corn and soybeans, and he had a prairie seed and ecological restoration business as an offshoot of his farm." Tony was looking for someone to help manage the prairie seed business, and Sara went to work for him upon graduation.

Sara worked at Willow Lake Farm for two years. "That was a very good experience because of my interest in prairie. I learned about the prairie seed market and how to run a business." Sara also had the opportunity to farm row crops with Tony when she wasn't busy with the prairie and restoration business.

Sara wanted to get experience on a community supported agriculture



Sara Hanson is shown here in her hoop house surrounded by collard greens, swiss chard and lacinato kale that is ready for harvesting.

(CSA) farm, so she traveled east from Minnesota to Wisconsin to work with Barb and Dave Perkins on their Vermont Valley Community Farm near Madison. At the time Sara worked on the farm, Vermont Valley was filling 500 CSA shares (they are now filling over 1,000) as well as providing products to the wholesale market. "Their operation was really efficient, very mechanized and profitable. For me it was an awesome example of how you can be successful and make a living growing vegetables," she says.

On-farm experience is recommended

Sara worked at Vermont Valley for two seasons and recommends working on a farm, with an operation that is compatible with your interests, for two or more seasons before starting your own. "The first season I learned about the farm, people and processes. The second season I was able to do more crew management and learn the second layer of how the farm works."

After Vermont Valley, Sara traveled to Deep Creek Green, a nursery, cut flower, and vegetable farm near Livingston, Montana. Sara initially took a seasonal position, but she moved into an assistant manager role and stayed with the business for

four years. "It was a great experience," she says, "because I ended up not just as assistant manager, but essentially produce manager." Sara increased vegetable production to four acres, plus added a hoop house and small plots surrounding the nursery. "I did all the planning, seed ordering, marketing, crew management, and decided what to harvest and how much," she adds. Deep Creek Green sold their produce through a small CSA, direct sales on site, restaurants and some natural food stores. "That was a really great experience for me," she recalls. "It was like having the opportunity to run and manage a farm with a safety net."

Sara increased produce sales by incorporating lessons learned at Vermont Valley Community Farm in Wisconsin. "Simple things, like getting stackable crates, upgrading the washing station and post-harvest handling procedures made the operation more efficient," she says. Sara invested in some labor-saving equipment that she had learned about while working in Wisconsin as well.

Not only did Sara get the opportunity to apply her newfound skills to Deep Creek Green, she acquired new skill sets. "In

Montana, I had the opportunity to do record keeping," she explains. "I've learned the importance of keeping good records,

from planting through harvest and sales. I learned it was really important to have a scale. There are farmers who don't operate that way and do just fine, but for me, it's imperative to understand the numbers."

Learning the business

Sara and her crew kept meticulous records at Deep Creek Green. "At the end of the day, our crew would come in and fill out a work log," she recalls. "If they would spend two hours in the lower garden harvesting carrots, they would write that down. In the winter, I could go back and see how much time we were spending on different crops, look at our labor records, run some crop calculations and see how we were doing."

Sara returned to Willow Lake Farm in Minnesota in 2007 to be back in the Midwest closer to home. She considered starting her own business at Willow Lake Farm, because there was not room at the time in Iowa on her family land to start her operation. Sara's great aunt passed away that same year, and Sara made the decision to purchase a section of her family's land and move back to Iowa.

2011 marks Sara's first season selling farm products. She is investigating interest levels in local markets to create her marketing focuses for next year. "Already I am getting a sense of where my markets are and what's going to be most efficient for my time and future profitability of my farm. I want to decide my market direction soon so I can promote my plans for next year to customers at this year's farmer's market."

Sara has already changed course from her initial marketing plan due to higher demand by local wholesale outlets than anticipated: "Local grocery stores around

here are contacting me, saying, 'I see your produce at Fresh Connections Co-op in Algona, and it would be so nice if we could have it here in Bancroft, too.'" Sara is also starting conversations with Hy-Vee stores in her area. Sara is contemplating how to create a produce subscription (CSA) model in her area that allows weekly online ordering and home delivery. She is also interested in working more with her dad and his farming operation in the future and potentially purchasing additional family farmland. "I didn't envision myself as more than a 10-acre farmer, but we'll see what happens."

My experience has provided me a strong network and support from other farmers. ... They're really good at responding to questions I have as I start my own farm.

Sara Hanson

I'm kind of stepping into it more gradually and plan to build from a solid foundation."

Build a strong network of support

Sara's path to her own farm has directed her farmscape and planning. Her experience at Willow Lake Farm is apparent in the two acres of prairie she has seeded into CRP ground, and her work as a Research Associate with Pioneer Research to supplement her beginning farmer income. Work at Vermont Valley has helped her equip her farm with efficient procedures and in-depth knowledge of the CSA model. At Deep Creek Green, Sara gained knowledge about which crops will bring her the best return (salad greens, basil and tomatoes) as well as how her skills translate into numbers: "I know how many pounds of salad greens I can harvest in an hour. I have a lot of those figures ingrained in my head."

"My experience has provided me a strong network and support from other farmers. I've stayed in pretty close contact with all the farmers I worked with over the

years. They're really good at responding to questions I have as I start my own farm."

Gathering experience and working on other farms is a great way to determine if farming is the right career path to pursue. Farming, especially small-scale vegetable production, is labor intensive. "You need to be sure you're committed to hard work before you start your own farm," Sara warns.

Working on other farms allows you to see different marketing methods and processes, and how they work for other operations. "You have the opportunity to pay attention to your strengths and skills as an individual, and structure your farm accordingly," she says.

"You can save yourself some time and mistakes. I like to do things behind the scenes, not be in the spotlight so I like the idea of wholesaling," she adds. "I also really enjoy working with people, but prefer to do so one on one or in small groups."

Sara is participating in Practical Farmers of Iowa's Savings Incentive Program, geared to help beginning farmers succeed. Find details about this program on page 25.



Sara hoists a bin of kale and collard greens.

Selling to restaurants that value local food: The ingredients For good buyer—seller relationships

by Sally Worley and Tomoko Ogawa

Mojo's in Johnston has roughly 30 vendors listed at the top of its menu; ingredients from these local farmers are transformed into dishes that are fresh, unique and tantalizing to the palette.

Executive Chef Anthony Johnson prefers to buy local, "I'm Iowa born and raised, and think we can produce some of the best meats and vegetables in the world." He estimates that 35-45 percent of his dinner menu is sourced locally, depending on the season.

How does Anthony source local products from so many different businesses? He works individually with each local account and sources the remaining products from a food distributor. For him, the process of purchasing from local producers is fairly simple and works well. "I have all their numbers; they either call me when they're coming this way, or I call them when I need something and they bring it to me," he says. Although the process varies slightly from client to client, there are similarities.

For example, Judy Henry from the Berry Patch calls before making her weekly trek to the Johnston farmer's market, then delivers to Mojo's on the way. Iowa Farm Families phones each Tuesday for Thursday delivery. Mark Schmitz from Majinola Meats also calls when he is traveling to the Des Moines area. Ben Saunders from Turtle Farms calls each Friday after CSA distribution to let Anthony know what's still available. Jennie Smith from Butcher Crick Farms calls and lets Anthony know what is ready for harvest. "I order, she'll go out and harvest it, rinse it off, throw it in her car and bring it to the door. It couldn't be any fresher."

There are certain farms, like Milton Scheeder, Scheeder Farms, and Doug Wirth, Wirth Farms, that Anthony calls when he is getting low on product, and they will deliver within a couple of days.

Sourcing local beverages works similarly. Some clients, like Madhouse Brewery, stop by weekly to check the cache and refill if needed. Others, Anthony calls as needed: "For most of the Iowa wines, we order what we need and they deliver. I try to always order enough to make it worth the trip."

Is managing so many client relationships difficult? "No," says Anthony. "I enjoy working directly with local farmers." He likes to see the care and pride the farmers have for their products and likes what the quality of their products brings to the plate. Prices are generally set by the producers but are often negotiable. Anthony isn't able to triple his cost over what is available from his distributor but gladly pays a premium for local products. "The quality is much better, and it takes a lot more for these farms to create their products. They

6 Quick tips for restaurants purchasing from farmers

1. Get involved in a *Buy Fresh, Buy Local* program and visit local farmer's markets to meet new suppliers
2. *Have realistic expectations;* ask up front about quantity and delivery window capabilities
3. Alert farmers in advance of *any fixed menu items* you will need year-round or for an entire growing season
4. *Be creative;* ask what they have available, incorporate it into your menu or create specials to take advantage of seasonal availability
5. *Print menus in house* for the flexibility to make frequent changes
6. *Be willing to pay more* for local than commodity market prices



Ben Saunders, farm manager at Turtle Farm, delivers just-picked quality to Mojo Executive Chef Anthony Johnson.

don't have huge machines or labor forces. They do the work themselves, and you have to pay them for it."

The relationship provides continual education for Anthony. "They explain to me when to harvest basil for maximum flavor, how to breed lambs to create a more perfectly shaped rib loin. It's great." Farmers learn from and appreciate Mojo's talents as well. "Farmers will bring in something they see every day, and my sous chef Eric and my eyes light up. When they return a few days later, *their* eyes light up; they are amazed what we did with their product."

Turtle Farm manager Ben Saunders says, "Anthony is an amazing chef, both in the dishes he creates and his commitment to and creativity in incorporating local foods. His menu is directed by what local ingredients he can source. The end result is amazing." An added bonus for both Turtle Farm and Mojo's is the free advertisement they provide each other. "Mojo's promotes Turtle Farm on their menu," Ben says. "And, I always mention Mojo's to my CSA (community supported agriculture) customers. We have a great relationship."

PFI farmer James Nisly has found a profitable niche in selling micro greens to local restaurants, but this didn't happen over night. He shares some of the lessons he's learned along the way by listening to his customers' needs.

"I like delivering my products to chefs, giving them produce that they really feel good about and are excited to serve to their customers," says James. Finding something he loves to grow and sell is just one key to his success in selling to area restaurants.

James operates Organic Greens in Kalona, Iowa, which produces and markets specialty mini and micro greens, such as pea shoots, broccoli sprouts and sunflower sprouts. Although he started selling to restaurants 13 years ago, today his clients also include regional distributors and several grocery stores. He now provides greens to 24 restaurants and three delis in the Iowa City/Coralville area. James estimates that restaurants account for 50 percent of his business. He has expanded his restaurant accounts primarily through the word of mouth.

James spends approximately two to three hours a week taking orders and then a day and a half delivering those orders. Each week, he also makes regularly scheduled sales calls to his restaurant clients. Some restaurants have standing orders and some give him discretion to deliver a selection of greens of his choosing.

The biggest challenge in selling to restaurants, according to James, is to meet their price expectations. "Because most of the certified-organic products I sell are produced on a small scale, it's difficult to compete with commodity vegetable suppliers' prices," says James. Another challenge is to have enough products available for an extended period of time.

James thinks it is important to educate restaurateurs about the benefits and marketability of buying local. Large

commodity vegetable producers from other climates have longer growing seasons and, therefore, can provide better volume and off-season selection of vegetables. The small-scale, local organic producer has the advantage when it comes to freshness, flavor and environmental friendliness.

Restaurateurs who are well-informed about these benefits can take steps to appeal to health-conscious and environmentally concerned customers to make them feel good about spending a little more to purchase meals prepared with locally grown and organic ingredients. "Restaurants should be advertising more

that they use local and organic produce," says James. However, he warns, "It's important to communicate in a way that doesn't create a negative impression with customers who don't value organic food."

Motley Cow Café in Iowa City is one of James' customers. Currently, the restaurant buys meat, produce, eggs and some grains from primarily six local producers. Since it opened in 1999, Motley Cow Café has always valued purchasing local foods. David Wieseneck, chef de cuisine and owner, estimates that 95 percent of meat and up to 70 percent of produce he uses are local. Local vegetables from Iowa City make up 75 percent of his consumption, while the rest is from within an hour away. All the meat comes from Iowa, the majority from within a 10-15 mile radius.

David spends only a couple of hours a week to order from individual farmers. Although he recognizes it requires a little extra work when compared to using a single purveyor who can supply everything, he finds it worthwhile. "Everything is fresher. I know that the produce I choose has been picked within 24 hours of delivery," says David. He can also be assured of the quality and know what practices have been

(Continued on page 11.)

5 Quick tips for farmers Approaching restaurants

1. *Go in personally.* Introduce yourself, bring samples and price lists
2. *Know your volume* and delivery frequency capacity
3. *Stay away from peak hours* such as lunch and dinner time
4. *Stop back in person.* If you drop by and the chef or food purveyor isn't in, leave a card, but return in person if they don't contact you
5. *Create fair restaurant pricing.* Don't charge full retail



The beautiful sprouts above, which were grown by James Nisly, owner of Organic Greens, Kalona, Iowa, will soon be served in dishes at restaurants throughout the Iowa City/Coralville area.

Cover crop investigation: PFI farmers turn “undercover” agents *by Sarah Carlson*

PFI farmers have been experimenting with cover crops since PFI's Cooperators' Program formally began in 1987 with PFI farmers seeking solutions to their on-farm challenges by conducting on-farm research and demonstration projects. Today, there is renewed interest in cover crops.

Several PFI Cooperators have tested adding winter rye, hairy vetch, oats and other cover crop species to their farms to reap the benefits that cover crops provide for the farming system and the surrounding environment through reduced soil erosion, improved nutrient holding and cycling, and pest and weed suppression.

Summaries of two PFI Research Reports published in 1988 and 1989, below, illustrate the commitment of PFI's farmers to finding answers to their on-farm questions.

Cooperators' cover crop Discoveries of the 80s
How will cover crops affect my crop yields? Mark May of Wilton, Iowa, was studying the effects of cover crops on his corn yields while Allyn Hagensick studied cover crops' effects on soybean yields.

It was very dry in 1988, following a drought in 1987, and there were a some very real concerns about a possible negative effect of cover crops robbing moisture from the main crop in extreme dry conditions; however, as dry as it was that year, Mark and Allyn did not see this negative impact.

Mark reported that he was pleased with unchanged corn yields following hairy vetch-oats cover crop. Allyn reported that he saw neither an increase nor a decrease in his soybean yields with cover crops he'd planted in north central Iowa in that dry year.

The following statement concluded their research report: “We shouldn't let one potential negative over shadow the many positive aspects of reducing soil erosion, decreasing weed pressure, improving soil

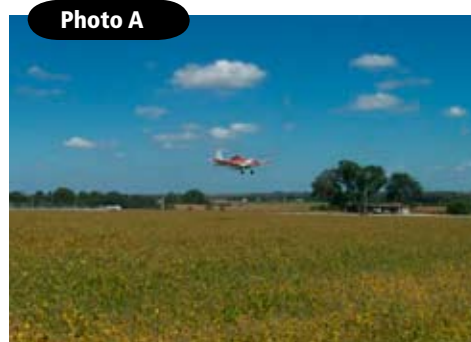


Photo A
A plane aerially seeds cover crops into yellowing soybeans in southwest Iowa on the farm of Steve McGrew.

structure, increasing earthworms, and catching moisture and nitrogen that would otherwise be lost.”

As a result, more trials were planned for 1989 to determine how best to add cover crops to a farm system. Two highboy applicators were used that fall for cover crop experiments. The ground applicators gave more precise seeding for plots than airplane seeding. PFI cooperators also built an over-seeding rig from a used high-clearance tractor to sow cover crops cheaply and before cash crop grain harvest. Another important cost-cutting measure was the production of cover crop seed right on the farm. Cooperators also explored using airplanes or ground equipment to improve cover crop growth by moving up its planting date.

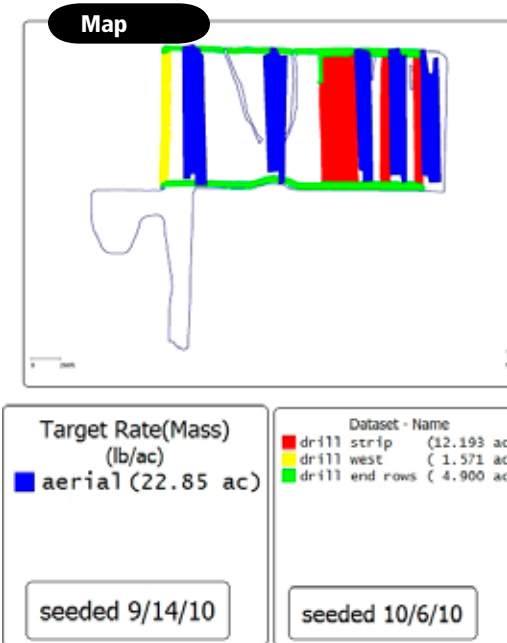
A renewed interest in cover crops today

There is new momentum for cover crops because they hold onto valuable top soil made all the more important today in light of increased precipitation levels in Iowa. PFI farmers and staff have been invited to speak about cover crops at events that have reached more than 500 farmers this year and last. Already in 2011, we have assisted 80 farmers interested in adding cover crops. In response to this growing interest, PFI created a **Cover Crop Business Directory** to help members and others find seed sources, pilots who can over seed cover crops and cooperatives

or other custom applicators who can help manage the cover crop in the spring while farmers are busy planting other cash crops.

Comparing aerially seeded cover crops versus drilled in 2010

Last year PFI member Steve McGrew used aerial seeding to plant cover crops into yellowing soybeans on his farm in southwest Iowa (Photo A). He compared aerially seeded (Photo D) versus drilled cover crops of hairy vetch (Photo E), tillage radish and rapeseed into standing soybeans and following soybean grain harvest. He aerially seeded 15# hairy vetch + 3# tillage radish + 2# rapeseed on September 14, 2010 (Photo



Cover Crop Business Directory
Download the latest version at: <http://www.practicalfarmers.org/assets/files/fieldcrops/additional/CoverCropDirectory.pfd>



Photo C
Tuber growth and above-ground biomass This photo shows growth samples of two different brassicas and the aerial versus drilled planting date and planting type comparison.

E). Within three days, he received almost an inch of rainfall. The pilot flew on cover crop strips with “skips” and then on October 6, 2010, following soybean harvest, Steve returned to the field and planted the drilled cover crop mix treatment (Photo E). Check out a map of Steve's on-farm project (Map).

After planting the treatments, Steve monitored cover crop growth. He collected a sample of the brassicas in the different treatments to view tuber growth and above-ground biomass (Photo C).

The aerially seeded treatments were much bigger than the drilled treatments. Steve harvested biomass in early December 2010 to estimate how much effect planting date and type had on the cover crop growth. On



Photo D
Right: mid-November 2010 photo of September aerially seeded treatment.



Photo E
Left: Picture taken mid-November 2010 of October drilled treatment.

average the aerially seeded cover crop mix yielded 43# biomass/A (Photo D) versus 28# biomass/A (Photo E) in the drilled treatment. “The hairy vetch was looking okay but the brassicas were beginning to become mushy following a hard freeze around this time,” says Steve. In addition to the side-by-side comparisons on a nearby field, Steve also hand planted (Photo F) the mix on the same day as the aerially seeded treatment to compare the type of planting. Steve

says the September hand-planted site was 10 times larger than the aerially seeded cover crops planted on the same day (Photo F & G). At this time the aerially seeded cover crops were also five times larger than the October drilled treatment (Photos C).

In the spring, the brassicas had died but the hairy vetch was still present. On April 27, 2011, above-ground biomass samples were collected. A full research report will be made available from Steve's project. A key observation from Steve's project was discussed at the February Cooperators' Meeting in Ames. Farmers were concerned about the accuracy of aerial-seeding and the presence of “skips” or missed areas where cover crop seed does not hit the

ground because of issues with the plane's GPS or wind. They also wanted to know how to improve soil-to-seed contact when over seeding into a standing crop. Several PFI members discussed modifying a highboy or detasseling machine to either broadcast cover crop seed over the crop canopy or use the boom of a highboy to funnel seed into drop-down tubes that would place seed within the crop canopy and closer to the ground.

Over seeding planting rate suggestions

If you over seed cover crop seed into a standing crop make sure the seeding rate is increased by 50 percent.



Photo F
Above: Picture taken mid-November 2010 of September hand-planted demonstration site.



Photo G
Above: Picture taken mid-November 2010 of tuber from September hand-planted demonstration site.

- Small Grain 1.5bu/A-2bu/A
- Vetch 20-30lbs/A
- White clover 5-10lbs/A
- Red clover 10-15lbs/A

Would you like to borrow PFI's highboy for on-farm testing?

Contact Sarah Carlson, sarah@practicalfarmers.org or 515.232.5661, to borrow PFI's highboy (shown below), or to tell us of ways you've modified a highboy or other over-seeding equipment to improve soil-to-seed contact.



PFI's modified highboy has a broadcast seeder mounted on the front to seed over the canopy. It is on a car trailer and can be pulled easily by any truck with a ball hitch. It is FREE and available for any farmer to borrow to test over-seeding cover crops on your farm.

Which small grains overwinter the best?

by Tomoko Ogawa

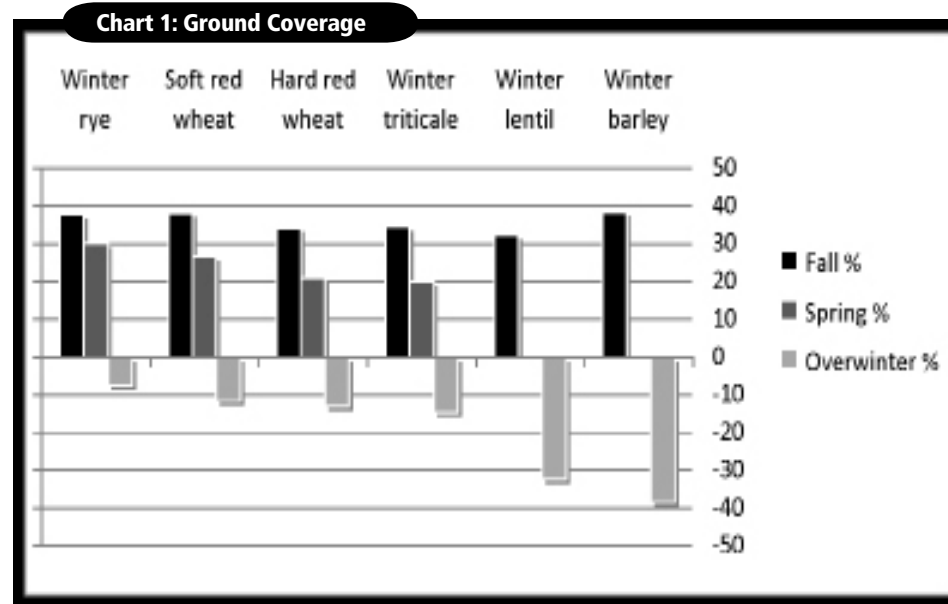
Driven by the practical nature of our members, PFI is always looking for ways to work together to farm better. Part of the quest is to make good land stewardship more profitable for our members.

With that in mind, PFI has found another good reason to plant cover crops: They are yummy and can be used to feed humans as well as livestock.

PFI's Small Grains Study

To learn more about the ability of various small grains to overwinter on the Iowa landscape and be profitable, PFI began exploring which cover crops could be good at both covering the soil through the winter and being harvested for food quality grains. PFI is assessing which winter small grain crops, such as winter wheat, rye or barley, could do double duty.

PFI planted cover crops (using a no-till, drilling method) on October 5, 2010, following soybean harvest at ISU Agronomy Farm near Boone. Six different crops (soft wheat, hard wheat, rye, triticale, barley and lentil) were tested. The test consisted of



Graph 1. Fall ground coverage, spring ground coverage and overwinter percentage of six different varieties

four hard red winter wheat varieties, three soft red winter wheat varieties, four winter rye varieties, one winter triticale variety, four winter barley varieties and one winter lentil variety.

On November 29, 2010, prior to snowfall, 16 different small grain varieties and

one winter lentil variety's coverage of the soil was measured. Then in spring the cover crops were measured again after snow melted on March 2, 2011.

Some species clearly better Than others

All cover crops had the same amount of fall growth going into winter. While different varieties varied in their overwintering performance, their differences were not statistically significant. On the other hand, differences among crops were statistically significant.

Among crops, winter rye performed best, followed by soft red winter wheat, hard red winter wheat, soft red winter wheat and winter triticale. By looking at individual varieties, hard red winter variety Arapahoe performed best at overwintering in our experiment this past year. Arapahoe actually grew under the snow and was the only variety to have more biomass present following snow melt.



Plot comparison photo, May 2, 2011
From left to right: Kaskaskia (soft red wheat), Elbon (rye) and Overland (hard red wheat)

(Continued from page 7.)

In Chart 1, the shorter the lightest gray bars, the better the cover crops' ability to overwinter and keep the ground covered until spring. These results are in line with a common perception by farmers and others who have grown and studied different cover crops and report that winter rye is the most winter-hardy among the different winter small grains.

In the spring, winter barley and lentil had very poor growth and stayed small even in May.

More to come

We are going to leave these small grain varieties to set seed for harvest in early July. Following the harvest we'll measure test weight, protein and moisture levels and conduct kitchen tests to examine baking qualities of the different small grain varieties.

Early this fall, PFI will over seed more varieties into standing corn and soybeans to see how an earlier planting date will affect the ability of different cover crop varieties to overwinter and also be harvested for grain the following summer. Watch for more results to come.

What does it mean To "overwinter?"

Crops that overwinter are those that even during winter, when they cease to grow above the surface, store energy in their roots so the plant can regenerate when the soil warms in the spring.

Some farmers prefer to plant cover crops that do not overwinter, meaning they don't regenerate in the spring, such as oats, while other farmers are looking for cover crops that overwinter well, such as winter wheat.



Motley Cow Café in Iowa City uses local foods whenever possible.

employed. He adds, "I also like that my dollars are spent within Iowa to strengthen our state and local communities financially and also support the heritage of Iowa, which is agriculture."

While buying from local producers might be a little more expensive for restaurants at the point of purchase, David points out that he can order smaller quantities more frequently, getting just what he needs when he needs it. This cuts waste and saves him some money over the long haul, while allowing him to provide increased quality and freshness.

David tries to honor the producer relationships he already has and therefore is not actively searching for additional suppliers, unless there is a new product he can't access through his current producers. Also there are certain products that the restaurant uses in such a high volume that David doesn't expect to purchase all of them locally. For example, it's hard for him to imagine getting all of his onions, carrots and celery locally. "People grow carrots but usually not at the volume that we need," he says. "Celery has been grown

[locally], but I don't see a lot of success with it so we get it from other sources."

According to David, clear communications on availability, product description and price are the key for a good relationship between restaurants and producers. It is important for producers to understand how a restaurant is going to use their products, to know their target audience and to figure out what each restaurant is looking

I like delivering my products to chefs, giving them produce that they really feel good about and are excited to serve to their customers.

James Nisly

for before deciding how to process their produce. David says that clean vegetables provide an added value for him. "When it comes to produce, it can never be too clean," he maintains.

David says that using local foods can help differentiate you from your competitors and his customers appreciate the quality, local products he uses. "Of course there is a some extra effort involved in buying local but there is also a true benefit in these products. It's worth it and does pay off."

Is marketing the “weak link” in your grazing operation? How some PFI graziers are moving their products

by Kevin Dietzel

Marketing is a huge component of farm profitability and sometimes the weak link for otherwise successful farmers. PFI graziers use a wide array of strategies. Two members who use direct marketing, a beginner who is trying to expand direct markets, a wholesale meat marketer, a seedstock producer and a meat science professional talk about their approaches.



Ron Dunphy, Creston

Ron has been raising cattle for more than 30 years. Although, now retired, he still keeps a herd of 30 cows. When he started farming, he was a partner with his dad and uncle, whose marketing strategy was to sell calves at weaning, or sometimes feed them for an extra month or two to get a better price. Around 1980, Ron started retaining ownership of his animals when they went to the feedlot, through the Midcrest Area Cattle Evaluation program and later through the Tri-County Steer Carcass Futurity Cooperative.

The advantages to the farmer of participating in such programs are many: by owning the animal longer, there is better opportunity for a good price, the cow-calf producer gets data on how their animals performed, and since the animals are marketed in larger groups,

better prices are received. Ron says most cow-calf producers sell calves at the sale barn in small groups, and therefore get the smallest price. Ron’s advice for beginning graziers is to lean heavily on someone with marketing experience.



Ken Henrichsen, Winterset

Ken buys 150 head of open yearling heifers each spring to develop into replacement stock. In March, he checks and measures all of the heifers. Those that will become replacement stock are then bred through artificial insemination (AI), and the rest are grass finished. The heifers that do not get bred either through AI or a cleanup bull are also separated into the grass finishing group.

Both groups are rotationally grazed, with moves once or twice a day, but the finishing group stays closer to the house where he has higher quality improved pastures. The bred heifers are further away on perennial native pastures. Ken grass finishes 20-25 animals per year (all heifers), with slaughter dates beginning in late September at two local lockers. He gets his customers by word of mouth, giving discounts for referrals.

He markets his bred heifers through a local advertiser “The Exchange” and by calling farmers. The biggest weaknesses he sees are weather and his neighbors’ perceptions (their weakness). His advice on maximizing profitability is to maximize the end-product you are selling, by doing all of the feeding, hauling and marketing yourself.



Nick Wallace, Keystone

Nick direct markets 225-250 head of grass-fed beef every year, some from his family’s farm and from two other farmers. He gets all of his slaughtering and processing done at Lorentz Meats in Cannon Falls, Minnesota. Most of Nick’s marketing is done through buying clubs, two in Chicago and three in Iowa. Nick says his biggest challenge is time, balancing production, processing and marketing. Another challenge is the rising cost of processing. Nick sees a potential role for PFI to educate landowners about alternative ownership structures and farming systems, and to facilitate landowners who are helping beginners get started.



Jake Wheeler, Monroe

Jake has 45 total head of cattle, including cows, yearling heifers and last year’s bull calves all in one mob that he moves twice a day. When he first started his cow herd five years ago, he sold his calves at the sale barn in the spring. Jake’s goals for his cattle are to spend no money and to improve genetics so he can eventually market bulls. He would also like to

expand his direct marketing. He says it is often difficult to retain customers if he sells them a quarter or half a beef and they do not hear from him for long periods of time, so he is trying to diversify by adding pastured poultry this year. Currently he is relying on word of mouth to find his customers. Jake’s animals are slaughtered at Amend Pack, a USDA-inspected facility in Des Moines. Jake’s long-term goal is to work full-time on the farm and support his family, but estimates even if he direct markets all of his animals, he would have to sell at least 80 head every year, and he is not sure if he has the marketing skills to sell that many.

Jake would like PFI to show success stories, including example numbers, of beginning farmers who are not independently wealthy or have inherited land AND are raising a family. He also would like to have opportunities to “cross-market,” whereby farmers selling different products work together to have a full set of products to offer their customers.



Ryan and Kristine Jepsen, Dorchester

Ryan is a co-owner of Grass Run Farms. Ryan and his wife Kristine started their farm in 2006 and initially sold at farmers’ markets, then gradually moved into wholesale markets. In June 2009 they decided to separate the meat company from their farm.

Ryan and Kristine have reduced their own cow herd so they have more time to devote to the meat company.

Grass Run Farms is a farmer-owned meat company that sends to slaughter a weekly average of 25-30 head of grass-fed cattle and 10 head of grain-fed cattle (raised without hormones and antibiotics). They also purchase pork raised at Aberdeen Farms in Webster City and then market it. Grass Run Farms works with around 25 producers who are in various stages of production from cow-calf, to backgrounding, to finishing.

All of Grass Run’s cattle are slaughtered at J.F. O’Neil Packing Company in Omaha, Nebraska. The beef is then sold primarily as boxed beef through a wholesale market in Ames, Des Moines, Iowa City, Milwaukee, Madison and the Twin Cities.

Their customers include some institutions, grocery stores and cooperative markets. Ryan says he finds customers through research, phone calls and relationships. The biggest challenge for Ryan is finding quality, consistency and large enough loads to get economy of scale. He thinks to achieve this, more mainstream farmers may have to be tapped, who can work at a large scale and are willing to do what it takes to produce consistently high-quality grass-fed beef year-round.



Steve Reinart, Glidden

Steve has 100 cow-calf units and 40 heifers to be bred. Sixty percent of his bulls go to Pharo Cattle Company in Cheyenne Wells, Colorado, to be forage tested and are sold at the PCC fall bull sale. Most of his females are kept back

and bred, though he does also sell cows. The bull calves not selected for the bull sale are castrated and sold to farmers. He is told these animals always grade “low choice” when finished on grass. He always does ultrasound testing on yearlings to determine tenderness, ribeye shape and marbling ability. Steve says the Pharo catalog is his best marketing venue. Steve recommends that beginners need a goal and need to select genetics that will work best for that goal.

Arion Thiboumery, NMPAN

Arion, who co-coordinates the Niche Meat Processors Assistance Network (NMPAN) and is vice president of Lorentz Meats, Cannon Falls, MN, says there are state-inspected slaughter facilities in most areas of Iowa, and this inspection will be enough to sell individual cuts of meat and quarters, halves or whole animals if selling in-state.

There are also many custom slaughter plants in Iowa that can slaughter and custom butcher for farmers selling directly to consumers (but not for retail or for selling individual cuts of meat). **A database of meat plants in Iowa can be found at:** <http://idalsdata.org/iowaData/meatAndPoultry.cfm>.

Arion warns that selling meat by the cut often results in high transaction costs per sale and the stockpiling of cuts that don’t easily sell. He adds that selling animals while alive in halves or quarters and having your customers place their own cutting orders works well and so does selling the meat in halves, quarters, or bundles proportional to how meat comes from an animal, such as 1/12th or 1/20th.





They're all pumpkins

Above: Dean Henry, Berry Patch Farm, Nevada
 "We enjoy the contact we have with our customers. They appreciate the farm experience we provide, and the children know what FRESH really is."



Beauty & The Buzz



Above: Mary Swalla Holmes, Madrid
 "I farm for the sheer beauty of it."



Garwin Sunrise

Above: Dave Schmidt, Rock Valley Livestock Co., Garwin
 "I farm because I get to watch the sun rise over western Tama County."



Carry On

Above, right: Ronald Abbott, Diagonal
 Ron and his sister Bonnie are shown here in 1946 with their mother's horse, Old Fanny, and her colt standing in front of the house Ron lives in today. "Living on a farm with animals is like having another family. It gives a farmer responsibility, companionship, entertainment and income."



Behold

Left: Michelle Janssen, Osage Clydesdales & Stock Farm, Stacyville
 "We farm to enjoy life at its best, at its worst and everything in between to make every moment count."

Below: Susan Jutz, Local Harvest CSA, Solon
 "Each year the beauty of my spring crops renews my spirit, and this year I've been particularly inspired by the crops grown in our new high tunnel."



The Goat Ladder
 Left: Going up
 Below: Coming down

Annie Grieshop,
 "Most of my life is spent working on and playing pianos, but I also raise laying hens (both chicken and duck) and meat sheep as part of my daily life. One without the other would put my life out of balance ... I farm because this community of living creatures is simply part of who I am."



A Moment

Middle, right: Rick Hartmann, Small Potatoes Farm
 Rick and his daughter take in a unique sky that shrouds the landscape surrounding their farm.



Nature's Way — Francis Thicke, Radiance Dairy, Fairfield
 "I like to see cows in their natural environment eating their natural diet. I wouldn't want to farm any other way."



Growing Inspiration

PFI has big plans: Board approves Strategic direction for next three years

by Tim Landgraf and Teresa Opheim

PFI is in such a healthy position—we have been growing steadily in membership, in accomplishments, in influence. Where will PFI go next? The PFI Board of Directors has just approved an ambitious but doable strategic plan, and we are excited to tell you about it.

Our niche is farmer-to-farmer networking and learning, and we will use that core strength to accomplish the following by 2014:

Building Better Businesses

Many of you report that you want more business planning help. As a result, PFI will:

- ◆ Offer more trainings on developing whole farm plans and enterprise budgets;
- ◆ Provide personal support for 100 beginning farmers to develop business plans (through the Savings Incentive Program);
- ◆ Share experienced farmers' tips on day-to-day efficiencies;
- ◆ Support the Grow Your Small Market Farm™ business planning course;
- ◆ Help our fruit and vegetable producers operate vegetable subscription services (CSAs) that provide a living wage;
- ◆ Develop materials on sustainable systems that can help you approach lenders and investors;
- ◆ Establish a banker/investor/financial planner corps of experts to help answer your business planning questions.

Seed Choice

PFI has been working on a very important project to combat the increasing lack of seed choice in the marketplace, and this work will continue, including our leadership in the U.S. Testing Network, a national effort to rebuild the dwindling selection of non-GMO corn seed. Our



PFI will continue to provide extensive networking opportunities—73 in 2010, even more this year. Pictured here are Susan Jutz and grandson Tyson talking with Liz and Ryan Maas at a meeting in Cedar Rapids sponsored by Women Food and Ag Network and PFI.

current work on corn will continue, and we will also add soybeans and small grains to our work. If our fruit and vegetable producers ask for it, we will work more on seed availability for them in the future.

We need your help!

We will be exploring the following questions before deciding PFI's role.

Health insurance

- ◆ How many PFI members have it? Who are your carriers? What effect will federal policy have? How can PFI help?

Lack of livestock processing

- ◆ How have mobile processing units worked for others? Do you want your own mobile processing units?

Marketing

- ◆ Specifically how do you want PFI to help? (You listed marketing as a top priority on your member survey)

Collaborative ventures

- ◆ Do you want to do more of them with each other?

Saving Energy, and Money, On Farm

Many of you believe that your near-term financial viability will be closely tied to your ability to reduce energy costs. PFI plans to help you understand your energy use, costs and carbon dioxide emissions and will work with you to reduce your energy use and explore renewable energy technologies. We also will focus on highlighting our "energy star" members and providing them opportunities to teach other farmers about energy efficiencies and renewable energy technologies.

Top-Notch Research and Demonstration

The staff would like more direction from you about our on-farm research and demonstration efforts, so we are forming a farmer advisory committee to guide the future of our Cooperators' Program. However, the feedback you've provided thus far has provided the following focus: Establishing the profitability of three-plus year rotations and grazing systems. Non-GMO corn choices. Protecting our precious Iowa soil with cover crops. Reducing on-farm energy and meeting fruit and vegetable producers' production challenges.

Using Policy for Success

In the policy arena, we need a more level playing field so that grazing, organic, fruit and vegetable operations can succeed as well as conventional operations. For example: How can we ensure that fruit and vegetable producers are covered when they experience crop losses? How can the stewardship programs work better for extended crop rotations and grazing systems? PFI staff and your policy committee will help you become advocates in these areas. We also will encourage you to become active on the local level through your Soil and Water Conservation Districts and other committees so you can be in the driver's seat when important policy decisions are made.

Farms for the Future

Lastly, none of the above matters if we do not continue our work for future generations. Beginning farmers are a major investment for PFI. By 2016, 100 beginning farmers will have completed business plans through our Savings Incentive Program. The PFI beginning farmers will greatly benefit from PFI's increased focus on business planning (see earlier paragraph) and all the contact we provide them with experienced farmers.

For those of you who have been farming awhile: We need you to work to preserve your farms! Consequently, PFI will:



Business planning help is a top priority in our new strategic plan. Janice and Ryan Marquardt (above) are developing a business plan through the Savings Incentive Program.

- ◆ Provide a counselor to help families work through the sometimes challenging issues of bringing another generation back to the farm (contact Teresa if you are interested);
- ◆ Connect you with the growing number of friends of farmers who are committed to sustainability;
- ◆ Encourage you to take the legal and other steps to ensure that your farms will stay together when you are gone.

PFI's current work — such as our field days, annual conference programming, and more — will continue strong. As always, our programming will feature:



PFI will expand its seed choice project to include soybeans and small grains as well as corn.

A strong PFI

The strategic directions plan includes a number of strategies to ensure that PFI is an effective organization, including:

- ◆ Retaining and attracting high quality staff
 - ◆ Building a strong board that represents the diversity of the PFI membership
 - ◆ Implementing excellent financial practices, such as maintaining healthy cash flow and passing audits with no significant deficiencies
 - ◆ Developing more effective branding materials to help increase our reach
- Please help us share with others what a wonderful organization this is!



We will secure widespread media coverage for our work to expand our influence beyond our membership. Jeff Klinge (above with PFI staffer Sarah Carlson), was recently featured on Iowa radio stations, talking about how to reduce soil erosion.

- ◆ Farmers as leaders
- ◆ Many opportunities for members and others to network
- ◆ Extensive media featuring farmers and our projects
- ◆ Partnerships with agencies, organizations, universities, and others who can effectively help us achieve our goals.

How will we know if we are successful? You will continue to be PFI members. You will make good friends and colleagues and learn from each other. You will report that PFI has helped you increase your stewardship, profitability, efficiency and more. You will help the organization grow.

Thank you to the following who served with us on the Strategic Directions Committee, which developed the plan that the Board of Directors approved: Sean Skeehan and Dan Wilson, from the Board of Directors; Ellen Walsh-Rosmann and Jerry Peckumn, from the membership at large; and Sarah Carlson, from the staff. We would love to hear your feedback!

Please contact us with your comments: Tim: libland@peconet.net or 641.495-6367 Teresa: teresa@practicalfarmers.org or 515.232-5661

PFI member book review — Honeybee: Lessons from An Accidental Beekeeper

I do not have bees, yet. But I will someday, and so with this goal in mind, I picked up the book, Honeybee: Lessons from an Accidental Beekeeper by C. Marina Marchese.

Admittedly I am apt to judge a book by its cover. Lucky for me, in this case, the cover and title are an adequate representation of what you'll find inside: candid stories combined with practical information, presented in a way that is both aesthetically and factually pleasing.

The author, after visiting her neighbor's hives and subsequently becoming fascinated with bees and beekeeping, leaves her fast-paced job in design to devote her time to learning about, and keeping, bees. She purchases her own Italian bees, studies wine tasting so she can better go about honey tasting, earns a certificate in apitherapy (healing with honeybee products) and launches her own business, Red Bee® Honey.

I had tried reading books about bees before, and seemed to slowly plow my way through them. The facts and history were often not very interesting without a compelling context. But this bee book, to use the old cliché, I simply couldn't put down. The book worked for me because it tells a story in warm, inviting and deft language while at the same time providing illustrations and details that a novice beekeeper (or hopeful soon-to-be beekeeper) will find useful. You'll learn the basics, and more, of what you need to know to get going — provided in the supportive voice of one who has been there.

The book also features several recipes and appendixes. You'll learn how to



by Erica Romkema

make "Every Beekeeper's Simple Lip Balm," as well as information for "Deciphering a Honey Label" and "75 Varietals of Honey." (Who knew there were so many kinds?) A glossary at the back will also help you become familiar with beekeeping terminology.

If you have any interest at all in beekeeping, or simply love honey and want to learn more about its production and benefits, do yourself a favor and pick up this book! I haven't stopped recommending it since I first read it. And, while writing this review, I'm wanting to read through Honeybee again to re-absorb all its good, sweet information . . . and make myself a cup of tea with honey from the hives down the road.

About Erica Romkema

Erica grew up on hobby farms in Minnesota and Iowa. A member of PFI since 2008, she currently resides in Colorado, where she works on a small CSA farm and at a horse stable, and writes about food, nature and farming. Check out her blog at www.kindsofhoney.wordpress.com

Jeanelle Boyer finishes run across Iowa for PFI

Jeanelle Boyer, the yoga instructor and biology professor who decided to run across Iowa to benefit PFI and Slow Food USA, has finished her journey.



bands of her legs. At one point, Jeanelle remembers, the pain was almost too much for her.

"I always thought 'If I can walk, I can do it' — but I could hardly walk."

Eventually, she says, the pain passed and she was able to run again. When asked what kept her going, she says "I really wanted to finish!" Aside from that, she says that yoga has taught her to recognize when her mind is just trying to convince her to give up.

"I was just taking it moment to moment," she adds.

Jeanelle says the high point of the journey for her was running into Iowa City, her hometown. The morning was beautiful, she had less pain in her legs and more than 100

In 10 days, from June 22 to July 1, Jeanelle ran from Omaha, NE to Davenport, IA, averaging about 30 miles a day. Along the way, she collected \$5,000 in donations, with more coming in each day. So far, Practical Farmers of Iowa has received more than \$3,700.

"It's a relief to be done," says Jeanelle, "but I enjoyed the whole adventure."

During the run, Jeanelle experienced debilitating pain in the iliotibial (IT)

by Patrick Burke

people participated in the yoga class she led that day. When it was time to leave, a large group of supporters ran with her.

Jeanelle's donation goal is \$10,000, and even though she is finished running, there is still plenty of time to give. Donations will be accepted through August 30, and an anonymous donor has agreed to match each \$1000 raised.

If you'd like to contribute, go to: <http://www.crowdrise.com/JeanelleBoyer>

What's next for Jeanelle? She says she is looking at some 50-mile races in the fall. When asked if she plans to follow in the footsteps of her great grandfather, who walked around the world in seven years, Jeanelle says she is seriously considering taking a summer to run across the whole country.

PFI members take issue with *Boston Globe* editorial

by Patrick Burke

Recently on the PFI General email discussion list, someone shared an article that caused a bit of a stir. The op-ed article titled, "The Locavore's Dilemma," appeared in the Boston Globe with the provocative subtitle, "Urban farms do more harm than good to the environment."

Here's the first paragraph:

All that is grassy is not green. There are many good reasons to like local food, but any large-scale metropolitan farming will do more harm than good to the environment. Devoting scarce metropolitan land to agriculture means lower density levels, longer drives and carbon emission increases, which easily offset the modest greenhouse gas reductions associated with shipping less food.

Picture of urban agriculture

PFI members were predictably skeptical of the over-simplified take on local foods presented by Mr. Glaeser. Many respondents questioned the author's assumptions about what urban agriculture looks like:

"Most advocates and practitioners of urban agriculture aren't [advocating or practicing] 'large-scale farming' but [are] highly diversified, small-scale or widespread micro farming. The type of highly productive approaches that need have little to no impact on housing density." - **Andy Johnson**

"It does not seem necessary to build quarter-acre lots into new housing developments to allow for neighborhood food production. First, there are probably already many large residential lots with well-groomed, chemically-managed lawns that could be used for food production. And there may be vacated commercial lots that could be converted to gardens." - **Helen Gunderson**

Effect on population density?

Other members wondered about Glaeser's conclusion that a decrease in population density (if that would in fact be an unavoidable result of an increase in urban agriculture) would necessarily mean more driving:



Urban gardens can take all sizes, shapes and forms. Photo from inhabitat.com

"What if slightly less density meant more trains, buses, subways or healthy walking and bicycle riding?" - **Gary Buker**

While we in Iowa don't exactly have the same concerns as folks in densely populated eastern seaboard cities like Boston, we can still explore this question: Does it make more sense for city-dwellers to buy their tomatoes from California, given its longer growing season and the relatively low cost of transporting food?

Well, if you take Glaeser's viewpoint, and consider only the carbon footprint of local versus distance food purchases for urban residents, the answer might be "yes" — depending on the season and what "local" means to you. Despite the many objections to Glaeser's dismissal of urban agriculture, some had to admit that carbon savings is not the strongest selling point for local foods:

"Even without the density argument Glaeser makes, the inputs involved in our agriculture (even sustainable or alternative ag at times) do often overwhelm any transportation savings." - **Andy Johnson**

Should we all just quit buying local foods?

Of course not! By far, the most common response to the article was some variation of the idea that there's more to local foods than the energy saved in transportation:

"What about the intangible benefits of people getting closer to the production of their own food? ... Environmentalism is only one slice of the quality-of-life pie." - **Sharon Hoerichs**

"It is increasingly recognized that what is most valuable about this concept is not the distance that food travels but the potential it has for revolutionizing the food system, especially [by] involving people in their own communities as 'food citizens'" - **Fred Kirschenmann**

"Local food systems hold many benefits, the greatest being the health of food, people, and local economies." - **Andy Johnson**

Benefits, history favor urban gardens

To those virtues, you could also add flavor (less-traveled foods often taste better), variety choice (local fruits and vegetables don't have to be bred to withstand traveling thousands of miles), and food security (knowing that your food is not dependent on a thousand-mile-long supply chain).

If Glaeser is arguing against totally shifting our food production from rural to urban areas, he won't find many people to convince. No one is suggesting cropping Boston Common or grazing cattle on Harvard Yard. Even he knows it's not possible for an area to be both densely populated and food self-sufficient.

If, on the other hand, he is arguing that agriculture has no place at all in urban environments, both history and the present urban agriculture movement are against him. Folks have always wanted to be close to the source of their food, and they are finding ways to do so with whatever limited space they have: from backyard chicken coops, to community gardens, to rooftop hothouses, to vertical and container gardens.

Urban agriculture might not be the solution to all our problems, but it is a step in the right direction for urban communities.

Assessing tillage radish for Weed control in vegetable production

based on a report written by Tim Landgraf

PFI members Tim Landgraf and Jan Libbey conducted a trial to observe the effects of a cover crop planting of tillage radish at their farm, One Step at a Time Gardens (OSTG), near Kanawha, Iowa, in 2009. They examined the residual effects of weed suppression in the spring of 2010 following tillage radish and observed the effect of tillage radish planting density on weed suppression.

Using tillage radish as a cover crop can provide several benefits. One benefit is that it penetrates the hardpan layer in the soil. When allowed sufficient time to mature, tillage radish reach a size of one to two inches in diameter, and 18-24 inches in length. Tillage radish can also be used to suppress weed germination by shading the soil. The plant is also an effective nutrient scavenger and will then release those nutrients back into the soil in the spring, nourishing early seeded vegetable crops.

Watching for weed suppression

Another benefit that has been observed in other trials is the tillage radish's ability to inhibit weed growth. The tuber of the radish releases allelopathic chemicals that have been proved to reduce the germination rate of the weed seeds in the soil. Tim and Jan wanted to see if they could observe this effect on their gardens so they used this trial to observe whether or not fall-planted tillage radish would reduce weed growth the next spring on early season lettuce and spinach.

They chose a field that had previously been planted with Broccoli in which to plant the lettuce and spinach in spring 2010. After the broccoli harvest was complete in 2009, the remaining plant residue was chopped (mowed) and tilled under using a tractor-mounted rototiller. Tim and Jan set up a grid system using

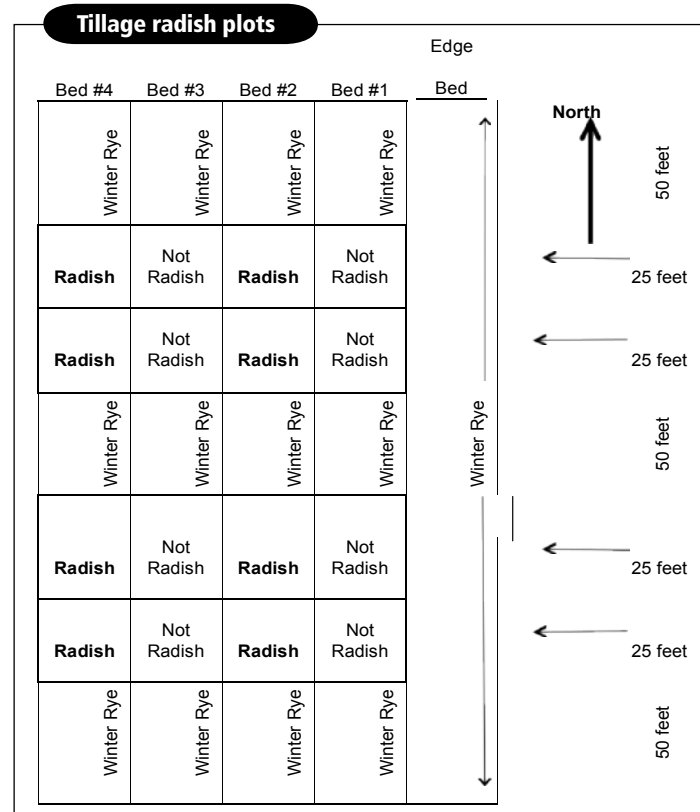


flags to create two sets of eight field plots each. See the complete grid, labeled "Tillage radish plots" below. Each set of eight plots was identified as "radish" or "not radish" to provide side-by-side comparisons of the effects of the tillage radish. The bed closest to the field edge was planted with OSTG's normal overwintering cover crop of winter rye. Similarly, the alleys and ends of each of the beds were planted to winter rye.

Using two seeding rates

On August 27, 2009, Jan and Tim planted the tillage radish at two different seeding rates. The south set of plots was seeded at a rate of 10 pounds per acre. The north set of plots was seeded at a rate of 30 pounds per acre. They seeded the plots with a hand crank seed

spreader, followed by a light tilling with the rototiller, which was set on the shallowest setting. Measurements of the diameter of the tillage radish were taken on October 16. In the south planting with the lower seeding rate, the radishes grew to approximately 3/4-inch in diameter and nine inches long. In



the north planting with the higher seeding rate, they were considerably smaller, reaching approximately 3/16-inch in diameter and six inches long. For the entire trial, Jan and Tim noticed a smaller than desired radish size. They attribute this overall effect to a late planting date (due to seed availability) combined with the arrival of an early winter so the radish didn't have time to mature.

Roots do their job: Soil is dotted with holes

In the spring of 2010, after the winter snows had melted, all that remained of the tillage radish was a few of the dried leaf clusters. The radish roots were completely gone, and the soil was dotted with the holes made by the roots. Jan and Tim noted that the radish plots had visibly fewer perennial and annual weeds, as documented in the photos at the right. The cause of this weed suppression is not known.

On April 29, 2010, they rototilled the beds in preparation for planting and direct seeded lettuce and spinach into the test plots that same afternoon. They made observations throughout the growing season to determine if any residual effects from the tillage radish remained in the soil, affecting either the lettuce/spinach plantings or weed germination and growth. Jan and Tim noticed no difference between the "tillage radish" and the "no tillage radish" plots.

Summary of observations

Tim and Jan concluded that the planting date of the tillage radish (August 27), combined with the early onset of winter prevented the tillage radish from growing to the target size. An earlier planting date, such as the first week in August, would have allowed the radishes to grow to the target size.

The heavier seeding density on the north side plots caused crowding of the tillage radish plants, negatively impacting



Early April 2010 | Tillage radish planting. Dried leaf clusters from the tillage radish are shown, along with emerging Canada thistle.



Close-up photo | Tillage radish plots. Shows holes remaining after the breakdown of the tillage radish and dried leaf clusters.



April 29, 2010 | centered on a "no tillage radish" bed. Note the size and frequency of the Canada thistle as compared to the adjacent photo.



April 29, 2010 | prior to tilling the bed in preparation of planting lettuce and spinach. The photo is of a tillage radish bed in the South planting. The bed on each side clearly shows a higher density of both perennial and annual weeds. The height of the winter rye plantings around the edges of the plots can be seen in the back of the photo and on the top, left edge.

their size and penetration depth in the soil. The planting density in the south plots (i.e. 10 pounds per acre) seemed adequate to get complete soil coverage by the leaf clusters and larger tubers.

Planting of the tillage radish does appear to suppress perennial and annual weeds. However, this effect appears to be gone by the time the beds are tilled and planted to the next year's crop.

Evaluating the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Why aren't more farmers participating?

While an impressive 27 percent of PFI members have participated in CSP, it is estimated that a mere 1.6 percent of all Iowa farmers have received Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contracts since 2007. Practical farmers of Iowa set out to discover why this number is so low and to look for ways to increase participation.

"We wanted to get a better understanding of PFI Farmers' experiences when applying for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), especially their experiences with the application process," explains PFI policy director Sarah Carlson. "We need to know how to improve the process to get more farmers involved."

The information that was gathered will be used, along with information gathered by other sustainable agriculture organizations, to inform NRCS at the US federal level about any issues or concerns related to the CSP application process. "Ultimately, we would like to see wider acceptance of and participation in CSP," Sarah adds.

PFI enlisted the assistance of Wilbeck Consulting to gather insights into the CSP application process from the applicant's perspective. Wilbeck Consulting conducted in-depth interviews with six PFI member farmers who have been awarded CSP contracts. A brief summary of what these interviews revealed follows. (View the full report at: <http://practicalfarmers.org/programs/PFI-Supports-Policy-Involvement.html>)

Pleased to finally be rewarded for their conservation practices

All six of the PFI farmers who were interviewed felt they were finally being rewarded – to some extent – for their conservation work and were fairly happy that their contracts paid for some of the costs of their conservation efforts. Although they said that they realized it was much less than what they would be paid with other government programs.

Application process depends upon the NRCS staff person

PFI farmers' responses varied from "painful" to "easy." How they felt about the experience seemed to depend almost entirely on their local NRCS staffer's knowledge and desire to help. Those farmers who had to make several trips to the office to complete the paperwork found the process "painful." That so many trips were required was chalked up to staffer's



Dan and Bonnie Beard value the CSP program because it has helped them to improve their grass-based dairy and rewards them for having a farming system that provides a high level of conservation.

lack of time or an apparent practice of parsing the interview into several sessions. It is clear that this negative experience could be avoided, since those who had good experiences were able to complete their paperwork often in a single session.

Opportunity for NRCS to encourage more meaningful practices

All of the farmers said that they came to the CSP interviews with an idea of what they wanted to do as a new practice. Most had researched the enhancement list and had pre-selected the practice they wanted to implement. The NRCS staffers appear to have suggested additional enhancements, though those suggestions seemed to be either very-easy-to implement or minor conservation steps the farmers thought they should already be doing.

This may highlight an opportunity for the NRCS staffer to establish more of a "coaching"

role in the process. Ideally the staff person is well-trained and able to spend the time to work with farmers to create a conservation plan and recommend enhancements with greater conservation benefits. Since this isn't currently happening, it may indicate limitations in the structure of the program and structure of the enhancement list, as well as limitations in NRCS staff time and training.

Farmers would like to better understand and have access to the Conservation Measurement Tool

Because farmers could not see how their responses were affecting the scoring of the Conservation Measurement Tool (CMT), they didn't know how their existing practices or selected enhancements fared in the process. If there was an easy way to run the scoring tool to generate revised scores by adding or removing practices, it seems as if some of the farmers would have appreciated the opportunity to compare practices and the resulting scores generated from the changes.

Farmers unsure whether practices were weighted properly

If farmers knew how practices were weighted, it may be a way to encourage interest in practices that weren't previously considered and which may produce higher conservation benefits (and subsequently a higher point value). However, this is also dependent on whether the conservation benefits assigned to a particular practice are what a sustainable farmer sees as true benefits. (For example, some farmer's felt that no-till was currently favored in the process and that it didn't necessarily have a high conservation benefits.) Some farmers felt the scoring tool needed to be revised to reflect such benefits and CSP was not necessarily delivering the conservation results intended or expected when the program was initially conceived.

Farmers unclear about verification requirements

Farmers felt like they needed a clearer explanation from NRCS of what would be required to verify that they implemented the enhancements as contracted.

There was a lot of uncertainty and speculation surrounding how they "thought" they'd be checked or how their practices would be verified. Perhaps the NRCS staffers told them, but the farmers did not seem to recall how it all would "work." A written explanation of what needed to be recorded or shown as "proof," how it would be verified and when it would be verified would be helpful, if not already available or provided at contract signing.

Farmers liked the program and would reapply in the future

All six farmers said they most likely would re-apply for CSP, once their contracts were up.

Ultimately, the farmers still believe in the merits of the program and CSP's value to the farming community. Even

after some negative experiences when applying, uncertainty regarding how their new enhancements would be verified for compliance and perceived limitations in the way CSP is administered and structured – they want it to continue and they want it to be funded. They all believe that PFI and other organizations should continue to advocate for the program.

For Iowa applicants, NRCS has application information available on the Iowa NRCS website or at the NRCS county-level offices.

More CSP information is available

Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) www.nrcs.usda.gov, Iowa NRCS www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov, and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition www.sustainableagriculturecoalition.org.

NRCS CSP Application process

- Complete a brief on-line self-screening to see if you meet program requirements.
- Submit an application.
- Set up an interview with your county NRCS office to answer a series of questions from the Conservation Measurement Tool.
- After the interview, applicants should know if they have met minimum requirements and later receive a score and rating.
- Within a few days, applicants are notified if they are tentatively approved and what their program payment amount will be.
- NRCS staff conduct an on-farm verification visit.
- Complete a conservation plan and contract.
- Begin receiving payments.

Conservation needs your help!

Iowa Senators Chuck Grassley and Tom Harkin need to hear from you.

Last month Ethan Book left his home, Crooked Gap Farm in Knoxville, and traveled to Washington D.C. to encourage government officials to continue to fund the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), which has been on the legislative budget-cutting chopping block. In addition many more of you made phone calls urging Iowa's Senators to keep programs like the Conservation Stewardship Program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the Wetland Reserve Program.

To make sure the Senators don't forget the flood of calls they received, we need to remind them how important continued funding for conservation programs is for healthy agriculture and a vibrant Iowa.

During the months of August, please call:

Senator Tom Harkin
at 202.224.3254

Senator Chuck Grassley
at 202.224.3744

Leave a message with their agriculture staffers.



PFI member Ethan Book (left), pictured above with Iowa Congressman Tom Latham, traveled to Washington D.C. in July to defend CSP and young farmer programs.

Young farmer Parker Beard: Not your typical teenager

While many teens expend a great deal of effort trying to escape family activities to hang out with friends, Parker Beard is one teen who loves spending time with his family.

Parker, his two brothers, Sam and Tom, and their older sister Erin, have grown up sharing the work of the family farm with mom and dad, Bonnie and Dan.

“Working with my family everyday is the best part of farming,” says 17-year-old high school junior Parker Beard. “Everything we do is together. We raise and eat good food together and it’s fun and I like being outside almost all of the time, being close to nature.”

In the summers, Parker helps with the milking and fieldwork. He also helps care for a flock of 140 sheep, which he owns with his brothers, 160 dairy cows, 100 free-ranging chickens and a litter of 11 pigs.

Parker and his family have 591 acres of pasture on which their animals graze so

a lot of time goes into putting together grazing rotations, moving fencing and animals to ensure optimal nutrition and best use of the land. They also have 306 acres of hay, 78 acres of corn for silage to feed the cows, 33 acres of oats and 12 acres of winter wheat. Everything the Beards raise is certified-organic.

Parker is dual enrolled, meaning he home schools some classes and goes to public school for others. He participates in cross country, track and swim team for Decorah High School, plays the violin in orchestra, is part of the chorus and plays the banjo in a locally popular group of young men know as “The Bread & Butter String Band.” Parker is also a member of the “Envirothon” team at his school. The Envirothon is a hands-on environmental problem-solving competition for high school-aged students.

His interest in the environment extends beyond school to the farm and he hopes to someday greatly reduce their farm’s dependence on diesel. Parker is the driving force in their family for their latest



endeavor to sow 21 acres of sunflowers. The plan is to harvest the seeds for their oil and meal. They will use the oil to fuel a retrofitted diesel tractor, and the meal will provide a great source of added protein for their animals.

Dad Dan says, “Parker has always been the super enthusiast of our kids, and his passion for farming is contagious. He has a special gift of getting everyone excited about an idea and inspires them to get it done.”

New PFI “Find A Farmer” website growing steadily

by Luke Gran

Each month, PFI’s new “Find A Farmer” website gains approximately 30 new registrants and is helping landowners and land seekers to connect with one another.

So far, 164 messages have been exchanged on the site between 18 landowners and 112 landseekers.

One of these landowners, who is located in eastern Iowa, says this about his land opportunity, “My two siblings and I are about to acquire our grandmother’s 160-acre farm about five miles south of Clarence. I would like the property to remain a ‘family’ farm, on which only organic vegetables and fruits are grown for human consumption – and no domestic animals raised on the land.”

The site is designed so that with a little luck, he will soon receive a response from a

landseeker whose farming aspirations align with this landowner’s vision for his land.

Another message on the site, this one from a landseeker located in northeast Iowa, says he is seeking 20 to 80 acres of land on which to run a diversified homestead of veggies and meat.

A native Midwesterner, he had lived in Scott County and his wife had lived near Peoria. They are looking to move back to Iowa with their 11-month-old son to raise a family, after having spent a few years enjoying the Maine local foods scene.

This landseeker and his family appreciate how the site can help connect them to the new life they are dreaming about.

Users’ identities remain private; only the location of the land and whatever they choose to share in the comment box is made public. Messages are private and tied to the user’s email address.

Are you looking for land or do you have land that you would like to see a beginning farmer thrive on? Register on Find A Farmer today and let the PFI network go to work for you! www.practicalfarmers.org/findafarmer



Now taking applications for PFI’s Savings Incentive Program

Practical Farmers of Iowa is now taking applications for their 2012 round of Savings Incentive Program participants. The Savings Incentive Program will provide beginning farmers the opportunity to save money while learning how to build a profitable farm.

Money saved (up to \$2,400) will be matched after completing the two-year program. Applications will be accepted now through October 1, 2011. Download application forms online from PFI’s website www.practicalfarmers.org or call 515.232.5661 to receive a copy in the mail.

Developing an ecologically sound and community-enhancing next generation of farmers is the top priority for Practical Farmers of Iowa, and the Savings Incentive Program aims to equip these farmers with the tools needed for success. The Savings Incentive Program will entice beginning farmers to save \$100 a month for two years; after two years, PFI will match their savings dollar for dollar. The beginning farmer can then use this savings to purchase a

productive farm asset (land, machinery or livestock). Meanwhile, enrollees will participate in programming to help their farm enterprise succeed.

A review panel of five PFI members will evaluate and rank applications. Ten farmers were enrolled in the Savings Incentive Program in 2010. Twenty-four beginning farms will be named in November 2011; an additional 24 farms will be accepted in 2012, and 24 farms in 2013.

Eligible applicants must be:

- ◆ Farming now and have farmed for five years or fewer
- Legal residents of Iowa and farm in the state
- ◆ Members of Practical Farmers of Iowa (If not a member, candidates can join at www.practicalfarmers.org or by calling (515)232-5661.)



2010 Savings Incentive program recipient Ben Saunders manages Turtle Farm near Granger. Ben wants to purchase equipment and possibly purchase farmland of his own. He plans to use his SIP funds to make those dreams a reality.

Savings Incentive Program enrollees will be required to:

1. Open a separate savings account at a bank of their choice and make regular Savings Incentive Program deposits to this account
2. Attend at least four PFI events per year (online, on-farm, or in person)
3. Meet with a farmer mentor three times in one year
4. Complete and maintain a business/whole farm plan over two years
5. Check-in quarterly with a member of PFI staff or business plan consultant of their choice to keep on track with goals defined by the beginning farmer

Make a difference for the future of farming

If you would like to donate to the Savings Incentive Program, please do so online at www.practicalfarmers.org.

If you have questions about the Savings Incentive Program application process, please contact Next Generation Director Sally Worley at (515)232-5661, sally@practicalfarmers.org.

Poultry Pen Design

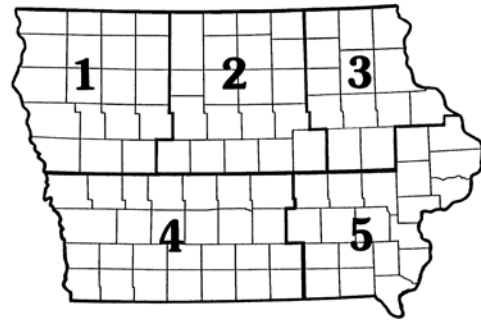
If you go to the Internet or the library and look up “pastured poultry,” you will find hundreds if not thousands of resources. The issue is, how do you know what will work for you? What’s working for other farmers in your area? Will the pen hold together? Move well? Not blow away in the Iowa winds?

PFI is working to put together a resource designed to uncover the answers to these and other questions. In talking to many farmers at field days, the Annual Conference and the Cooperators Meeting, it seems that deciding which pen design to use can be quite difficult.

So far, we have gathered detailed pen design questions from several farmers. The next step is to gather stories and experiences from farmers about using specific designs. That’s where you come in!

If you are interested in offering your opinions and experiences about specific pastured poultry pen designs, please contact Suzi Bernhard at 515.232.5661 or suzi@practicalfarmers.org. By sharing your experiences with different pen designs on your farm, you will help other people make better decisions for their farms. Thanks for your help!





District 1 — Northwest

Sister Marie Hesed,
Society of Our Lady, Wiley
Benjamin Wise, Lytton

District 2 — North Central

Dan Beougher, Maxwell
Lucas Bielfelt, Boone
Patrick and Sarah Burke, Ames
Craig Cox, Ames
Sarah Daisy, Glidden
Susan DeBlicek, Ames
Daniel and Susan Duvick, Madrid
Kevin and Brenda Fall, Jefferson
Carrie Herrman, Ames
Vicki Imerman, Boone
Wendy Johnson, Charles City
Ahna Kruzic, Ames
Jill Mortensen, Ames
Mason Osborne, Jefferson
Chris Wilbeck, Rippey
Jesse Worth, Ames

District 4 — Southwest

Matthew Ulrich, Agronomic Solutions Inc.,
Woodward
Thomas Burkhead, Des Moines
Dan Dennison, Knoxville
Ben Gran, Des Moines
Kyle Hoffman, Newton
Dewane Keasling, Seymour
Kenny McCabe, Minburn
Danelle Myer, Logan
Heather Phillips, Granger
Jessie Price, Des Moines
Frank Santana, Clive
Arnold and Jane Schneider, Lacona
Donna Vaughn, Des Moines

District 5 — Southeast

Suzan Erem, West Branch
Gary Maske, Deep River

District 6 — Out of State

Muriel Strand, Sacramento, CA
Palma Strand, Arlington, VA
Catherine Capel, The Land Connection, Sidney, IL
Bill and Christy Whitley, Birmingham, AL

UPCOMING EVENTS

SAVE THE DATE!
January 12-14, 2012
PFI Annual Conference

Scheman Building | Iowa State
University | Ames, Iowa

**AUGUST 6 | Grazing Cattle to
Increase Biodiversity | Maxwell, IA**

Held at the Chichaqua Bottoms
Wildlife Area and the Bruce and Connie
Carney farm. Learn about a four-year
project to increase biodiversity in two
ecosystems. The goal is to return the
prairie to a diverse native condition.
See the dramatic difference the
presence of livestock has made.

**AUGUST 7 | Abbe Hills Farm Open
house and Sweet Corn Feed
Mt. Vernon, IA**

Great for young people thinking about
horticultural endeavors and local food
lovers of all ages, this on-farm field
day is open to everyone. Take a walk
around large vegetable gardens, see
a high tunnel for season extension
and a reconstructed wetland.

AUGUST 9-11 | MOB Grazing Tour

Visit five different farms across the state
in three days. See how each uses a variety
of grazing techniques for their livestock.
Learn about fencing, watering, forage
composition, paddock size and shape,
the NRCS cost share program and more.

**AUGUST 17 | Organic Seed Options
and Managing Manure
Keystone, IA**

Join Tyler Franzenburg in examining
test plots of organic corn hybrids
and soybean varieties, improving
manure management and manure
handling methods, and a discussion
of their rotational grazing system.

**AUGUST 18 | Control Weeds, Pests
and Livestock Disease Organically
Harlan, IA**

Learn about pink-eye control in organic
livestock. Join a discussion about grass-fed
beef, soybean aphid resistance, a ridge-
till weed control study in soybeans with

pre-cultivation before planting and more.
Ron and Daniel Rosmann will conduct a
fencing-construction demonstration.

**AUGUST 27 | Corn, Canola,
Soybeans and More
Sutherland, IA**

Join Paul and Karen Mugge to take a
look at research projects they have
conducted to improve their profitability
and environmental stewardship.
Discussion will cover organic and non-
GMO corn hybrids, non-GMO aphid-
resistant versus susceptible soybean
varieties, and adding spring and winter
canola into the farming rotation.

**AUGUST 27 | Dairy Farming
Without Fossil Fuels | Fairfield, IA**

Go on a wagon tour of Radiance Dairy's
60-paddock grazing system and a walk
through of dairy processing facilities.
Emphasis of the field day will be on the
energy systems in place and planned for
the farm. Gregg Heide, an expert on wind
energy, will help lead this discussion.

**AUGUST 30 | Committing to Cover
Crops for Corn and Soybeans
New Market, IA**

Join PFI for refreshments and networking
on a beautiful July day as RAGBRAI
rolls through Iowa. Art Behrens, Jon
Judson and PFI staff will be hosting
this PFI social at the Templeton
Veterinary Clinic just a quarter of
a mile north of the bike route.

**AUGUST 31 | New Corn and
Soybean Discoveries for Increased
Profitability | Sioux Center, IA**

Kelly and Irene Tobin share results from
on-farm research conducted with PFI
and the Iowa Learning Farm. Discussion
will include rye biomass, nitrogen
content of rye, soil nitrate testing,
effects of rye on corn and soybean yield
in no-till systems, comparison of six
nitrogen rates on corn, rye cover crop
effect on water quality and more.

**Many more field days are
Coming this fall! To see them all,
visit: www.practicalfarmers.org.**

CALENDAR

Grow your farm with PFI. Join today!

This annual membership is a:

- new membership
- renewal

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.)

I am joining at the level of:

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

..... Each membership includes one subscription to *the Practical Farmer*.

Sustain PFI
For 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(c) 3 organization. Your gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Thank you!

Individual, Farm or Organization Name*: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Street: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Primary Phone (with area code): _____

Alternate Phone (with area code): _____

Email: _____

* For Farm/Household membership, please list names of persons included. For Organization membership, please list one or two contact persons.

Payment:

Total: \$_____ = \$_____ membership + \$_____ donation

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

TO PAY WITH A CREDIT CARD, PLEASE GO TO: <http://practicalfarmers.org/join-pfi.html>



Practical Farmers of Iowa

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Ames, IA 50014

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Our Vision for Iowa



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



Wholesome food that is celebrated
for its connections
to local farmers
to seasons,
to hard work
and good stewardship
Communities alive with
diverse connections between
farmers and friends of farmers



Places where commerce,
cooperation, creativity
and spirituality are thriving
Places where the working landscape,
the fresh air and the clean water
remind us of all that is good about Iowa.